

The Market-Recognition Gap in Digital Transformation: A Conceptual and Diagnostic Framework for Technological Capability Recognition

Vedran OBRADOVIĆ*  

*Vizura Studio®, Zagreb, Croatia

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Abstract

Digital transformation can alter what a firm is capable of faster than customers, partners and other external audiences revise their understanding of the firm. This conceptual paper calls that difference the market-recognition gap. The paper integrates research on digital transformation, signalling theory, market orientation and dynamic capabilities with bounded practitioner observations from B2B technology branding. It argues that strategic positioning can function as a translation layer between operational capability and market recognition when it makes consequential differences easier to understand and connects claims to verifiable evidence.

The paper develops a four-part model of recognition failure: capability change, category inertia, signal ambiguity and proof separation. It then proposes three research propositions concerning the relationship between capability change, signal specificity and external recognition. The contribution is intentionally conceptual. It does not test causal effects or generalize from proprietary client data. Instead, it offers a vocabulary and research agenda for examining why technological transformation may remain commercially under-recognized even when operational capability has materially changed. The paper further introduces a diagnostic framework and a two-dimensional market-

recognition matrix to distinguish under-recognized capability change from broader visibility problems. These tools are proposed for structured managerial assessment and future empirical validation, not as validated diagnostic measures.

Keywords: digital transformation, strategic positioning, signalling theory, market recognition, organizational identity, B2B technology.

1. Introduction

Popular futurism has long served as a cultural benchmark against which technological progress is measured. *The Jetsons* portrayed a world in which financial and domestic tasks were highly automated: bills were paid by machines, purchases were instantaneous, and routine decision-making was delegated to intelligent systems. For much of the twentieth century, this vision remained speculative. However, the past decade has produced a cluster of financial innovations that increasingly resemble this frictionless and automated financial environment.

Digital transformation research has established that digital technologies can reshape organizational processes, business models, value creation and competitive structures. Vial (2019) defines digital transformation as a process in which digital technologies create disruptions that trigger strategic responses and structural changes in organizations. Verhoef et al. (2021) similarly emphasize that digital

transformation is multidisciplinary and may involve changes in strategy, organizational structure, metrics, capabilities and market behaviour. A practical issue follows from that breadth. Organizational capability can change more quickly than external audiences update their mental model of the organization.

A software company may move from a narrow tool to infrastructure that carries materially different operational importance. A service provider may develop stronger specialization, more rigorous processes or new technical capabilities. A technology firm may redesign how it creates and delivers value. Internally, the organization experiences these changes as capability development. Externally, customers and partners often encounter the company through compressed signals such as a category label, website, sales deck, recommendation, procurement document or short conversation.

This paper defines the resulting difference as a market-recognition gap: the distance between what a firm has become capable of doing and what relevant external audiences can reasonably infer about that capability before deep evaluation. The concept matters because digital transformation is not commercially complete merely because new capability exists. If market participants continue to classify the firm using an older or overly generic mental model, transformed capability may be harder to recognize, compare and trust. Strategic positioning then becomes more than a promotional exercise. It can operate as a translation mechanism between operational change and market understanding.

The paper addresses three questions. First, what creates the recognition gap after technological change? Second, which market-facing signals help external audiences update their understanding of new capability? Third, where does positioning fail because it compresses meaningful transformation into generic digital-transformation language? The contribution is conceptual and practitioner-informed. It does not claim that positioning causes market performance, nor does it present a new empirical dataset. Its purpose is to connect established literature with a recurring B2B technology problem and to propose a model that can be tested in future research.

Recent research reinforces that digital transformation is not a single technology-adoption event but an organizational change process that can alter strategy, structures, capabilities and ecosystem relationships (Hanelt et al., 2021; Warner and Wäger, 2019). That makes external interpretation consequential: the object being positioned may itself be changing while the market continues to rely on accumulated category cues. Recent work further indicates that digital transformation and organizational identity influence one another, with technological change potentially requiring identity realignment as organizations redefine who they are and how they are understood by stakeholders (Hein-Pensel, 2026).

2. Conceptual Background

Digital transformation is often described through changes in technologies, processes, customer experience, organizational structures and business models. Vial (2019) synthesizes this literature by showing that digital technologies can generate disruptions that lead organizations to alter value creation paths and organizational structures. Verhoef et al. (2021) distinguish between digitization, digitalization and digital transformation, emphasizing that transformation can reach the level of strategic and business-model change.

This distinction is important for market recognition. Incremental digitization may be visible as a functional improvement. Deeper transformation can alter what the firm is, which customers it can serve, how much responsibility its product carries or which competitive comparison is appropriate. These changes are not automatically visible to external audiences.

Dynamic capabilities research provides a related perspective. Teece (2007) argues that firms compete by sensing opportunities, seizing them and transforming resources and organizational structures. The market-recognition problem appears after or alongside this capability development. A firm may

successfully transform internally while still being interpreted externally through an outdated category frame.

The digital-business strategy literature similarly treats digital resources as capable of changing the scope, scale and speed of business strategy rather than merely supporting existing activities (Bharadwaj et al., 2013). This paper therefore treats capability change as a substantive shift in what a firm can credibly do, not as a cosmetic modernization or communication initiative.

Signalling theory is concerned with situations in which one party possesses information that another party cannot directly observe. Spence (1973) formalized signalling in labour markets, and later organizational research extended the logic across management contexts. Connelly et al. (2011) emphasize that signals are meaningful when they convey otherwise difficult-to-observe information and when receivers interpret them under conditions of information asymmetry.

B2B technology markets frequently exhibit this problem. Before technical evaluation, a buyer cannot fully inspect architecture, operational reliability, internal expertise, implementation quality or service discipline. The buyer therefore relies on partial signals. Certifications, customer evidence, specialist language, product demonstrations, category membership, partnerships, case studies and reputation can all reduce uncertainty.

Strategic positioning belongs in this signal environment when it helps organize and interpret evidence. It fails when it substitutes attractive language for underlying capability. The signalling literature also distinguishes between the existence of a signal and the receiver's interpretation of it. Bergh et al. (2014) emphasize the importance of separating equilibrium, in which expectations created by a signal are subsequently confirmed through experience. This is directly relevant to market recognition: a positioning claim is useful only if it improves interpretation and remains connected to an underlying capability that later evaluation can verify. More recent evidence similarly shows that digital-transformation narratives can function as external signals of strategic commitment, while their credibility depends on alignment between articulated digital attention and substantive innovation outcomes (Chen et al., 2026).

Market orientation research emphasizes the value of understanding customers and competitors and coordinating organizational responses to market information. Narver and Slater (1990) connect market orientation with the behaviours required to create superior value for buyers.

The recognition gap adds a complementary question: even when the organization understands its market, does the market understand the organization after capability has changed? This is not simply a messaging problem. External audiences classify firms using existing categories, familiar comparisons and accumulated expectations. A transformed company can therefore face category inertia. Buyers may continue to compare it with the firms it used to resemble, or interpret its new capabilities through a generic label that hides the operational difference.

The proposed construct is adjacent to, but distinct from, several established ideas. Organizational identity and image research examines the relationship between internal self-definition and external perceptions (Gioia et al., 2000). Categorization research shows that market actors use categories to simplify evaluation and that ambiguous category membership can create penalties (Zuckerman, 1999). B2B branding research shows that brand-related cues can matter for some organizational buyers alongside tangible product and service attributes (Mudambi, 2002). The market-recognition gap combines these concerns around a specific temporal problem: a firm's capability changes, but the external inference structure used to evaluate those firm changes more slowly. Recent global B2B branding research further emphasizes the strategic role of branding in helping organizational buyers interpret firm value and navigate complex market environments (Marvi et al., 2024).

3. Method and Scope

Conceptual research can create new knowledge by linking theoretical streams, clarifying constructs and proposing a model for later empirical testing, provided that the selection and role of theories are explicit (Jaakkola, 2020). The synthesis was organized around one focal phenomenon: the lag between substantive capability changes and external recognition in B2B technology markets.

Four theoretical streams were selected because each explains a different part of the phenomenon. Digital-transformation and dynamic-capabilities research explains substantive organizational change. Signalling theory explains communication under information asymmetry. Market-orientation research explains how firms' sense and respond to markets. Organizational-identity and categorization research explains how audiences maintain and revise interpretive frames. B2B branding research provides additional context for how intangible corporate signals enter organizational buying situations.

The analytical procedure was interpretive rather than systematic-review based. The paper first identifies the explanatory role and boundary of each stream, then synthesizes the streams into a four-part model of capability change, category inertia, signal ambiguity and proof separation. Practitioner observations from B2B technology branding are used only as bounded illustrations of the problem structure. They are not treated as a representative sample, and no confidential client information is used.

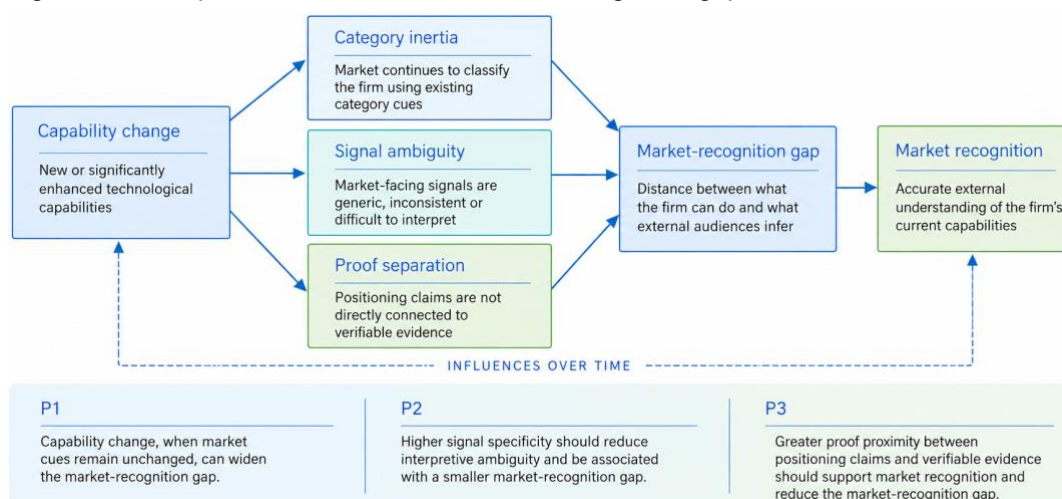
The method is therefore appropriate for theory development and proposition building rather than causal testing. The framework should be treated as a testable conceptual model whose constructs, measures and boundary conditions require future empirical validation.

4. The Market-Recognition Gap

The proposed model has four connected elements: capability change, category inertia, signal ambiguity and proof separation.

The market-recognition gap is defined more narrowly than a generic image gap or a lack of awareness. It exists only when there is a substantive capability or role change and relevant external audiences continue to infer the firm through an older, overly broad or weakly evidenced frame. Its theoretical novelty is therefore the joint treatment of temporal capability change and external inference. Signalling theory alone does not specify why the object being signalled may transform faster than the audience's category model. Identity-image research does not by itself isolate pre-evaluation recognition of changed capability. Categorization theory explains interpretive constraints, but not the combined effect of changed capability, ambiguous signals and distance to proof. The proposed construct integrates these mechanisms into one recognition problem.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the market-recognition gap



Source: Author's conceptualization.

The first condition is substantive internal change. The firm acquires or develops a capability that changes what it can deliver, how it creates value, which risks it can manage or which customers it can credibly serve. Without capability change, there is no recognition gap in the sense used here. Repositioning that is not grounded in changed or under-recognized capability is simply a change in market presentation.

External audiences use categories because categories reduce cognitive effort. A buyer needs shortcuts to decide which providers deserve attention. However, the category attached to a firm can lag behind the firm's actual development. This creates inertia. A company that began as a simple application may later become embedded infrastructure, but buyers may continue to interpret it as a lightweight tool. A consultancy may develop specialized technical capability but remain mentally categorized as a generalist. A platform may expand its governance or control model while still being described by an old functional label. Category familiarity is not inherently negative. Familiar categories improve comprehension. The problem emerges when the category becomes a ceiling on what the audience can recognize.

The next element is ambiguity in market-facing signals. Technology markets often converge on shared vocabulary: intelligent, secure, scalable, seamless, innovative, next-generation and enterprise-ready. Such language can accurately describe many firms, but it carries low proprietary information when competitors can make the same claim. Visual systems can converge in the same way. Category conventions help users recognize a market, yet heavy reliance on those conventions can make materially different firms appear interchangeable. Signal ambiguity therefore increases when a transformed capability is represented by generic category language rather than a specific, consequential difference.

The final element is the distance between a claim and the evidence that would allow an external audience to verify it. A firm may possess strong proof in the form of certifications, architecture, customer outcomes, process discipline, partnerships or product behaviour. If those signals are difficult to connect to the central market claim, the buyer must assemble the reasoning independently. This creates proof separation. The claim may be visible, and the evidence may exist, but the relationship between them is weak.

5. Propositions

The model supports three propositions for future testing.

Proposition 1. The greater the magnitude of internal capability change, the greater the risk of a market-recognition gap when external category cues remain unchanged. This proposition follows from the idea that deep transformation creates more distance between the firm's previous and current state. If market-facing cues remain stable while the internal capability changes substantially, external classification may lag.

Proposition 2. Signal specificity moderates the relationship between capability change and market recognition. Signals that identify a specific buyer consequence, operating principle or verifiable distinction should make new capability easier to recognize than broad category claims. This does not imply that specificity alone creates trust. Instead, it should improve the audience's ability to form an accurate hypothesis about what has changed.

Proposition 3. The effect of strategic positioning on market recognition depends on proximity between claims and verifiable proof. A positioning statement that clearly connects to evidence should reduce uncertainty more effectively than a claim that requires the buyer to search across unrelated materials for support. Future research could test whether proof proximity influences comprehension, trust formation or evaluation speed.

The framework suggests that strategic positioning can be understood as a translation layer. Translation does not mean simplifying a complex product until its technical meaning disappears. It means selecting which difference is consequential enough to organize the buyer's understanding. A useful translation has three properties. First, it is grounded in operating truth. The market-facing distinction should correspond to a real product, process, architecture, capability or service model. Second, it is consequential. The difference should explain what changes for the buyer, not merely describe an internal feature. Third, it is verifiable. The claim should lead naturally toward evidence. This produces a simple sequence: capability, consequence, proof.

Consider a hypothetical technology provider whose transformed platform gives customers materially more control over deployment choices. A weak translation would describe the firm as innovative and flexible. A stronger translation would identify control as the consequential difference and then point toward the architecture or operating model that makes the control real. The stronger version does not expose every technical detail on the first interaction. It gives the audience a more accurate frame for evaluating the detail later.

However, the effectiveness of strategic positioning as a translation mechanism may be undermined by several recurring failure modes. The first is category wallpaper, which occurs when transformed firms continue to rely on conventional industry terminology that obscures their newly developed capabilities. The second is decorative distinctiveness, whereby visual differentiation attracts attention without communicating a meaningful technological or operational advantage. A third failure mode, proof without interpretation, arises when organizations present certifications, technical specifications, partnerships, or customer evidence without explaining their relevance to buyer decisions. Finally, over compression occurs when complex capabilities are reduced to simplified claims that omit important operating conditions, trade-offs, or technical distinctions. Although these approaches may facilitate initial communication, they can perpetuate the market-recognition gap by weakening the connection between actual capabilities, buyer-relevant consequences, and verifiable evidence. Accordingly, effective strategic positioning requires not merely distinctive communication but interpretive precision, ensuring that market-facing claims accurately reflect substantive organizational transformation.

6. Managerial Implications

For technology firms, developing new capabilities is only part of the challenge. Those capabilities must also be understood by the customers, partners, and other stakeholders whose decisions shape the firm's market opportunities. A company may substantially improve its technology, expand its expertise, or change the way it delivers value, yet still be perceived through an outdated understanding of what it does. The proposed framework helps managers recognize when this disconnect occurs and consider how strategic positioning might address it.

A useful starting point is to ask four questions. What has actually changed in the firm's capabilities? Who needs to understand these changes? How clearly are they reflected in the firm's market-facing communication? And what evidence is available to support the claims being made? Together, these questions encourage managers to look beyond the appearance of their brand and consider whether the market has an accurate understanding of the organization.

This distinction matters because not every change in a business requires a new visual identity or a complete repositioning exercise. In some cases, the problem may be an outdated market category that no longer reflects the firm's activities. In others, the company may be communicating its capabilities through broad claims that could apply equally to its competitors. It may also possess convincing technical evidence but fail to explain why that evidence matters to potential buyers. The appropriate response therefore depends on where the recognition gap arises. A clearer message, a more specific description of the firm's

role, or a stronger connection between claims and evidence may sometimes be more useful than a visual redesign.

These issues are especially relevant in B2B technology markets, where purchasing decisions often involve complex products, specialized knowledge, and several decision-makers. Potential customers rarely develop a complete understanding of a supplier during their first interaction. Instead, their impressions take shape gradually through websites, recommendations, sales presentations, procurement documents, and conversations with company representatives. Each interaction contributes to how the firm is understood and evaluated. When these signals are inconsistent or overly generic, important differences in technological capability may remain difficult to recognize.

Table 1 offers a practical way to examine this problem. It brings together the four dimensions of the proposed framework, capability change, category inertia, signal ambiguity, and proof separation, and connects them with questions managers can investigate using information already available within their organizations and markets.

In practice, managers could begin by identifying what has materially changed in the business. This might involve reviewing product developments, technical architecture, service capabilities, specialist expertise, or new responsibilities the firm can now undertake. The next step is to consider whether customers and partners recognize these developments. Feedback from sales teams, customer conversations, procurement interactions, and stakeholder interviews may reveal whether the firm continues to be associated with its former capabilities or market category. Once these differences become clearer, attention can turn to the firm's communication. Managers can examine whether websites, presentations, and positioning statements explain what makes the company's current capabilities distinctive and why those differences matter to buyers. They can then assess how easily customers can move from a claim to the evidence supporting it. A statement about technical reliability, for example, becomes more meaningful when it is connected to relevant certifications, documented performance, or demonstrable operating practices.

The final step is to compare the changes that have taken place within the firm with the extent to which external audiences recognize them. Figure 2 provides a simple way to interpret this relationship. Where technological capabilities have advanced considerably but market recognition remains limited, managers may have reason to investigate a potential recognition gap. The findings can then guide decisions about which category descriptions, positioning claims, or supporting evidence should be improved.

This approach is not intended to provide a fixed checklist or a numerical assessment of market recognition. Rather, it offers a structured way of examining a problem that can otherwise be difficult to identify. Its usefulness will depend on the information available, the audiences being considered, and the circumstances in which buyers evaluate the firm. The proposed diagnostic procedure therefore remains a conceptual managerial tool that requires further empirical examination.

Table 1. Market-Recognition Diagnostic Framework

Dimension	Diagnostic question	Possible indicator	Potential evidence
Capability change	What can the firm now credibly do that it could not do before?	Changes in functionality, architecture, expertise, service scope, or delivery responsibilities	Product documentation, technical architecture, service records, capability evidence
Category inertia	Is the market still classifying the firm according to its former role or category?	Persistence of legacy category associations or outdated competitive comparisons	Buyer feedback, search/category labels, sales conversations, stakeholder interviews

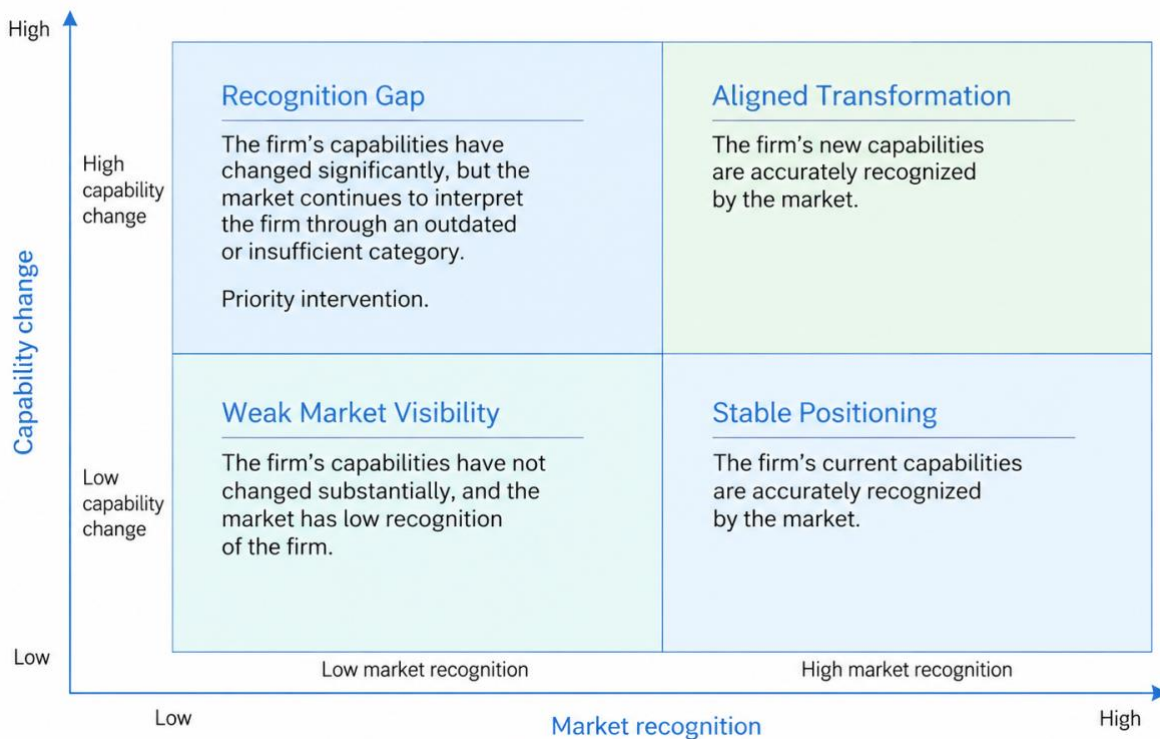
Dimension	Diagnostic question	Possible indicator	Potential evidence
Signal ambiguity	Are transformed capabilities communicated through generic or interchangeable claims?	Similarity of claims to competitors and limited specificity of buyer-relevant consequences	Corporate websites, sales presentations, category terminology, competitor-message audits
Proof separation	Can buyers readily connect central positioning claims to verifiable evidence?	Distance between positioning claims and accessible supporting evidence	Certifications, case evidence, demonstrations, customer outcomes, partnerships

Source: Author's conceptualization.

An important distinction emerges from this diagnostic approach. Limited market recognition does not necessarily mean that a firm is experiencing a market-recognition gap. A company may simply have low visibility, particularly if its capabilities have not changed substantially. The gap described in this paper concerns a more specific situation: the firm has developed capabilities that external audiences have not yet fully recognized.

Table 1 and Figure 2 help managers examine this distinction from different perspectives. Table 1 focuses on why recognition may be falling behind, drawing attention to outdated categories, unclear signals, and weak connections between claims and evidence. Figure 2 offers a broader view by showing how different levels of capability change and market recognition relate to one another. Used together, these tools may help managers distinguish between a genuine recognition gap and other positioning or visibility challenges. Their practical effectiveness, however, remains to be established through empirical research.

Figure 2. Market-Recognition Matrix



Source: Author's conceptualization.

7. Discussion

The market-recognition gap links an internal transformation problem with an external interpretation problem. Digital transformation literature explains how organizations change. Signalling theory explains how difficult-to-observe qualities are communicated under information asymmetry. Market orientation explains the importance of understanding customers and competitive contexts. Dynamic capabilities explain how firms renew and reconfigure capabilities.

The missing connection addressed here is temporal and interpretive: organizational change and market understanding do not necessarily move at the same speed.

This distinction may be useful because many discussions of positioning assume that the object being positioned is relatively stable. Technology-driven firms often violate that assumption. Their product, architecture, customer base and role in a workflow can change quickly. A firm's identity can therefore become inaccurate without becoming visually obsolete. The problem is not age. It is lag. The framework also clarifies why more communication is not necessarily the answer. If the signal is generic, increasing its frequency can scale ambiguity. If the claim is separated from proof, producing more content can increase the number of unsupported assertions rather than reduce uncertainty. The relevant variable is not communication volume but interpretive precision. The framework also extends the practical use of B2B branding research. Mudambi (2002) shows that branding does not matter uniformly to all organizational buyers, which suggests that recognition mechanisms may vary by purchase context. Future work should therefore examine when the proposed gap is most consequential, for example under high information asymmetry, category transition, long buying cycles, or technically complex evaluation.

For future empirical testing, the conceptual dimensions can be translated into indicative measures as summarized in Table 2. These measures are illustrative rather than validated scales and should be refined through scale-development and validation procedures.

Table 2. Indicative operationalization for future empirical testing

Construct	Indicative operationalization	Possible empirical approach
Capability change	Magnitude of change in product/service scope, architecture, expertise or delivery capability	Manager survey, longitudinal case coding, archival comparison
Category inertia	Persistence of legacy buyer categorization after substantive capability change	Buyer categorization task, interviews, longitudinal perception study
Signal specificity	Degree to which market-facing claims identify distinctive, consequential capabilities	Content analysis, experiment, buyer comprehension test
Proof proximity	Ease and directness with which evidence can be connected to the central positioning claim	Website/sales-material audit, experiment, task completion time
Market recognition	Accuracy with which relevant external audiences identify the firm's current capabilities and role	Buyer survey, recognition task, pre/post positioning experiment

Source: Author's conceptualization.

The proposed framework offers a conceptual explanation of why technological capabilities may evolve faster than external market perceptions. Nevertheless, several limitations should be considered when interpreting its contribution.

First, the market-recognition gap and the relationships proposed in the model have not been empirically tested. Although the framework draws on established research in digital transformation, signaling theory, organizational identity, and market categorization, its explanatory value remains theoretical. Future studies could examine the three propositions through buyer experiments, longitudinal case studies, stakeholder interviews, or mixed-method research designs.

Second, the framework has been developed primarily with B2B technology firms in mind, where complex products, specialized knowledge, and information asymmetry can make capability recognition particularly challenging. Its applicability to consumer markets, public-sector procurement, highly commoditized industries, or markets characterized by lower information asymmetry remains uncertain. Comparative research across industries and purchasing contexts could help establish the conditions under which the proposed recognition gap is most relevant.

Third, greater market recognition should not necessarily be treated as a universal strategic objective. Firms entering new markets may deliberately retain some ambiguity in their positioning, while organizations serving different customer segments may need to communicate their capabilities in different ways. Future research could therefore investigate how recognition strategies vary across audiences, market-entry stages, and competitive environments. Finally, the framework does not suggest that strategic positioning alone determines commercial performance. Purchasing decisions are also influenced by product quality, pricing, distribution, existing relationships, organizational reputation, and broader market conditions. Future empirical research should account for these factors when examining whether more accurate capability recognition contributes to buyer comprehension, trust formation, evaluation efficiency, or subsequent commercial outcomes.

A particularly important direction for future research is the operationalization of the market-recognition gap itself. The indicative measures presented in Table 2 provide an initial basis for developing and validating appropriate measurement instruments. Subsequent studies could examine how category inertia, signal specificity, and proof proximity influence the relationship between capability change and external recognition. Such investigations would help determine whether the proposed diagnostic framework can reliably distinguish genuine recognition gaps from broader problems of market visibility or organizational positioning.

8. Conclusions

This paper advances the market-recognition gap as a conceptual explanation for the temporal mismatch between substantive technological capability change and external understanding. Its central contribution is to distinguish this mismatch from a general lack of visibility, an outdated visual identity or weak promotion: a recognition gap requires evidence of meaningful capability change alongside persistent external misclassification or incomplete inference.

The proposed framework identifies three mechanisms through which the mismatch may persist: category inertia, which anchors evaluation in the firm's former role; signal ambiguity, which obscures distinctive capabilities behind generic claims; and proof separation, which makes the link between market-facing claims and verifiable evidence difficult to establish. The three propositions offer a basis for examining how unchanged category cues, signal specificity and proof proximity may shape recognition. They remain theoretical propositions rather than empirically demonstrated relationships. Taken together, the conceptual model explains why recognition can lag behind technological transformation, while the diagnostic framework offers a structured way to investigate where that lag may arise. The proposed measures and propositions provide a starting point for future validation rather than evidence of established causal effects.

The diagnostic framework and market-recognition matrix extend this theoretical argument into a structured managerial interpretation. Together, they encourage firms to establish what has actually changed, examine how relevant buyers currently classify the organization, audit the specificity of market-facing signals and connect consequential claims with accessible proof. The matrix also makes clear that low recognition alone is insufficient to diagnose a recognition gap: the defining condition is high capability change combined with low external recognition.

For technology leaders, the practical implication is not necessarily to redesign a brand or increase communication volume. A more defensible response is to identify the precise point at which operational change fails to become intelligible to the intended audience. Depending on the diagnosis, the appropriate intervention may involve reframing category membership, clarifying buyer-relevant consequences, reorganizing technical evidence or testing whether audiences can correctly describe the firm's current capabilities. The framework also provides a research agenda. Future studies could use longitudinal firm, buyer comparisons to assess whether perceived capability lags behind documented change; experiments could vary signal specificity and proof proximity; and interviews or categorization tasks could examine how buyers revise legacy interpretations. The indicative measures proposed in this paper require construct refinement, scale development and independent validation before they can support causal or generalizable claims.

Finally, the study is limited by its practitioner-informed design and its emphasis on B2B technology settings. Market-recognition processes may differ across sectors, audiences and purchasing conditions, and improved recognition should not be assumed to produce commercial performance. Within these limits, the paper offers a testable vocabulary and a diagnostic starting point for understanding why digital transformation can change, what a firm does before it changes, what the market believes the firm can do.

CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

Obradović, V.: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review and Editing.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author is a branding practitioner and founder of a commercial design studio. This professional background informs the practitioner perspective described in the paper. No client or third party funded the manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

No new data were created or analysed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Ethical Approval Statement

This study is theoretical and conceptual in nature and did not involve human participants, personal data, or animal subjects. Therefore, ethical approval was not required.

Use of AI Statement

During preparation of this manuscript, the author used OpenAI ChatGPT to support drafting, language structuring and editorial formatting. The author reviewed and edited the content, verified the cited literature, and takes full responsibility for the final manuscript.

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