



The Role of Identity Leadership in Enhancing Brand Alignment and Organizational Identity with Emphasis on Organizational Culture, Employee Commitment, and Internal Communication

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Received: 2025-11-01 Reviewed: 2026-03-04 Revised: 2026-03-12 Accepted: 2026-05-13 Published: 2026-09-01

Abstract

The present study aimed to examine the role of identity leadership in strengthening the alignment between brand and organizational identity by considering the mediating roles of organizational culture, employee commitment, and internal communication. This study was conducted using a quantitative and applied approach with a survey design. The statistical population consisted of employees of banks in Fars Province, from which a sample of 400 participants was selected through random sampling. Data were collected using a 25-item questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The measurement model was assessed in terms of reliability and convergent and discriminant validity, while the structural model was evaluated using path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). The results indicated that identity leadership has a significant positive effect on organizational culture ($\beta = 0.405$, $p < 0.01$), employee commitment ($\beta = 0.522$, $p < 0.01$), and internal communication ($\beta = 0.502$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, organizational culture ($\beta = 0.254$, $p < 0.01$), employee commitment ($\beta = 0.299$, $p < 0.01$), and internal communication ($\beta = 0.253$, $p < 0.01$) were found to have significant positive effects on brand alignment and organizational identity. The model demonstrated acceptable explanatory power, with R^2 values of 0.164 for organizational culture, 0.273 for employee commitment, 0.252 for internal communication, and 0.341 for brand alignment and organizational identity. Positive Q^2 values confirmed the predictive relevance of the model. The findings suggest that identity leadership plays a critical role in fostering alignment between brand and organizational identity by enhancing organizational culture, strengthening employee commitment, and improving internal communication processes. These results highlight the importance of identity-based leadership as a strategic mechanism for achieving internal coherence and sustainable organizational performance.

Keywords: Identity leadership, organizational culture, employee commitment, internal communication, brand alignment and organizational identity

How to cite this article:

Sharaf Tadavani, M., & Cheraghsahar, R. (2026). The Role of Identity Leadership in Enhancing Brand Alignment and Organizational Identity with Emphasis on Organizational Culture, Employee Commitment, and Internal Communication. Management Strategies and Engineering Sciences, 8(5), 1-9.

1. Introduction

In contemporary organizational environments characterized by rapid technological change, intensified competition, and increasing stakeholder expectations, the alignment between brand and organizational identity has

emerged as a strategic imperative for achieving sustainable competitive advantage. Organizations are no longer evaluated solely based on their external branding strategies; rather, internal coherence between what the organization claims to be and what it actually embodies through its culture, values, and employee behaviors plays a decisive role



in shaping organizational legitimacy and performance outcomes. In this context, leadership has gained renewed attention as a critical mechanism for integrating internal and external identity dimensions, particularly through identity-based approaches that emphasize shared meaning, collective belonging, and symbolic alignment [1-3].

Identity leadership, grounded in social identity theory, focuses on the capacity of leaders to define, represent, advance, and embed a shared sense of “who we are” within the organization. Unlike traditional leadership models that prioritize transactional or transformational exchanges, identity leadership operates through the construction of a collective identity that aligns individual motivations with organizational goals. This form of leadership is particularly relevant in contexts where organizational coherence and employee identification are essential for delivering consistent brand experiences. Empirical evidence suggests that identity leadership enhances group identification, fosters trust, and strengthens employees’ psychological attachment to the organization, thereby contributing to more coherent organizational functioning [1, 2, 4].

The importance of organizational identity in shaping employee behavior and organizational outcomes has been widely documented in the literature. Organizational identity serves as a cognitive and emotional anchor that influences how employees perceive their roles, interact with stakeholders, and enact organizational values in practice. When employees internalize a strong organizational identity, they are more likely to exhibit behaviors that are congruent with the organization’s brand promises, thereby enhancing brand credibility and consistency. Studies have demonstrated that leadership styles, particularly those grounded in ethical and identity-based frameworks, significantly influence the development of organizational identity and its translation into employee behavior [5-7].

Organizational culture constitutes another critical dimension in the process of aligning brand and identity. Culture represents the shared values, norms, and practices that guide organizational behavior and decision-making processes. A strong and coherent organizational culture not only reinforces identity but also provides the foundation for consistent brand communication and delivery. Leadership plays a central role in shaping and sustaining organizational culture by articulating values, modeling behaviors, and reinforcing norms. Research indicates that leadership effectiveness is closely linked to the development of innovative, inclusive, and adaptive cultures that support organizational performance and competitiveness [8-10].

Employee commitment is another key mechanism through which identity leadership influences organizational outcomes. Commitment reflects the psychological attachment of employees to their organization and is associated with higher levels of engagement, performance, and retention. Identity leadership enhances employee commitment by fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose, which in turn motivates employees to align their behaviors with organizational objectives. Empirical studies have consistently shown that leadership styles, particularly those emphasizing identity, ethics, and transformation, have a significant positive impact on employee commitment and engagement [11-13].

Internal communication also plays a pivotal role in facilitating the alignment between brand and organizational identity. Effective internal communication ensures that organizational values, goals, and brand messages are clearly articulated and consistently understood across all levels of the organization. It serves as a conduit through which identity is constructed, negotiated, and reinforced. Research highlights that symmetrical and transparent internal communication enhances employee experiences, strengthens organizational identification, and fosters loyalty and engagement [14-16]. Moreover, internal communication has been identified as a critical factor in managing organizational change and maintaining alignment during periods of uncertainty [17-19].

The interplay between identity leadership, organizational culture, employee commitment, and internal communication becomes particularly salient in the context of digital transformation and evolving organizational ecosystems. Modern organizations operate in increasingly complex environments where digital technologies reshape communication patterns, leadership practices, and organizational structures. Digital leadership capabilities, combined with strong organizational cultures and effective communication systems, are essential for fostering innovation, engagement, and sustainable performance [20-22]. In such contexts, identity leadership provides a unifying framework that integrates diverse organizational elements and ensures coherence between internal processes and external representations.

Furthermore, recent studies emphasize the role of leadership in fostering knowledge sharing, innovation, and organizational adaptability, all of which contribute to stronger alignment between brand and identity. Leadership-driven cultures that promote collaboration, learning, and inclusivity enable organizations to respond effectively to

environmental challenges while maintaining a consistent identity. These dynamics highlight the multifaceted nature of leadership influence, extending beyond individual-level outcomes to encompass broader organizational processes and capabilities [3, 23, 24].

Despite the growing body of research on leadership, organizational culture, and employee behavior, there remains a need for integrative frameworks that explicitly examine the role of identity leadership in aligning brand and organizational identity. While previous studies have explored the individual effects of leadership, culture, commitment, and communication, limited attention has been paid to their combined influence within a unified model. This gap is particularly evident in emerging economies and sector-specific contexts, where organizational dynamics may differ significantly from those in developed settings [5, 25, 26].

In addition, cultural and contextual factors play a significant role in shaping organizational identity and leadership effectiveness. Social and cultural identities influence how employees interpret organizational messages, engage with leadership, and align with organizational values. Studies examining the impact of social media, cultural identity, and organizational socialization further underscore the importance of context in understanding organizational behavior and identity formation [4, 7, 27]. These insights highlight the need for context-sensitive research that considers the interplay between leadership, culture, and identity within specific organizational settings.

Given these considerations, the present study seeks to contribute to the existing literature by developing and testing a comprehensive model that examines the role of identity leadership in enhancing the alignment between brand and organizational identity, with particular emphasis on the mediating roles of organizational culture, employee commitment, and internal communication, using a structural equation modeling approach.

2. Methodology

The present study is quantitative and applied in nature and was conducted using a survey method. The statistical population consisted of employees of banks in Fars Province. Sampling was performed using a random sampling method, and data were collected through a 25-item questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. In total, 400 analyzable questionnaires were entered into the statistical analysis process. To assess the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was employed. For data analysis, descriptive statistics were first examined, and the normality of the data was assessed using skewness and kurtosis indices. Based on the variance-based approach (PLS-SEM), the measurement model (reliability and validity) was first evaluated, followed by the structural model (path coefficients and predictive power).

3. Findings and Results

Table 1 presents the calculation of the mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, and minimum and maximum scores for the latent (main) variables. According to the table, the mean of the employee commitment variable (15.10) is higher than the others, while identity leadership (14.03) has the lowest mean. In addition, the standard deviation of employee commitment (2.89) is higher than the others, whereas organizational culture (2.60) has the lowest standard deviation. The skewness and kurtosis values for all five variables (identity leadership, organizational culture, employee commitment, internal communication, and brand alignment and organizational identity) fall within the range of -2 to $+2$, indicating that the data distribution for all variables is normal. Although there is no strict normality requirement when using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), the skewness and kurtosis indices indicate that the data distribution is approximately normal.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Latent Variables

Statistic	Brand Alignment and Organizational Identity	Internal Communication	Employee Commitment	Organizational Culture	Identity Leadership
N	400	400	400	400	400
Mean	14.94	14.87	15.10	14.57	14.03
Standard Deviation	2.83	2.82	2.89	2.60	2.68
Skewness	-0.071	0.125	-0.113	0.048	0.031
Kurtosis	-0.171	-0.132	-0.011	0.359	0.371
Minimum	7	7	7	7	6
Maximum	23	23	24	23	25

The hypotheses of the study are as follows. Identity leadership has a significant effect on organizational culture. Identity leadership has a significant effect on employee commitment. Identity leadership has a significant effect on internal communication. Organizational culture has a significant effect on brand alignment and organizational identity. Employee commitment has a significant effect on brand alignment and organizational identity. Internal communication has a significant effect on brand alignment and organizational identity.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between independent and dependent variables. It shows the direct effects of independent variables on dependent variables. The R² value for organizational culture is 0.164, for employee commitment is 0.273, for internal communication is 0.252, and for brand alignment and organizational identity is 0.341. Based on these positive R² values, it can be concluded that a proportion of the variance in the dependent variables is explained by the independent variables.

Table 2. Summary of Model 1: Relationships Between Independent and Dependent Variables

Hypothesis	Beta (β)	f ²	P-Value
Identity leadership → Organizational culture	0.405	0.197	0.000
Identity leadership → Employee commitment	0.522	0.375	0.000
Identity leadership → Internal communication	0.502	0.337	0.000
Organizational culture → Brand alignment and organizational identity	0.254	0.086	0.000
Employee commitment → Brand alignment and organizational identity	0.299	0.118	0.000
Internal communication → Brand alignment and organizational identity	0.253	0.085	0.000

Based on Table 2 (Model 1 summary), the beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.405$) and f² statistic (0.197) for Hypothesis 1 indicate that the effect of identity leadership on organizational culture is significant at a significance level of less than 0.01 ($p = 0.000$), confirming that identity leadership significantly influences organizational culture. The beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.522$) and f² value (0.375) for Hypothesis 2 show that identity leadership has a significant effect on employee commitment at a significance level below 0.01 ($p = 0.000$). Similarly, for Hypothesis 3, the beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.502$) and f² value (0.337) indicate a significant effect of identity leadership on internal communication at $p < 0.01$. For Hypothesis 4, the beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.254$) and f² value (0.086) confirm that organizational culture significantly affects brand alignment and organizational identity at $p < 0.01$. For Hypothesis 5, the beta coefficient (β

$= 0.299$) and f² value (0.118) indicate that employee commitment significantly influences brand alignment and organizational identity. Finally, for Hypothesis 6, the beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.253$) and f² value (0.085) at $p < 0.01$ indicate that internal communication significantly affects brand alignment and organizational identity.

The total Q² values for internal communication (0.138), employee commitment (0.147), organizational culture (0.083), and brand alignment and organizational identity (0.187) are all positive, indicating the predictive relevance of these constructs. Based on the factor loadings of the items for all five variables in Model 1, which are above 0.40, it can be concluded that the items demonstrate adequate convergent validity. Furthermore, according to Table 3 (correlation matrix), all variables exhibit discriminant validity.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix for Discriminant Validity

Variables	Internal Communication	Employee Commitment	Identity Leadership	Organizational Culture	Brand Alignment and Organizational Identity
Internal Communication	0.769				
Employee Commitment	0.287	0.762			
Identity Leadership	0.502	0.522	0.745		
Organizational Culture	0.278	0.290	0.405	0.740	
Brand Alignment and Organizational Identity	0.409	0.445	0.404	0.411	0.770

Since the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct is greater than its correlations with other constructs, discriminant validity is confirmed.

Table 4. Reliability and Validity Indices

Variables	Cronbach’s Alpha (≥ 0.70)	Composite Reliability (≥ 0.70)	AVE (≥ 0.50)
Internal Communication	0.827	0.878	0.591
Employee Commitment	0.819	0.873	0.580
Identity Leadership	0.799	0.861	0.554
Organizational Culture	0.793	0.858	0.548
Brand Alignment and Organizational Identity	0.828	0.879	0.593

Other structural model fit indices, including average variance extracted, composite reliability, and Cronbach’s alpha (Table 4), confirm the adequacy of the structural

model fit. Based on the reported values, the reliability of all variables is strong, as indicated by Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability, and AVE measures.

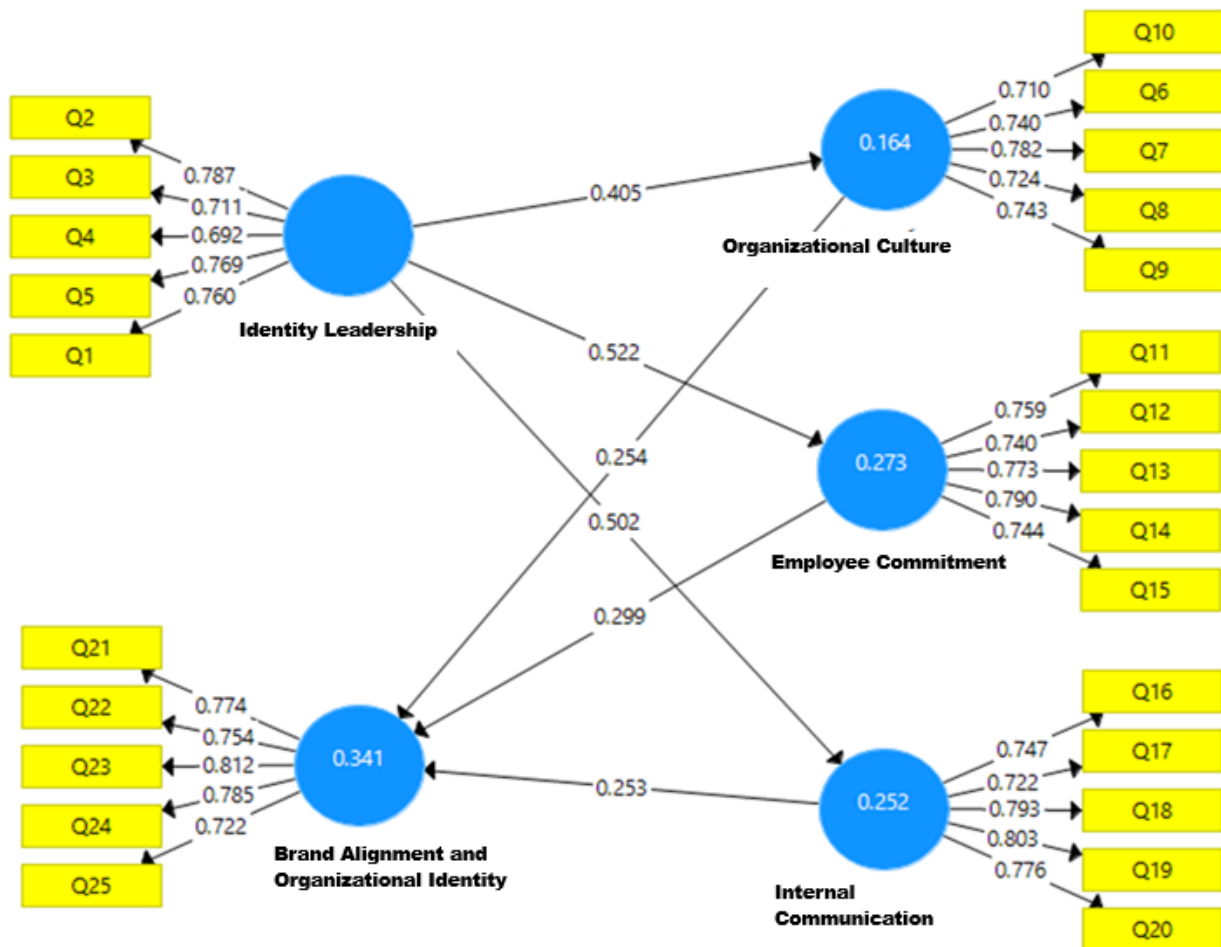


Figure 1. Final Model of the Study

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study provide robust empirical support for the central role of identity leadership in enhancing the alignment between brand and organizational identity through key organizational mechanisms, including organizational culture, employee commitment, and internal communication. The structural model results indicated that identity leadership exerts significant positive effects on all

three mediating variables, which in turn significantly influence brand alignment and organizational identity. The magnitude of the path coefficients demonstrates that identity leadership has the strongest effect on employee commitment ($\beta = 0.522$), followed by internal communication ($\beta = 0.502$) and organizational culture ($\beta = 0.405$), while all three mediators significantly contribute to explaining variance in brand alignment and organizational identity. The R^2 values further confirm the explanatory power of the model,

particularly for brand alignment and organizational identity ($R^2 = 0.341$), suggesting that a meaningful proportion of variance is accounted for by the proposed predictors.

These findings are theoretically consistent with the principles of social identity theory and identity leadership, which posit that leaders who effectively construct and reinforce a shared sense of identity can influence collective attitudes and behaviors within organizations. The significant effect of identity leadership on organizational culture indicates that leaders play a pivotal role in shaping shared values, norms, and meanings that define the organization. This result aligns with prior research demonstrating that leadership is a key driver of cultural formation and transformation, particularly in fostering innovative and cohesive organizational environments [8-10]. Moreover, identity-based leadership contributes to embedding cultural values that reinforce internal consistency and external brand promises, thereby facilitating alignment between what the organization communicates and what it enacts in practice.

The strong relationship between identity leadership and employee commitment observed in this study is also consistent with existing empirical evidence. Identity leadership enhances employees' sense of belonging and psychological attachment by aligning individual self-concepts with organizational identity. This alignment fosters affective commitment, which is associated with higher levels of motivation, engagement, and discretionary effort. Previous studies have similarly reported that leadership styles emphasizing identity, ethics, and transformation significantly enhance employee commitment and engagement [11-13]. The findings also resonate with research highlighting the mediating role of organizational identity and socialization processes in strengthening employee commitment and performance outcomes [4, 25].

The results further demonstrate that identity leadership has a significant positive impact on internal communication, which in turn contributes to brand alignment and organizational identity. This finding underscores the importance of communication processes as a mechanism through which leadership influences organizational coherence. Effective internal communication facilitates the dissemination of shared meanings, enhances transparency, and ensures that employees understand and internalize organizational values and brand messages. This is consistent with prior studies emphasizing that symmetrical and transparent communication improves employee experiences, strengthens organizational identification, and enhances loyalty [14-16]. Additionally, internal communication has

been identified as a critical factor in promoting employee satisfaction and engagement, particularly in dynamic and culturally diverse organizational contexts [17-19].

The significant effects of organizational culture, employee commitment, and internal communication on brand alignment and organizational identity highlight the multidimensional nature of alignment processes within organizations. Organizational culture provides the foundational framework for consistent behavior and decision-making, ensuring that organizational practices reflect core values and brand identity. Employee commitment, on the other hand, translates these values into action by motivating employees to act in ways that support organizational goals. Internal communication serves as the integrative mechanism that connects these elements, ensuring coherence and consistency across different organizational levels. These findings are consistent with research indicating that organizational performance and identity coherence are shaped by the interaction of leadership, culture, and communication processes [3, 23, 24].

Furthermore, the positive Q^2 values obtained for all endogenous variables confirm the predictive relevance of the model, indicating that identity leadership and its associated mechanisms not only explain but also predict organizational outcomes related to identity and brand alignment. This reinforces the argument that identity leadership is not merely a symbolic or abstract construct but a practical and measurable driver of organizational effectiveness. The findings also align with studies highlighting the role of leadership in fostering resilience, adaptability, and innovation through identity-based mechanisms [2, 28].

The present study also contributes to the growing literature on leadership in the context of digital transformation and evolving organizational environments. The significant relationships identified in the model suggest that identity leadership can serve as a unifying framework that integrates diverse organizational elements, including culture, communication, and employee attitudes, in complex and dynamic contexts. This is particularly relevant in light of recent research emphasizing the importance of digital leadership, innovation ecosystems, and organizational adaptability in achieving sustainable competitive advantage [20-22]. By fostering a shared sense of identity, leaders can enhance organizational coherence and resilience in the face of technological and environmental changes.

In addition, the findings of this study are consistent with research examining the interplay between leadership,

organizational identity, and employee behavior. Identity leadership has been shown to influence not only positive organizational outcomes but also ethical behavior and organizational citizenship, highlighting its broader implications for organizational functioning [6, 7]. The alignment between brand and organizational identity, as demonstrated in this study, can therefore be seen as part of a broader set of outcomes associated with effective leadership and strong organizational identity.

Despite these contributions, the findings should be interpreted in light of certain contextual considerations. The study was conducted within the banking sector of a specific geographic region, which may influence the generalizability of the results. Organizational dynamics, cultural norms, and industry-specific factors may shape the relationships observed in the model. Nevertheless, the consistency of the findings with existing literature suggests that the proposed relationships are likely to hold across different contexts, albeit with varying magnitudes.

The limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the use of a cross-sectional survey design limits the ability to draw causal inferences, as the relationships observed are based on data collected at a single point in time. Second, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce common method bias and social desirability effects, potentially affecting the accuracy of the results. Third, the study focuses on a specific sector and geographic region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Finally, although the model explains a significant portion of variance in the dependent variables, other relevant factors, such as external environmental influences or organizational structure, were not included in the analysis.

Future research should address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs to examine the causal relationships between identity leadership and organizational outcomes over time. Researchers are also encouraged to explore the role of additional mediating and moderating variables, such as organizational justice, psychological safety, and digital capabilities, in shaping the relationships identified in this study. Comparative studies across different industries and cultural contexts would further enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, future studies could integrate qualitative approaches to gain deeper insights into the mechanisms through which identity leadership influences organizational processes and outcomes.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study highlight the importance of developing leadership

capabilities that emphasize identity construction and alignment. Organizations should invest in leadership development programs that focus on building leaders' ability to articulate and reinforce a shared organizational identity. Furthermore, fostering a strong organizational culture, enhancing internal communication systems, and promoting employee commitment should be prioritized as key strategies for achieving alignment between brand and organizational identity. Managers should also recognize the interconnected nature of these factors and adopt a holistic approach to organizational development that integrates leadership, culture, and communication processes.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

Acknowledgments

Authors thank all participants who participate in this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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