

What Are Digital Identities in Practice? Initial Insight from Finnish B2B Software Companies

About

This paper presents the initial findings from a qualitative interview study conducted with two Finnish business-to-business (B2B) software companies. The research goal was to understand how digital identities are perceived and managed from the perspective of identity providers and software product companies. The study identifies key stakeholder priorities, as well as the factors that disrupt or accelerate the process of meeting those priorities.

Problem

Software companies that provide software-as-a-service products must manage the growing complexity of digital identities, balancing numerous stakeholder needs and evolving regulations. There is a research gap in understanding how these companies practically define and handle digital identities, navigate competing priorities like security and user experience, and address challenges in a real-world business context.

Study Outcome

- Software companies tend to avoid the abstract term 'digital identity', preferring more concrete, practical terms like 'authentication', 'login', and 'user roles'.
- Different stakeholders have distinct priorities: customers value control and user experience; identity providers focus on interoperability and security; software companies aim to balance security with competitive advantage; and regulators emphasize compliance.
- Key factors that slow down (disruptors) the alignment of these priorities include security concerns, interoperability issues, unknown regulatory requirements, and a lack of standardization.
- Factors that speed up (accelerators) this alignment include a strong emphasis on user experience, clear company strategies for security and identity management, and collaboration among stakeholders.

Keywords

Digital Identity • Software Product Company • Identity Provider • B2B • Stakeholder Priorities • User Experience • Qualitative Study