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Reinventing Work Nature: The Changing Work Landscape in Malayalam Architecture Magazines in the Post-COVID-19 Pandemic Era

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted various industries, including the field of architecture magazines. This study aims to analyze the ramifications of the pandemic on the work nature of architecture magazines, with particular attention given to the editorial, business, and mechanical departments. By utilizing a qualitative research approach involving in-depth interviews with experts, this research investigates the changes that have transpired within the nature of work in architecture magazines as a direct response to the pandemic. Many changes have occurred. Findings from this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the changes and transformations within the architecture magazine industry, shedding light on the evolving work nature, strategies, and practices in the post-pandemic era. The insights gained will inform the key players such as stakeholders and advertisers to navigate the multifaceted challenges within the media landscape, reinforcing the resilience of magazine organizations and paving the way for sustained growth in the future.

Keywords: *architecture magazines, COVID-19, editorial changes, business transformation, web-based marketing, digital circulation.*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in early 2020, had profound and far-reaching consequences across various sectors of the Indian economy. Stringent lockdown measures, social distancing protocols, and the swift transition to remote work compelled organizations and employees to adapt to unprecedented circumstances, leading to significant transformations in the nature of jobs in India. This research article aims to explore the extent and implications of these changes, providing insights into key trends and offering valuable perspectives on the future of work.

The pandemic acted as a catalyst, redefining the dynamics of interactions and operations between employees and organizations. The 'State of Remote Work 2022 Report' by Owl Labs revealed a significant increase in interest for remote work by 24% and hybrid work by 16% compared to previous years, while interest in in-office work experienced a decline of 24%. Even after a return to in-office work, a substantial majority of respondents (57%) expressed a preference for full-time remote work. These statistics underscore the profound impact of the pandemic on work preferences and the growing acceptance of remote work arrangements (Owllabs, 2022).

The future of work has been shaped by the rapid adoption of remote work. A survey conducted by Gartner in 2021 revealed that an astonishing 88% of organizations worldwide mandated or encouraged remote work during the peak of the pandemic. This sudden transition necessitated the development of new communication protocols, virtual collaboration tools, and management strategies to effectively support remote teams. Platforms like Slack witnessed a notable 56% increase in usage, highlighting the indispensable role of digital communication tools in enabling remote work (Gartner, 2021).

Remote work also had a positive impact on employee happiness and work-life balance. The Future of Remote Work Report (2022) by Zapier emphasized that remote work allows employees to maintain a satisfactory work-life balance, leading to higher contentment. In fact, 96% of remote workers acknowledged the crucial role work-life balance played in their overall happiness within their professional roles. This shift in focus from rigid office hours to flexible work arrangements has implications beyond the workplace, influencing employees' overall lifestyles and well-being (Future Workplace, 2022).

The nature of jobs underwent a significant transformation across various industries. Sectors like healthcare, e-commerce, and online education experienced an unprecedented surge in demand, leading to the emergence of new job roles and opportunities. For instance, telemedicine visits in the United States alone saw a remarkable 72% increase in 2020, necessitating the hiring of additional healthcare professionals and support staff to cater to the rising demand for virtual healthcare services. On the other hand, sectors heavily reliant on physical presence, such as hospitality, travel, and retail, encountered substantial disruptions, resulting in a significant decline in employment, with an estimated 8.8% decrease in global working hours according to the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The pandemic's impact necessitated a reevaluation of job roles and the acquisition of new skills. Organizations recognized the need to upskill their workforce to adapt to the changing business landscape. Digital skills such as data analysis, coding, and cybersecurity were in high demand. Online educational platforms played a crucial role in skill development during lockdowns, providing individuals with opportunities to enhance their skillsets and human capital.

The shift to remote work also brought about increased reliance on digital technologies. A significant rise in internet usage was observed during the pandemic, with a 13% increase in broadband subscribers in India in 2020 alone, as per the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) (Indbiz, 2020). This digital transformation facilitated seamless information transfer, communication, and collaboration among employees, revolutionizing traditional work processes and enabling virtual teamwork across geographical boundaries.

Despite the advantages of remote work, it also presented challenges in maintaining work-life balance. A survey conducted by Ernst & Young (EY) revealed that 57% of Indian employees reported an increase in working hours during the pandemic, leading to heightened stress levels and burnout. This calls for a reassessment of work policies and the implementation of support mechanisms to prioritize employee well-being (Spence, 2020).

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered transformative changes in work culture and the nature of jobs in India. The widespread adoption of remote work, increased reliance on digital technologies, shifts in job roles and skills, and the impact on work-life balance have reshaped the employment landscape. Understanding these changes is crucial for policymakers, organizations, and individuals to effectively navigate the future of work. The examples and statistics presented in this article highlight the profound impact of the pandemic and the need for continuous adaptation and upskilling to thrive in the evolving work environment. Further research and industry-specific studies are necessary to gain a deeper understanding of transformations within specific sectors, such as the media sector, in response to the pandemic. By learning from these experiences, we can better prepare for future challenges and opportunities in the dynamic world of work.

Review Literature

The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant changes in work culture, prominently marked by the widespread adoption of remote work and digitalization. FlexJobs (2021) reports that the pandemic accelerated the remote work trend, resulting in a substantial increase in the number of professionals working remotely in India. This transformation was facilitated by advancements in technology and the availability of digital tools and platforms (Narang, 2022). Remote work not only changed the physical work environment but also impacted the way teams collaborate and communicate.

The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the importance of flexible work arrangements, particularly remote work. Employers now see the benefits of telecommuting and non-traditional work hours, leading to an increase in offering flexible options. These arrangements have long-term benefits like improved recruitment, retention, diversity, ethical behavior, and social responsibility efforts. Employers can also experience advantages such as cost savings, increased productivity, and higher employee engagement. However, implementing flexible work

arrangements can be challenging for some organizations, especially smaller ones lacking the necessary resources (Shrm, 2023).

The transition from a pandemic to an endemic state is causing a significant shift in the working culture. The new focus revolves around three essential keywords: health, safety, and flexibility. These factors are now at the forefront of shaping the way of work (Tarigan, Mannan, & Uddin, 2022).

The Covid-19 pandemic rapidly reshaped workplace culture, highlighting the potential of remote work and questioning the significance of in-person interactions. Organizational leaders must now determine which cultural changes to embrace and address during the recovery phase. The widespread adoption of digital tools necessitates clear direction and regular check-ins. Addressing social isolation and hidden costs of remote work becomes essential, prioritizing mental health awareness and setting boundaries. As the pandemic subsides, leaders should assess positive behavioral shifts to reinforce for the future. By reflecting and taking deliberate action, they can seize opportunities for positive transformation and growth (Thomas, 2020).

The paper titled "A study of work-culture changes at post Covid-19 pandemic in Greater Jakarta" examines the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on workplace culture in the Greater Jakarta area. The study finds that many companies implemented work-from-home policies during the pandemic, which resulted in successful employee safety and performance. As the pandemic transitions to an endemic phase, the study identifies health, safety, and flexibility as keywords for the new working culture. The research indicates that companies have adopted different working models, with 66% working from the office, 30% in a hybrid system, 2% entirely from home, and 2% from anywhere. The study emphasizes the acceleration of digital transformation and the importance of hybrid working arrangements in the post-pandemic workplace (Tarigan et al., 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant shifts in work culture worldwide, with remote work becoming the new norm for many organizations. This change has challenged traditional office-based work and highlighted the importance of a well-implemented organizational culture in promoting productivity and positive employee experiences (Waisfisz & Hofstede, 2017). Companies have been forced to innovate and pivot their workplace strategies to adapt to remote work practices. While remote work has shown its benefits, it has also posed challenges in maintaining a connected and engaged workforce. To sustain a strong work culture, companies have had to adapt their communication strategies and provide support to remote employees. The pandemic's impact has not been uniform, revealing a gender divide in the workforce, with women facing higher unemployment rates and increased responsibilities for unpaid childcare and household chores (Huen & Bobby, 2020).

The adoption of remote work has led to a shift in work dynamics, with many companies moving towards hybrid work models to offer employees greater flexibility in their work arrangements (Sharma, 2020). This transition highlights the importance of maintaining a strong and sustainable work culture. However, companies must address challenges in establishing fairness and equity among employees in hybrid work settings and retaining talent while providing flexibility (Nickson & Suzy, 2004). Technology has played a significant role in facilitating virtual workspaces and communication among remote teams. Offices are transitioning to a hybrid workspace model, accommodating employees' preferences for remote work. Nevertheless, ensuring equitable growth remains a concern, as certain sectors face job losses while others enjoy work-from-home privileges (Gautam, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant disruptions in various industries, including the Media and Entertainment sector, leading to the emergence of a new era termed "Post-COVID media" or "Covidization of Media Industry" (Abdulzaher, 2021). This transformation has been characterized by the adoption of new patterns, tools, roles, and skills in content creation and delivery to reach the target audience effectively.

Creating New Patterns in the Media Content: The pandemic has significantly impacted consumer behavior, prompting global media companies to focus on new digital business models like Video-on-Demand (VOD) content and subscriptions, moving away from a sole reliance on advertising (Netflix report, July 2020). Streaming sites, such as Netflix and Disney+, have experienced a surge in subscribers during the pandemic. The increased data consumption and rise in fixed broadband connections have accelerated the growth of the video streaming segment (Alexander, 2021). Rapid adoption of smartphones, cloud-based services, and incorporation of AI and machine learning have facilitated personalized content recommendations for individual users (Global Media Streaming Market Report, 2021).

Creating New Tools and Solutions for "Media Channels" to Reach the Target Audience: The pandemic has spurred the emergence of innovative tools and technologies to reach the target audience efficiently (Sidhu, 2021). Increased usage of combined data consumption, upgraded infrastructure like 5G technology, and partnerships to offer region-specific content have been observed (Sidhu, 2021). The pandemic has also accelerated creative innovation, leading to new programming formats and workflows (Sidhu, 2021). Covidization of Media Industry will increase media technology investment, which will facilitate access to the target audience with improved efficiency and content quality (Abdulzaher, 2021).

To cope with the Covidization of Media Industry, journalists' skills have adapted, requiring expertise in data analysis, AI journalism, and utilizing technology to address the challenges posed by the pandemic (Abdulzaher, 2021).

The Covidization of Media Industry has marked a significant shift in the media landscape, leading to a future that is more prepared, innovative, and focused on addressing global crises. As media companies continue to adapt and evolve, they must leverage new technologies, data-driven insights, and content personalization to thrive in the Post-COVID media era.

The pandemic influenced printing processes in the magazine publication industry. Organizations adjusted printing schedules and operations to prioritize digital publishing. Printers explored cost optimization measures and automation technologies to streamline printing processes (Malhotra, 2022).

In their study, Jabagi et al. (2019) highlight that the current uncertainty in traditional employment relationships arising due to the ongoing pandemic implicates further consideration for organizations to expand the share of gig workers post-COVID-19 to achieve agility in scaling their workforce up and down as per the business needs. The authors propose a blended model that embodies a new mode of assignment or need-based hiring, wherein organizations engage independent workers with full-time employees to create a team via various platforms. Embracing this approach offers organizations the prospect of achieving enhanced agility in workforce management, thereby addressing the challenges posed by the dynamic and uncertain business landscape (Mahato, Kumar, & Jena, 2021).

The rationale of the Study
The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted the magazine industry, leading to changes in its editorial, business, and mechanical departments. Understanding these changes is crucial as it provides insights into magazine organizations' adaptations and strategies to navigate the pandemic challenges. Examining remote work's influence on content creation and focus in the editorial department, shifts in advertising strategies, revenue generation, and new business models in the business department, and changes in production and distribution methods in the mechanical department helps understand the industry's resilience. Investigating these patterns of work in response to the pandemic informs effective strategies for future crises, contributing to the magazine industry's sustainability and success.

Research Gap
Despite extensive studies on the changes that occurred in the media sector after the COVID-19 outbreak, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding the context of specialized magazines. Specifically, limited research has been conducted on the changes that have transpired in the sector of architecture magazines in Kerala. This research gap presents an opportunity to delve into the transformations that have taken place within specialized magazines, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the changes in the field. By analyzing the changes that have occurred in the sector of architecture magazines in Kerala, this research aims to fill the existing gap in the literature. The study will shed light on the specific adaptations and innovations undertaken by architecture magazines in response to the pandemic. By examining this context, the researcher seeks to provide valuable insights that can be generalized to the broader realm of specialized magazines. Through a thorough analysis of the changes and their implications, the research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving landscape of specialized magazines in the post-COVID-19 era.

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Objectives of the Study

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

To analyze the changes in editorial practices and design of architecture magazines in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To examine the emergence of new strategies in circulation and advertising within the architecture magazine sector.

To determine the transformation that has occurred in the production process of architecture magazines.

Methodology

This qualitative study investigates changes in the architecture magazine industry using in-depth interviews with eight experts, including a managing director, CEO, editors, designers, marketing manager, marketing executive, and administrative staff member. The interviews aim to gather rich information about changes in reporting, designing, circulation, advertising, and production processes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the industry's strategies and experiences during this challenging period. By employing this methodological approach, the research aims to uncover and understand the architecture magazine industry's various transformations in the face of the pandemic.

Findings

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in work culture across various industries, including magazine publication. The findings try to explore the transformations that have occurred in editorial processes, circulation strategies and business aspects such as advertising, and printing within the magazine publication sector.

Editorial

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, architecture magazines underwent profound changes in their production and editorial sections. Traditional architecture reporting, reliant on experiential writing and on-site experiences, shifted to armchair journalism due to limitations. To maintain engagement, journalists embraced live interactions with architects and clients through ICT-enabled tools, preserving the essence of architectural spaces. This innovative approach aimed to compensate for the disruption and restore the soul of architecture reporting in the face of pandemic challenges.

The design of architecture magazines underwent significant changes. Reduced advertisements allowed designers greater creative freedom, leading to the incorporation of novel design concepts, spread photographs, whitespaces, artistic boxes, vibrant colors, and captivating illustrations that revitalized the visual appeal and enhanced reader engagement.

Web-based magazines (Webzines), revolutionized the editorial landscape by prioritizing photographs over text. Descriptive captions under images allowed readers to engage deeply with architectural projects, while word limits promoted concise and impactful content. Webzine editors introduced word limits, typically ranging from 350 to 500 words per article, encouraging concise yet impactful content that complemented the visual narrative.

Photography practices underwent a significant transformation during the pandemic. The customary practice of organizing photo shoots by reporters or in-house/freelance photographers was disrupted. Instead, architects, designers, and clients themselves took the initiative to arrange for photographers. During the pandemic, an intriguing development emerged in photography. The architects transformed into skilled photographers. They captured images of their own and others' projects, infusing unique perspective es and personal touches into architectural photography.

Graphic designers shifted to remote work, collaborating with sub-editors through web platforms for efficient review and incorporation of corrections. Editors ensured the magazine's highest standards.

Marketing and Circulation

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted architecture magazine revenues, necessitating business strategy transformation. Measures included launching web editions to attract a wider online audience, offering digital subscriptions, and leveraging social media, websites, and WhatsApp distribution of PDF copies. Architecture magazines adopted Magzter, a digital newsstand, for distribution, gaining access to a wider audience. They earn a percentage of revenue from Magzter subscriptions.

Architecture magazines optimized advertising with a single-pack ad strategy, enabling advertisers to reach multiple platforms (print, webzines, websites, exhibitions). Webzines offered cost-effective options with their lower production costs compared to print editions. Webzines offered additional discounts for advertising. By diversifying revenue streams through web-based marketing, cost-effective advertising, and Magzter distribution, architecture magazines aimed to optimize their revenue potential in the post-COVID-19 era.

Mechanical

A significant development in the architecture magazine industry is the reduction in print editions as digital platforms become more prevalent. With the disruption in global supply chains during the pandemic, the reliance on glossy paper imported from China for printing has decreased, leading to a shift towards Indian paper as an alternative. However, this change has resulted in increased production costs for architecture magazines. To overcome these challenges, magazines are increasingly focusing on web editions, offering benefits such as reduced expenses, broader readership, and the ability to adapt content to evolving audience preferences. The transformation towards online content dissemination reflects the industry's response to changing readership behaviors and financial constraints caused by the pandemic.

Conclusion

This research reveals the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the architecture magazine industry. Armchair journalism and ICT-enabled tools enabled journalists to engage with architects and designers. Webzines revolutionized content presentation, focusing on captivating photographs and concise descriptions for deeper reader connections. Architectural photography evolved as architects showcased their skills. Remote collaboration streamlined production workflows. New revenue-generation strategies included web-based marketing, web editions, and single-pack ad strategies. These changes have left a lasting impact, showcasing the industry's resilience and adaptability. The findings provide valuable insights for professionals, scholars, and readers, highlighting how the architectural journalism landscape navigated unprecedented challenges during the pandemic. In summary, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of how the architecture magazine industry underwent significant transformations during the COVID-19 pandemic. From adopting new editorial practices to revolutionizing the presentation of content and exploring novel revenue-generation avenues, these adaptations have had lasting impacts on the field. The findings offer valuable insights for industry professionals, scholars, and readers alike, shedding light on the resilience and adaptability of the architectural journalism landscape in the face of unprecedented challenges.

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