

Role of Digital Tools for Publicizing Work of an Interior Designer

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Abstract: Globally, the importance of the digital world has increased in the modern era. Advancement of technology has made it a necessity for all business concerns to adopt digital tools in some form or another. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the entire world went online, and so digital world became of utmost importance, both personally and professionally for every individual. Several facets of the profession of interior design rely on the digital realm. The internet world may be effectively utilised for interior designers' career advancement. Therefore, the present research was undertaken to identify digital tools adopted by Interior Designers and problems faced in adopting these tools for publicity of their work. The present study was descriptive. Data was collected from 76 Interior Designers using a questionnaire. The response was received from different cities across India. The results of the current study showed that, digital tools play an important role in publicity of work of an Interior Designer. Various digital tools are preferred, employed, and managed by Interior Design firms. Additionally, it was discovered that using digital tools successfully presents several difficulties, and it is urgently necessary to find solutions to these difficulties.

Keywords: Digital World, Digital Tools, Publicity, Digital Marketing, Interior Design Profession, COVID-19 Pandemic.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Technological advancements result in ease of human efforts and speed up the work output. They are found to assist the human comfort levels. The machines, equipment, automobiles, communication devices, computers and digital apparatus are some of the technologies surrounding our daily lives. These have become a part of our day-to-day work, directly or indirectly. Our daily routines are dependent on these technologies. They affect our homes and workspaces, travel and communication, knowledge and education, health and wellbeing, lifestyle, and social connectivity. These technologies affect all age groups of people. In present times, the digital world has gained a higher level of importance in the human life, globally. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized this importance largely in both, domestic as well as professional spheres of every individual. Use of digital mediums by individuals has increased tremendously. There has been increased use of digital tools and technologies by companies and enterprises to sell their products and offer services to the consumer ^[1]. Professional firms also adopted them to offer their expert services. Micro, small, and medium enterprises can use this technological business perspective to modernize and acquire the necessary tools to achieve a permanent position in the market and above all in the 2.0 sector, and successfully identify their clients on the Internet ^[2]. Profession such as Interior Designing utilize digital tools and technologies in their work. The field of Interior Design depends on the digital world for various aspects of the profession. The digital world today is about harnessing the 5Ds of "managing digital marketing interactions" which include digital devices (smartphones, tablets, laptops, desktop computers, TVs, gaming devices, virtual assistants), digital platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Google, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Microsoft), digital media (advertising, email and messaging, search engines and social networks), digital data and digital technology (websites and mobile apps to in-store kiosks and email campaigns) ^[3]. In the field of Interior Designing, the digital tools are used for various aspects. The preparation of designs in form of 2D and 3D drawings of the conceptual ideas of the designer is majorly done using computer software and applications. These software and applications, in addition to many other digital tools, allow the designers to present their work to the end consumer. The various digital platforms can also assist the designers in showcasing their work to a larger audience. An Interior Design firm can own their website to promote their work or post their work on common platforms such as blogs, webpages of another website and social networking sites. The digital world can be used for effective publicity of the

Interior Designer's work. On reviewing research work, it was found that studies such as "Empowering Digital Marketing with Interactive Virtual Reality (IVR) in Interior Design: Effects on Customer Satisfaction and Behaviour Intention"^[4], "Social Media as a Means of Increasing Non-Designers' Insight into Interior Design"^[5], "Impact of digital tablets on the work of interior design practitioners"^[6], "Impact of digital marketing and price towards intention to buy mediating by brand awareness in interior design business"^[7], "Community service of Dr. Koffie Bandar Lampung on Digital Marketing Transformation"^[8], "The Effect of Technology in The Development of Interior Design in Today's Digital Age"^[9] and "A study on the application method of digital media in commercial space - using persona-based scenario approach"^[10] were related to the field of digital marketing and its relation to the business of Interior Design. Some other studies were related to creative behaviour on online platforms^[11], influence of social media marketing on SMEs^[12], effectiveness of digital platforms for brand marketing^[13,14] and impact of artificial intelligence on digital marketing^[15,16]. A dearth of research was found in context of adoption and subsequent problems experienced regarding digital tools by Interior Designers for publicising their work. There is a need to identify the usage of digital tools by Interior Designers for publicity of their work and challenges they face in doing so. Thus, the present study was undertaken.

2. Objectives of the study:

- To identify various digital tools adopted by Interior Designers to publicize their work.
- To gain insight into problems faced by respondents with regards to adopting these digital tools.

3. Methodology:

The present study focused on describing various attributes of selected population in relation to digital tools for professional publicity. Thus, this research was descriptive in nature. The locale of the study was various cities in India as the data was collected from various Interior Design professionals across the country. Therefore, responses were received from Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot, Patiala, Udaipur, Ratlam and Hyderabad. The unit of inquiry were practicing Interior Designers and the sample size were 76 respondents. The sampling technique was purposive. Interior Designers practicing as freelancers and owning individual firms were included for the present study while, Interior Designers employed under professional firms were excluded. The tool for the present research was a questionnaire developed on Google Forms. The questionnaire comprised of following sections: Section 1: Personal Background Information of the respondents like gender, educational qualification was covered in this section, Section 2: Professional Background Information like work experience, types of projects undertaken was covered in this section and Section 3: Information regarding use of digital tools were covered which included aspects related to use, preference and problems related to digital tools. For the present study, digital tools were operationally defined as all digital mediums that require internet connectivity for use.

4. Findings :

Following results were revealed through the study:

1. Personal Background Information of the respondents: The Personal Background Information of the respondents included various demographic details namely age, gender, education level and personal annual income.
 - 1.1. Age of the respondents: The findings revealed that the mean age of the respondents was 26.97 years with minimum age being 20 years and maximum being 40 years. 73.65% of the respondents were in the age range of 20 - 30 years.
 - 1.2. Gender of the respondents: 71.10% of respondents were found to be Female Interior Designers.
 - 1.3. Level of Education of the respondents: It was revealed the 60.50% of the respondents had under-graduate degree and 31.60% had post-graduate degree.
 - 1.4. Personal Annual Income of the respondents: The findings showed that the mean personal annual income of the respondents was ₹ 3,20,815.80.
2. Professional Background Information of the respondents: The Professional Background Information of the respondents included various details of their profession and business. It included number of years of work experience, registration status of the firm and types of projects undertaken.
 - 2.1. Number of years of Work Experience of the respondents: The respondents were asked their number of years of work experience, and it was found that 44.70% of respondents had 1 – 3 years of work experience. 23.70% of respondents had more than 5years of work experience.
 - 2.2. Registration status of the firm of the respondents: The study revealed that 47.40% of respondents were owners of a registered firm undertaking Interior Design projects.
 - 2.3. Types of projects undertaken by the respondents: It was found through the study that the respondent were undertaking various types of projects. It was reported that out 76 respondents 97.40% of respondents were



- engaged in residential projects and 94.70% were engaged in commercial projects. 39.10% of respondents were undertaking institutional projects and 31.60% were undertaking landscaping projects.
3. Adoption, Management and Preference of digital tools of the respondents: The respondents reported various digital tools they adopted, methods for managing these digital tools and preferred digital tools for publicity of their work. The findings were as follows:
 - 3.1. Digital tools adopted and frequently used by the respondents: The respondents were asked to report the digital tools adopted and it was found that 89.50% of the respondents used Instagram and 76.30% used WhatsApp for publicity of their work. Along with these platforms, the respondents also used Facebook (57.90%), Emails (50.00%) and their own websites (36.80%). They frequently used and updated Instagram page (71.10%) and WhatsApp account (13.20%). Although 50.00% respondents adopted Emailing as digital publicity tool, only 07.90% visited and updated their Email data. Only 02.60% of the respondents frequently visited and updated their own Websites and Facebook accounts.
 - 3.2. Digital tools preferred by the respondents: The findings revealed that 60.50% of the respondents preferred Instagram for publicity of their work, 26.30% of the respondents preferred WhatsApp and less than 15.00% of the respondents preferred Online Podcast, Email and Websites (owned/ common platform).
 - 3.3. Management of digital tools by the respondents: The respondents were asked their methods of managing digital tools and it was revealed that 52.60% of 76 respondents used an In-house employee to update and manage their digital tools and along with it 44.70% of the respondents also managed it themselves.
 4. Problems faced in Adopting/Using Digital Tools by the respondents: The respondents were asked to report problems they faced in adopting/ using digital tools for publicity of their work. The findings revealed that 31.58% always faced problems with excessive data storage requirements of digital tools. 26.32% of the respondents always experienced issues with constant requirement for upgradation/subscription/ renewal in relation to digital tools. It was found that 23.68% of the respondents were always facing problems regarding receiving fake responses, having time constraints and data tracking issues. The data revealed that 15.79% of the respondents were always facing problems regarding limitations of applications, software and devices used for digital publicity (Fig:1).

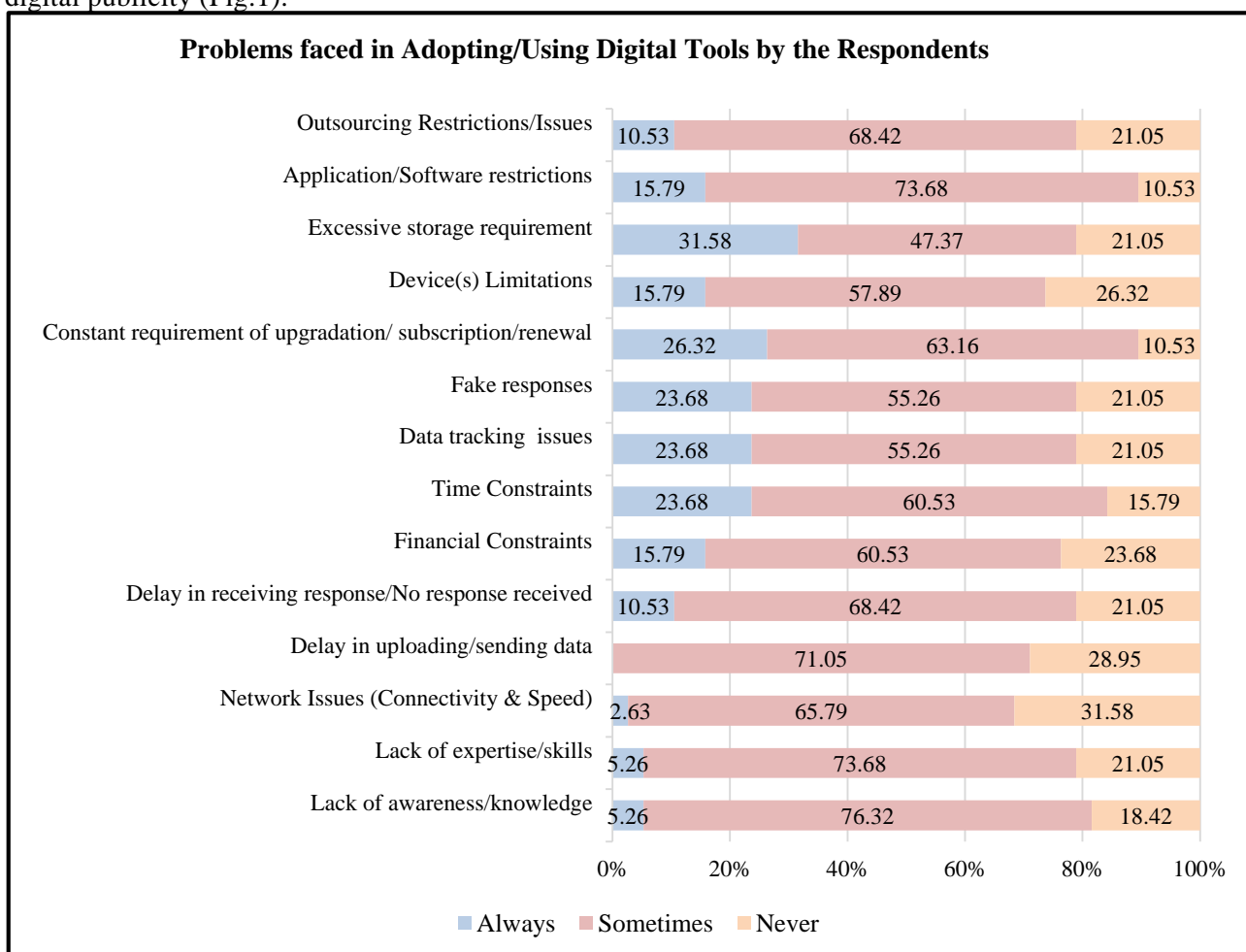


Fig:1 Problems faced in Adopting/Using Digital Tools by the Respondents

5. Discussion:

Advancement of technology has made it a necessity for all business concerns to adopt digital tools in some form or another. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the entire world went online, and so digital world became of utmost importance, both personally and professionally for every individual. An Interior Designer's profession depends on consumers viewing their existing work, for which digital tools are very important. It allows the designers to showcase their work digitally without the consumers needing to visit the actual site of work. The findings of the present research reported the use of varied digital tools, management and preferences of these tools and problems faced in using these tools. Majority of the respondents used Instagram and WhatsApp, and more than half of the respondents preferred Instagram for publicising their work. More than half of the respondents used In-house employees for updating and maintaining their digital tools. It was found that more than one-fourth of the respondents were always facing problems regarding excessive data storage requirements of digital tools and the constant requirement for upgradation/subscription/renewal in relation to digital tools.

6. Recommendations:

Based on the findings of the present study, it is recommended that training programmes can be planned and organized for interior designers who have and/or are aspiring to open their own firm. Special packages can be designed by service providers for Interior Designers for their need for excessive data storage on cloud. Professionals from IT industry can design a digital platform specialized for showcasing Interior Designer's work which can be made accessible to every potential consumer. Furthermore, detailed research can be conducted to study the use, management, barriers, and effectiveness of digital tools for various aspects of Interior Design. A similar study can be conducted for other professions. Specific research can be done to study the role of selected digital tools for the Interior Design profession.

7. CONCLUSION:

Worldwide, the importance of the digital world has increased in the modern era. This relevance has been greatly reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Several facets of the profession of interior design rely on the digital realm. The internet world may be effectively utilised for interior designers' career advancement. The results of the current study showed that, digital tools play an important role in publicity of work of an Interior Designer. Various digital tools are preferred, employed, and managed by Interior Design firms. It was also found that there are several challenges to using the digital tools effectively and resolution of these challenges are a need of the hour.

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