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The Implementation and Benefits of Telework in Various Sectors: Reality or Rhetoric?

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Abstract

This article explores the concept of telework, defined as work performed outside the traditional office, using technology to accomplish professional tasks. Initially designed to meet the needs of continuous customer support and to foster technological advancement, telework has been widely adopted by organizations due to its benefits, such as increased productivity, reduced operational costs, decreased traffic, and lower pollution. However, studies have highlighted significant challenges, such as employee feelings of isolation and the lack of effective managerial strategies to ensure connectivity and efficiency in remote work. Furthermore, the inadequate preparation for both the implementation and ongoing support of telework programs has become obvious. This article examines the implementation of telework and its benefits across various HoReCa organizations well equipped with digital tools and platforms, aiming to determine whether it represents a tangible reality or merely a management rhetoric by highlighting, within SWOT analyses, the advantages and challenges associated with this transition brought about by the adoption of telework.
Keywords: telework; remote work; SWOT analysis; management strategy; technology

Implementarea și beneficiile telemuncii în diverse sectoare: realitate sau retorică?

Rezumat

Acest articol explorează conceptul de telemuncă, definit ca munca efectuată în afara biroului tradițional, folosind tehnologia pentru îndeplinirea sarcinilor profesionale. Conceput inițial pentru a satisface nevoile de asistență continuă pentru clienți și pentru a promova progresul tehnologic, munca la distanță a fost adoptată pe scară largă de către organizații datorită beneficiilor sale, cum ar fi creșterea productivității, reducerea costurilor operaționale, scăderea traficului și reducerea poluării. Cu toate acestea, studiile au evidențiat provocări semnificative, cum ar fi sentimentele de izolare ale angajaților și lipsa unor strategii manageriale eficiente pentru a asigura conectivitate și eficiență în munca de la distanță. Mai mult, pregătirea inadecvată atât pentru implementarea, cât și pentru sprijinirea continuă a programelor de telemuncă a devenit evidentă. Acest articol examinează implementarea telemuncii și beneficiile acesteia în diferite organizații HoReCa bine dotate cu instrumente și platforme digitale, urmărind să determine dacă aceasta reprezintă o realitate tangibilă sau

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doar o retorică de management prin evidențierea, în cadrul analizelor SWOT, a avantajelor și provocărilor asociate cu aceasta. tranziție determinată de adoptarea telemuncii.
Cuvinte cheie: telemunca; lucru la distanță; analiza SWOT; strategia de management; tehnologie

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1. Introduction

Remote work, initially a visionary theoretical concept of workplace flexibility, has today become a norm in many industries due to accelerated technological advancements. This evolution marks a significant shift in the traditional work paradigm, offering both employers and employees unique opportunities to adapt to an increasingly digitalized and interconnected work environment. Khaifa și Davidson (Khaifa & Davidson, 2000) highlight the reduction in the need for direct physical interaction, made possible by innovations in telecommunications and information technology, which now allow professional activities to be carried out regardless of an individual's physical location. These changes emphasize a transition from the traditional office to virtual workspaces, where the "office" is anywhere there is an internet connection.

As organizations explore remote work as a solution for efficiency and adaptability, researchers discuss how it can reduce operational costs and improve productivity, while also offering employees greater flexibility and an improved work-life balance. Computer and telecommunications-based technology has enabled companies to carry out their tasks remotely, including from home, thus providing a new perspective on how organizations can thrive in this dynamic environment. (Apgar, 1998).

Therefore, implementing remote work requires a thorough evaluation of how organizations can seamlessly integrate technology into work practices to foster a sustainable and mutually beneficial transition for all stakeholders involved. In this context, not only the private sector but also the public sector is beginning to adopt remote work, recognizing the potential benefits in terms of accessibility and efficiency. This represents a turning point for organizations traditionally bound by mandatory physical presence, which are now exploring ways to respond more efficiently to customer needs through an expanded digital presence.

A crucial element in the successful implementation of remote work is adaptive leadership, which can navigate the challenges of coordinating a geographically dispersed workforce. Louie presents the idea of e-Leadership, a leadership approach that merges transformational leadership principles with technology to effectively guide and inspire virtual teams (Louie, 2017). This new leadership dynamic requires distinct skills and competencies to ensure team cohesion and productivity, despite physical barriers.

In our analysis, we will incorporate concepts from the specialized academic literature and case studies to highlight the impact of remote work on efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and accountability in different companies across the private sectors. We will examine the pros and cons of this rapidly growing phenomenon, known as remote work, and provide a foundation for assessing its impact on contemporary organizational behavior.

In conclusion, the introduction of remote work as a standard operating model within contemporary organizations presents significant opportunities for growth and innovation, but also requires careful and adaptive management. Remote work not only transforms the way services are delivered but also contributes to enriching and inspiring the broader wellbeing of the community.

2. Theoretical Aspects of Remote Work: A Review of the Academic Literature

2.1. What is remote work?

The literature on remote work offers a comprehensive understanding of its theoretical foundations, highlighting various aspects such as flexibility, productivity, and organizational dynamics. Key studies explore how technological advancements and shifts in work culture have led to the evolution of remote work from a niche practice to a mainstream organizational model.

Scholars have focused on the benefits and drawbacks of remote work, including its impact on worker productivity, work-life equilibrium, and the leadership position in overseeing geographically scattered teams. Theoretical frameworks including virtual collaboration models, job autonomy, and boundary theory provide valuable insights into the elements that influence the advantages and disadvantages of remote work.

Remote work, known by various names such as "Telecommuting," "Alternative Work Schedule," or "Alternative Workplace," is a form of work organization that allows employees to perform their tasks outside the traditional office by utilizing information technologies (Louie, 2017); (Apgar, 1998). This method of working involves the extensive use of telecommunications tools, such as phones, faxes, computers, and internet connections, to facilitate the completion of professional tasks remotely, often transforming part of the home into an office space. (McQuarrie, 1994).

Jack Nilles, a NASA scientist, introduced the term "telecommuting" in 1974, foreseeing a revolution in the way we work. A telecommuter is defined as an employee who works from home or another location outside the main office. (Nilles, 1975).

Remote work was created to meet the continuous, around-the-clock assistance needs of clients worldwide. Over the decades, terms like "remote work" and "telecommuters" have entered

academic vocabulary and policy discussions, highlighting a shift in workforce management and organizational strategies. (Hoffman, 2002).

The rapid flow of information, communication, technological progress, and employees' interest in flexible work arrangements have driven the adoption of this new workforce concept. Thus, telework is associated with increased productivity, reduced general expenses, decreased need for commuting, reduced traffic, lower fuel consumption, and diminished air pollution (Hoffman, 2002). This evolution reflects a continuous adaptation to the demands of a globalized economy and a workforce seeking flexibility and a balance between professional and personal life.

Remote work is often examined through the lens of various theories in management and organizational psychology. One frequently used theoretical framework is the Job Autonomy Theory, which argues that remote work enhances job satisfaction and productivity by increasing employee autonomy. (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). This theory suggests that when employees feel more autonomous and have control over their work environment, they are more motivated and engaged in their tasks.

Another important perspective is the Work-Life Balance Theory, which views remote work as a means to better balance professional and personal demands. (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). This theory emphasizes the importance of flexibility in work location and schedule as critical factors in improving employees' quality of life and reducing work-family conflict.

From a psychological perspective, remote work can have a significant impact on employee well-being. Studies show that remote work can reduce stress associated with the daily commute and provide a more personalized and comfortable work environment, which is often linked to greater job satisfaction (Golden, 2006). However, the same flexibility can also have adverse

effects, such as difficulties in separating work from personal life, which can lead to extended working hours and potential burnout.

On the other hand, from an organizational perspective, remote work presents challenges related to team coordination and maintaining a cohesive corporate culture. Without regular face-to-face interactions, teams may experience a lack of cohesion and inefficient communication, which can diminish innovation and creativity (Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė, & Goštautaitė, 2019).

2.2. SWOT Analysis and telework in general

Remote work, as a form of organizing work at a distance, has gained increasing attention in the academic literature due to its potential advantages and inherent challenges. In this section, we will examine academic literature and conduct a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) based on the in-depth examination of the impact of remote work within organizations as per researchers who have investigated the concept. This framework allows for a structured assessment of both internal and external factors that affect the effectiveness of remote work.

The implementation of remote work cannot occur without a significant digital transformation in any business or public institution. Therefore, when performing the SWOT analysis, organizations should consider factors such as:

- employees' remote access to company data,
- user-level permissions on files and documents,
- scalability and flexibility in energy consumption,
- IT infrastructure for connecting or updating existing solutions to be compatible with new remote work platforms,
- business system compatibility with cloud platforms,
- security levels,
- measures against internal and external threats
- investments in technologies that support workforce agility and mobility.

Regardless of whether existing technologies help employees, the number of platforms and applications an employee uses daily is increasing. Having an established system for data-driven decision-making is becoming essential, along with access to cutting-edge technologies. Without these, adapting to changes in the work configuration becomes challenging (Traqq, 2024).

When identifying the threats and opportunities of remote work, organizations and public institutions need to conduct impartial research on the industry in which they operate, their organizational structure, and the market they serve. Only through a reliable system of trust and critical evaluation of the organization's current position and performance can they determine if a permanent shift to remote work will be profitable and sustainable. Additionally, studying labor legislation related to how the jurisdiction specifically addresses work from home is essential for employers. This legislative review is particularly mandatory in the current post-COVID-19 context for public institutions and authorities responsible for such matters (Traqq, 2024).

Organizational leaders or heads of public institutions worldwide play a vital role in supporting and guiding the workforce toward success. Decision-makers must recognize the threats and opportunities that this new configuration of remote work could bring. In a geographically dispersed team, some employees are independent enough to quickly adapt to changes in remote work practices, even though others may find the transition challenging. Effective communication is crucial for the successful implementation of a work-from-home strategy. Numerous communication tools are available to connect teams across different locations, and certain project management software can assist managers in monitoring tasks and the progress of employees working from home.

Therefore, with the right tools and proper preparation, organizations can ensure a smooth transition, overcoming obstacles that may have seemed daunting in the past within the organizational environment (Traqq, 2024).

As per the objective of this section, in order to identify the rhetoric provided for the concept, we will conduct a SWOT analysis of remote work from the existing literature and we will review the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with this work model.

2.2.1. The advantages and benefits of remote work

Since the very beginning of the exploration of remote work concept, a considerable number of studies have been conducted to examine the advantages and benefits of telecommuting. Reshma has made a significant contribution to this field of literature through her findings based on the ABCD analysis framework. (Reshma, Aithal, & Shailashree V. T. and P. Sridhar, 2015). According to Reshma, remote work involves fewer investments and supports a diverse workforce. Reshma and collaborators argued in 2015 that telecommuting is cost-effective, saves time, and offers flexibility, allowing for optimal use of resources and providing a higher return at lower costs. It saves commuting time, reduces staffing costs, lowers office maintenance expenses, increases company profits, and offers a flexible work option, enabling employees to be more productive and satisfied. All of these factors create more jobs and strengthen the employee-employer relationship, improving the quality of work. Other positive effects include increased efficiency, with faster results generated by employees who feel privileged to work from wherever they choose, using the latest technologies. Absenteeism is also reduced, and the decreased need for commuting to and from the workplace results in less pollution compared to the traditional system. It also reduces traffic congestion, leads to better living conditions, and makes actions to protect the planet more feasible in this context.

In 2019, Flores also presented similar findings, with the rhetoric centered around flexible working hours. (Flores, 2019). He finds working from home as beneficial because it leads to greater responsibility in how employees manage their time. Job satisfaction and a more optimistic outlook on career development further enhance the positive effects.

Another study (Baard & Thomas, 2010) found similar advantages of remote work, such as fewer distractions, improved productivity, increased flexibility and employee loyalty, reduced stress, and lower monthly expenses.

We can then conclude that a significant advantage of remote work is that it allows employees to strike a balance between work and life as per the highlights in the studies of Reshma (2015), Flores (2019), and Baard & Thomas (2010).

Following the same rhetoric, Nakrošienė and collaborators (2019) argue that remote work provides employees with the opportunity to care for family members.

In 2015, Krasulja and collaborators also specifically examined the connection between remote work and work-life balance, finding that Generation Y employees, also known as millennials, view remote work as an alternative to achieving better work-life balance (Krasulja, Blagojevic, & Radojevic, 2015).

The evidence gathered from various studies indicates that remote work offers substantial advantages for both employees and employers, facilitating a more adaptable and satisfied workforce. However, to maximize these benefits, it is essential for organizations to implement effective remote management strategies and provide the necessary technological and administrative support. Therefore, continuous adaptation to new technologies and changes in work dynamics will be crucial to fully exploiting the potential of remote work and its benefits, which we group into the following four categories:

Flexibility and Accesibility: One of the most evident advantages of remote work is the flexibility it offers employees. It allows workers to adjust their schedules and work in environments that maximize individual productivity. (Golden, 2006).

Cost saving: Remote work reduces expenses related to office space, utilities, and other physical resources (Bloom, Liang, Roberts, & Ying, 2015). Organizations can significantly save by minimizing fixed costs, while employees save time and money by eliminating the need for commuting.

Employee Satisfaction and Retention: The flexibility provided by remote work can lead to greater employee satisfaction and reduce turnover rates, as employees feel more valued and balanced between their professional and personal lives (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Sustainability and Environmental Impact: Remote work helps reduce carbon emissions by lessening the need for daily commutes, thereby promoting more sustainable business practices and reducing the ecological footprint of companies. (Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė, & Goštautaitė, 2019) (Krasulja, Blagojevic, & Radojevic, 2015).

2.2.2. Disadvantages and Challenges of Remote Work

While remote work offers multiple benefits, such as increased flexibility and efficiency, it also comes with significant challenges that can impact both individuals and organizations. This section explores the disadvantages and difficulties associated with remote work, discussing their effects on collaboration, mental health, fairness in performance evaluation, and social integration.

According to Flores, remote work creates challenges in developing and maintaining social relationships and leads to a reduction in the frequency of social contact. Another identified risk is related to the inaccurate performance evaluation for remote workers, as they are not physically visible to managers. In his study, Flores sought to investigate this issue and found that there is less

transparency in ensuring fairness in the performance evaluation of remote employees. (Flores, 2019).

Several researchers (Flores, 2019) (Baard & Thomas, 2010) (O'Kane, Walton, & Ruwhiu, 2020) have highlighted that one of the most significant issues identified is employees' inability to manage their time effectively, emphasizing the negative effects of long working hours. In the study (Working from home and income inequality. Risks of a 'new normal' with COVID-19, 2021) the authors xamined the relationship between remote work and the distribution of labor income, highlighting the inequality generated by the rapid acceleration of remote work during the pandemic. The results indicated that the work-from-home strategy may lead to an increase in the inequalities in the labor market if remote work is not properly regulated (Bonacini, Gallo, & Scicchitano, 2021).

Another identified risk is that remote work has a negative impact on subjective well-being and the effects of work, which vary depending on parental status and gender. (Song & Gao, 2020)

Another interesting finding highlights how difficult it is to manage work while working from home, as the number of distractions increases. Employees with children often face significant challenges in maintaining focus and concentration. (Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė, & Goštautaitė, 2019) (O'Kane, Walton, & Ruwhiu, 2020).

According to a survey conducted in New Zealand by researchers from the University of Otago, employees working remotely may find it difficult to stay motivated when they are away from the office environment (O'Kane, Walton, & Ruwhiu, 2020).

This has also been supported by other studies, which found that working from home can lead to loneliness, lack of self-esteem, and demotivation.

In the study conducted by Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė, & Goštautaitė, the research findings revealed that older employees perceived fewer advantages of remote work.. (Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė, & Goštautaitė, 2019)

Other disadvantages, such as the lack of training for remote employees, were highlighted by Baard and Thomas (Baard & Thomas, 2010). Flores identified difficulties in making technology and systems work and in finding necessary information in a timely manner (Flores, 2019) while the lack of equipment and resources needed for effectively conducting remote work was revealed in a survey by O'Kane, Walton, and Ruwhiu. (O'Kane, Walton, & Ruwhiu, 2020).

Following the review of the specialized literature, we have grouped the disadvantages and threats posed by remote work into several categories:

Collaboration and Communication Issues: Remote work can erode the foundation of effective communication and collaboration within teams. According to (Flores, 2019), remote work limits face-to-face interaction, which is essential for building strong relationships and facilitating a smooth exchange of ideas. The lack of direct physical contact can lead to communication inefficiencies and project delays, complicating collaborative processes that are crucial in a dynamic work environment. (O'Kane, Walton, & Ruwhiu, 2020)

Performance Evaluation and Fairness: A significant challenge of remote work is the difficulty in accurately assessing employee performance. Flores found that managers may struggle to maintain a fair perspective on the performance of remote employees, often due to the lack of direct visibility. This gap can lead to misunderstandings and unfair evaluations, negatively influencing employee morale and motivation. (Flores, 2019)

Impact on Mental Health and Well-being: Working from home can negatively affect mental health by contributing to social isolation and blurring the boundaries between work and

personal life. Remote work may lead to feelings of loneliness and reduced self-esteem. Nakrošienė and her colleagues observed that older employees are, they may perceive fewer benefits from remote work, often due to technological challenges or a preference for direct interaction. (Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė, & Goštautaitė, 2019)

*Inequalities and Access to Resources: r*emote work can amplify existing labor market inequalities, particularly in terms of access to technology and resources. Bonacini and collaborators showed that work-from-home strategies may exacerbate disparities, favoring employees with access to cutting-edge technology and an adequate home working environment (Bonacini, Gallo, & Scicchitano, 2021). Additionally, O'Kane and Walton identified difficulties in providing a robust IT infrastructure for all employees as a major barrier to the effectiveness of remote work (O'Kane, Walton, & Ruwhiu, 2020).

While remote work offers significant advantages, the associated challenges and disadvantages require careful attention and well-planned strategies to minimize the negative impact on employees and organizational performance. It is essential for organizations to implement solutions that improve communication, ensure fair performance evaluations, and support employees' mental health and well-being. At the same time, efforts should be made to reduce inequalities and ensure equal access to the necessary resources for effective remote work. This thematic analysis, aligned with Almaiah's 2020 research (Almaiah & Al Mulhem, 2020), provides a valuable framework for understanding the complexities of remote work and for formulating appropriate organizational responses.

3. Research methodology

In order to investigate the benefits of remote work implementation across various companies, we chose to do the research in a manner that would allow us to include a

multidimensional approach based on three primary methods: literature review, SWOT analysis, and case studies. Each of these methods plays a crucial role in structuring and validating the research conclusions, providing both theoretical and practical insights into the subject. Below, we will detail the use of each method, discussing relevant theoretical elements and specific bibliographic sources.

3.1. Literature Review

The literature review is a fundamental research method that involves the critical assessment of existing works in the field of study, aiming to identify knowledge gaps and establish the theoretical foundations and conceptual framework for the proposed research. A literature review chapter also enables researchers to identify and apply existing theoretical models, test hypotheses, and validate conclusions based on previously accumulated knowledge.

In the case of remote work, the literature review included studies that examined the evolution and impact of remote work across various fields. This review helped identify common themes such as increased productivity, improved work-life balance, as well as challenges related to human resource management and information security.

The bibliographic documentation studied both primary and, predominantly, secondary sources. Primary sources consisted of reports generated from surveys or studies focused on remote work. Secondary sources included information extracted from specialized books, scientific articles on remote work, other relevant journals, as well as data published on various websites. No tertiary sources, such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, or other syntheses of scientific works, were used in this article.

In the desire to select and present high-quality information, the stage of the research involving the study of the specialized literature was carried out according to a well-structured

methodology, with rules, standards, and techniques that allow for moving from a general idea or hypothesis to a solution. This approach ensures that the research process is systematic and methodical, enabling the accurate identification and synthesis of relevant information to address the research objectives effectively (Zaiţ & Spalanzani, 2006).

To begin with, several articles and information from scientific publications related to remote work were identified; these were later supplemented with data obtained from other qualitative and quantitative research. This combination of sources allowed for a comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of the subject, ensuring that the analysis was both thorough and supported by a variety of research methods.

For each bibliographic source, relevant summaries and notes were created to align with the article's theme, and the necessary titles and citation details were inserted into the references section in "Word" to facilitate easy access to the bibliography. All documents were saved in a shared Google Drive were all three researchers have contributed.

The identification of publications was carried out by accessing databases such as SpringerLink, ResearchGate, Google Scholar, EBSCO, SAMRO, and others. This systematic approach ensured that all relevant literature was carefully documented and organized for future reference.

3.2. SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning technique used to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to a specific organization or project. Despite the debate on the originator of the technique, most people attribute SWOT Analysis to Albert Humphrey who originally developed it in the 1960s. (Madsen, 2016). Nowadays, SWOT analysis is widely applied across various fields, from business to academic research, due to its ability to provide a

comprehensive overview of a complex working environment. SWOT helps organizations and researchers assess internal and external factors that influence success, allowing for more informed decision-making and strategic planning.

In the research on remote work, SWOT analysis has been used to assess the internal and external factors influencing the implementation of telework across various sectors. Strengths and weaknesses were evaluated in relation to organizational capabilities, such as schedule flexibility, technological infrastructure, and organizational culture. Opportunities and threats were analyzed within the context of the external market, including legislative changes, economic trends, and technological developments. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the key factors impacting the success and challenges of remote work implementation.

The literature supporting the use of SWOT analysis in research includes foundational works such as those by Hill and Westbrook, who examined the practical applicability of SWOT in strategic management. These studies highlight SWOT's utility in providing a structured framework for analyzing both internal and external factors in decision-making and organizational planning. Hill and Westbrook's findings emphasize the method's versatility across various sectors and its relevance in aligning strategies with organizational strengths and external opportunities. (Hill & Westbrook, 1997).

Valentin's study also offers a critical review of the SWOT method, emphasizing the importance of integrating it into the broader framework of strategic planning. Valentin argues that while SWOT is a valuable tool for identifying key factors, it should be complemented by other strategic analysis techniques to ensure a more comprehensive and dynamic approach to organizational decision-making. (Valentin, 2001).

These sources were used to structure and theoretically underpin the SWOT analysis in the research on remote work. By drawing on the works of Hill, Westbrook, and Valentin, the research was able to integrate a robust framework for evaluating the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with telework, ensuring a well-rounded and academically grounded analysis.

3.3. Case Study

The qualitative research method called "case study" entails a thorough investigation of a particular topic in a real-world setting. When conducting exploratory or descriptive research with the goal of comprehending complicated phenomena—like the adoption of remote work in various organizations—this approach is especially helpful.

Through case studies, a researcher can obtain a comprehensive grasp of the context, procedures, and results, offering a whole new perspective on the phenomena they are studying. This methodology is useful for revealing insights that may not be demonstrated by other research techniques, particularly when examining the real-world applications of telework tactics. (Eisenhardt, 1989).

In the research on remote work, case studies were used to illustrate the application of telework in real organizations, identifying best practices and the challenges encountered. Each case study was structured to include an analysis of organizational information relevant to the article's theme and an evaluation of performance data. This approach allowed the research to compare and contrast experiences across different companies, providing a practical framework for interpreting the results. By examining these real-world examples, the study gained insights into how telework is implemented, the outcomes it generates, and the factors that contribute to its success or limitations in various organizational settings.

The research methodology, based on a literature review, SWOT analysis, and case studies, allowed for an in-depth examination of the benefits of remote work across various sectors. Each method contributed to a holistic understanding of the subject, ensuring a balanced approach between theory and practice. The research findings provide a solid foundation for understanding remote work in the current context, as well as guidance for future research and implementations in organizations. This comprehensive approach ensures that both theoretical insights and practical applications are considered, offering valuable contributions to the field of telework.

4. Results - Case Study on the SWOT Analysis of Remote Work in the HORECA Sector in Romania: TAZZ, Glovo, Bolt Food, Bringo, and Jerry's Pizza

This case study explores the impact of remote work in Romania's HORECA sector (Hotels, Restaurants, Cafes), focusing on five representative companies: TAZZ, Glovo, Bolt Food, Bringo, and Jerry's Pizza. The SWOT analysis conducted for each company highlights how remote work affects operational dynamics, employee satisfaction, and long-term sustainability. The study emphasizes the importance of adapting to new work models and identifies both the opportunities and challenges brought by telework.

Remote work has become an essential component of the modern organizational landscape, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the shift towards flexible work models. In the HORECA sector, remote work has been primarily adopted for administrative and customer service roles, while operational staff, such as couriers, continue to work in the field (O'Kane, Walton, & Ruwhiu, 2020) (Bădoi, 2020).

In this study, we analyze the impact of remote work on operational dynamics, employee engagement, customer satisfaction, and long-term sustainability for the five companies: TAZZ, Glovo, Bolt Food, Bringo, and Jerry's Pizza.

Remote work, which was previously limited to sectors such as IT and consulting, has gained traction in various industries, including HORECA, with the rise of online delivery platforms (Bădoi, 2020) and following the spread of COVID19 (Durbarry, 2021)

Romania's HORECA sector has undergone a significant transformation due to the expansion of online delivery platforms such as TAZZ, Glovo, Bolt Food, Bringo, and Jerry's Pizza. These companies have adopted remote work models for administrative tasks, customer service, and logistics coordination, while operational staff, such as couriers, remain active in the field. (Dima, Anghel, & Catalin)

In this study, a SWOT analysis is conducted to assess how each of these companies has integrated remote work into their operations. Both internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats faced by these companies in a rapidly changing environment, are evaluated. (Gîrdan, 2020).

4.1. Company Profiles

In this analysis, we examine five key companies—TAZZ, Glovo, Bolt Food, Bringo, and Jerry's Pizza—focusing on their business models and market orientation within Romania's HORECA sector. Each company has adapted its operational structure to meet the growing demand for delivery services, driven by advancements in online platforms and shifting consumer preferences.

1. TAZZ

TAZZ is one of Romania's leading food delivery platforms, offering customers a wide range of dining options from local restaurants. Their business model combines in-house delivery services with a robust digital platform for coordinating orders.

2. Glovo

Glovo is a global food and product delivery service with significant operations in Romania. The Glovo app allows users to order not only food but also a wide variety of products, including groceries and pharmaceuticals.

3. Bolt Food

A subsidiary of Bolt, known for its ridesharing and transport services, Bolt Food entered the Romanian market with a promise to provide fast, reliable, and affordable food delivery services. The company leverages Bolt's existing infrastructure and technological expertise.

4. Bringo

Bringo operates as a grocery delivery service, focusing on partnerships with major retailers like Auchan and Carrefour, delivering food products directly to customers' doorsteps.

5. Jerry’s Pizza

Jerry’s Pizza is a Romanian brand specializing in pizza delivery. Unlike other platforms that aggregate multiple restaurants, Jerry’s Pizza controls its entire supply chain and delivery process.

Each company has successfully integrated remote work and delivery solutions to adapt to shifting consumer demands in a post-pandemic landscape. Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the business models and market focus of these companies, along with the corresponding sources. Figure 1 visualizes the distribution of market focus among these companies.

Table 1. Detailed Analysis of HORECA Companies and their Market Focus

Company	Business Model	Market Focus
TAZZ	Combines own delivery services with a digital platform for food delivery from local restaurants	Food delivery from local restaurants
Glovo	Global delivery service offering food, groceries, and pharmaceuticals with operations in Romania	Food, groceries, pharmaceuticals

Bolt Food	Utilizes Bolt's ridesharing and transport infrastructure for affordable food delivery	Food delivery
Bringo	Focuses on grocery delivery through partnerships with major retailers like Carrefour and Auchan	Grocery delivery
Jerry's Pizza	Specializes in pizza delivery with full control over supply chain and logistics	Pizza delivery

4.2. SWOT Analysis: Remote Work implementation in five key companies in the delivery sector of the HORECA industry in Romania: AZZ, Glovo, Bolt Food, Bringo, and Jerry's Pizza

In order to achieve a qualitative SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis regarding the implementation of remote work models in the five organizations chosen for the research, we interviewed managers and collected insights directly from decision-makers. Structured script guided responses ensured consistency across participants, facilitating a meaningful comparison among their reactions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).The research questions we sought to answer in this research were:

"How would you assess the strengths and weaknesses of implementing teleworking in the context of organizational outcomes within the online delivery sector of HORECA?"

"To what extent do you believe that virtual team models create opportunities or represent threats to long-term sustainability in the online delivery industry within HORECA?"

"In the context of virtual teams, what strengths and weaknesses do you observe regarding their impact on employee motivation and engagement in the online delivery sector of HORECA?"

Data collected were further stratified through SWOT framework after the interviews taken to some key people with relevant positions within the aforemention companies. Some answers will be underline in the below analyse made.

We used this analytical tool to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each company with respect to their ability to maintain or scale remote work models, based on a deeper understanding of both internal factors and external factors. The SWOT created a fit-for-purpose

analysis, as it was structured in such a way that it allows discovering unique strategic insights and challenges to how each company implemented their remote work,

4.2.1. TAZZ

- Strengths:

Scalability of Remote Work: TAZZ has successfully implemented remote work for administration, marketing, and customer service teams. This scalability allows the company to reduce operating costs related to office space while maintaining efficient service coordination.

Enhanced Digital Infrastructure: The adoption of remote work has led TAZZ to further develop digital tools for internal communication and operational tracking, increasing organizational agility.

Increased Employee Satisfaction: Remote work offers flexibility, leading to higher employee satisfaction and reduced staff turnover, particularly in administrative and support teams.

- Weaknesses:

Coordination Challenges: Remote work can sometimes lead to fragmented communication between different teams (e.g., customer service, logistics, and management). These coordination issues can delay responses to customer requests or slow down operational processes.

Limited Monitoring: With employees working remotely, it becomes challenging to monitor productivity and ensure consistent quality within customer service teams.

Technological Dependencies: The success of remote work relies heavily on the digital tools used by TAZZ. Any technological disruptions could significantly impact operations.

- Opportunities:

Access to More Diverse Talent: Remote work allows TAZZ to recruit talent from across the country, without being limited to major cities. This can bring new skills and experiences to the team.

Service Expansion: The efficiencies gained through remote work could enable TAZZ to expand its offerings beyond food delivery, such as incorporating retail or service deliveries, leveraging its well-established logistics network.

Cost Reduction: Long-term adoption of remote work could lead to a permanent reduction in office-related expenses, improving overall profitability.

- Threats:

Increased Competition: Competition from other players like Glovo and Bolt Food, which also adopt remote work policies, presents an ongoing threat, especially as entry barriers in the online delivery sector are relatively low.

Potential Regulatory Changes: Changes in labor laws or regulations related to remote work in Romania could impose new compliance costs or limit the flexibility of these working models.

Cybersecurity Risks: As more activities move online, the risk of cyberattacks and data breaches increases, posing a threat to customer privacy and business continuity.

Interview answers:

"1. As a specialist at Tazz, I've noticed that working remotely has some clear benefits. It's great to be able to handle tasks from home, which makes things more flexible and can speed up our response times. However, since I'm still learning the delivery process, being in the office twice a week is really helpful for getting hands-on experience and understanding the workflow better. Remote work does come with its challenges, like occasionally feeling out of the loop or missing out on immediate feedback.

2. Virtual teams offer some solid opportunities for growth, like saving on office costs and allowing us to be more adaptable. For Tazz, it helps us manage operations more efficiently and potentially reach more customers. On the flip side, if we rely too much on remote work, we might miss out on crucial in-person training and team bonding, which could affect long-term performance and sustainability.

3. Remote work has been a mixed bag for me. It's convenient and lets me manage my time better, which is motivating. But because I'm still learning and only come into the office a couple of times a week, I sometimes miss out on direct interactions and support from my colleagues. This can make it harder to stay fully engaged and motivated. Being in the office helps me feel more connected and supported, which is important for my overall job satisfaction." – TAZZ Operations Specialist

4.2.2. Glovo

- Strengths:

Global Experience with Remote Work: As an international company, Glovo has considerable experience with remote work models, allowing it to implement best practices in different regions, including Romania.

Cross-functional Efficiency: Remote work has contributed to the streamlining of cross-functional tasks, particularly those related to customer service and support, improving service delivery.

Technological Leadership: Glovo's advanced app infrastructure and real-time data analytics enable efficient coordination between remote teams and field delivery staff.

- Weaknesses:

Cultural Challenges: Remote work in Glovo's Romanian operations can sometimes lead to a disconnect between the company's global culture and local needs, which may create tension in employee engagement and customer service.

Communication Barriers: Despite technological tools, communication between remote teams and field operations may encounter delays, particularly during peak demand periods.

Resource Allocation: Managing remote teams across different time zones can consume additional resources, leading to inefficiencies in task management and service delivery.

- Opportunities:

Service Localization: Remote work models allow Glovo to quickly adapt services to local markets by hiring regionally distributed teams that have a deep understanding of the Romanian market.

New Partnerships: Remote work enables Glovo to efficiently manage new partnerships with local businesses, expanding its service portfolio beyond food delivery, including groceries and retail products.

Employee Retention: Remote work can increase employee satisfaction, thereby reducing turnover rates and allowing the company to retain experienced employees for longer periods.

- Threats:

Local Competition: Competition from players like TAZZ and Bringo, which have strong local connections, could erode Glovo's market share if they offer services more tailored to the Romanian market.

Regulatory Pressures: Changes in Romanian labor laws or tax regulations could affect Glovo's remote work policies, particularly in managing remote teams and employee rights.

Market Saturation: The food and goods delivery market in Romania is becoming increasingly saturated, potentially limiting growth opportunities for Glovo.

Interview answers:

"1. Advantages: flexibility, the opportunity to access talent from multiple locations, and reduced operational costs.

Disadvantages: coordination difficulties, communication issues, which can affect teamwork.

2. Advantages: the ability to quickly adapt to market demands and optimize costs.

Disadvantages: risks related to data security and challenges in maintaining an organizational culture.

3. Advantages: flexibility and a better balance between personal and professional life.

Disadvantages: isolation and lack of direct interaction." – Manager Operations

4.2.3. Bolt Food

- Strengths:

Integration with Bolt Ecosystem: Bolt Food benefits from integration with Bolt's transport services, enabling seamless logistical coordination and efficient use of remote work for administrative functions.

Operational Agility: Remote work allows Bolt Food to be agile in adjusting to market conditions, such as fluctuating demand and changing consumer preferences.

Cost Efficiency: By adopting remote work, Bolt Food has reduced costs related to office space and utilities, thereby improving its financial performance.

- Weaknesses:

Challenges in Delivery Coordination: Remote work can make it difficult to synchronize office-based teams with field delivery operations, potentially leading to logistical inefficiencies.

Team Cohesion: The dispersed nature of remote work can weaken team cohesion, which is crucial in the fast-paced environment of food delivery services.

Dependence on Digital Tools: The success of remote work at Bolt Food relies heavily on digital tools for communication and task management, increasing the risk of disruptions in case of technological failures.

- Opportunities:

Market Expansion: The cost savings and operational efficiencies achieved through remote work may allow Bolt Food to expand its services to more regions in Romania, increasing its market presence.

Technology Integration: Bolt Food can leverage remote work to experiment with new technologies, such as AI-driven logistics planning and advanced data analytics to improve delivery efficiency.

Sustainability Initiatives: Remote work could allow Bolt Food to invest more resources in sustainability efforts, such as reducing its carbon footprint through optimized delivery routes.

- Threats:

Technological Vulnerabilities: As Bolt Food becomes increasingly reliant on remote work, any technological disruption, such as cyberattacks or system failures, could severely affect its operations.

Economic Uncertainty: Economic recessions could reduce consumer spending on food delivery services, threatening Bolt Food’s growth trajectory in Romania.

Rising Competition: Bolt Food faces competition not only from other delivery platforms but also from traditional restaurants that are increasingly developing their own delivery services.

Interview answers:

"1. Strengths: Virtual teams offer flexibility and cost savings, but in the HORECA online delivery sector, particularly for Bolt Food, these benefits are often outweighed by communication delays and inefficiencies, especially when quick decisions are needed for customer service or delivery issues.

2. Opportunities: While virtual teams can theoretically expand talent pools and reduce overhead, in practice, they often create silos, making it harder to maintain consistent service quality and manage long-term operational stability, which is crucial for Bolt Food's competitive edge.

3. Strengths: Virtual setups may appeal to some employees due to flexibility, but I've noticed a significant drop in motivation and engagement. Without face-to-face collaboration, team cohesion suffers, making it harder to instill company culture and maintain a high level of service that Bolt Food requires."- Customer Service Specialist.

4.2.4. Bringo

- Strengths:

Specialization in Grocery Delivery: Bringo's focus on grocery delivery, rather than restaurant food, allows it to capitalize on a unique niche in the Romanian market, with remote work supporting its administrative and customer service functions.

Strong Partnerships with Retailers: Bringo's partnerships with major retailers like Carrefour provide a competitive advantage, enabling remote teams to efficiently coordinate between stores and customers.

Adaptability: Remote work enables Bringo to quickly adapt to changes in consumer demand, such as the growing preference for contactless shopping and home delivery.

- Weaknesses:

Operational Complexity: Remote work can add complexity to Bringo's operations, particularly in managing relationships between stores, delivery staff, and customers.

Quality Control Issues: With remote teams handling customer service, maintaining consistent quality across all interactions can be challenging, potentially affecting customer satisfaction.

Logistical Challenges: Coordinating grocery deliveries, often involving perishable goods, can be more difficult when remote teams are not in direct contact with field logistics personnel.

- Opportunities:

Service Diversification: Remote work enables Bringo to efficiently manage the expansion of its services, such as adding new retail partners or offering new types of deliveries (e.g., pharmaceutical products).

Increased Demand for Grocery Delivery: The shift towards online grocery shopping presents a significant opportunity for Bringo to expand its customer base, especially in urban areas (Badoi, D., 2020).

Focus on Sustainability: Bringo can leverage remote work to invest in more sustainable delivery practices, such as eco-friendly packaging and energy-efficient transport options.

- Threats:

Competition from Supermarkets: Large supermarket chains are increasingly developing their own delivery services, which could threaten Bringo's market share.

Logistical Disruptions: Any disruptions in the supply chain, whether due to challenges in coordinating remote work or external factors such as fuel shortages, could affect Bringo's ability to meet customer expectations.

Regulatory Changes: New regulations related to labor practices in the HORECA sector could affect Bringo's ability to maintain a remote work model for its administrative and support teams (Badoi, D., 2020).

Interview answers:

"1. As a Bringo account manager, I've found virtual teams to be really effective. Working remotely gives us the flexibility to handle customer issues quickly and manage our time better. The digital tools we use help keep everyone on the same page, which is great. Of course, there can be occasional communication hiccups, but overall, the advantages of remote work make up for those small issues.

2. I think virtual teams offer a lot of chances for long-term success in the HORECA sector. We save on office space and can easily expand our reach without worrying about physical locations. Plus, it's more eco-friendly because we reduce commuting. As for threats, I don't see many—our team's been doing a good job of maintaining quality and staying connected, so I think remote work is pretty sustainable for us.

3. Working remotely has definitely boosted my motivation. Being able to set my own schedule and work from home makes it easier to balance work and personal life. I feel more engaged because I can manage my workload in a way that suits me best. Even though we're not physically together, the virtual setup keeps us connected, and it feels like the company really supports us, which is awesome." – Account Manager

4.2.5. Jerry’s Pizza

- Strengths:

Control over the Delivery Chain: Jerry’s Pizza manages the entire delivery process, allowing stricter control over quality and customer service. Remote work supports administrative and marketing functions, enabling more flexible operations.

Strong Brand Loyalty: Jerry’s Pizza enjoys strong brand loyalty in Romania, which remote work helps maintain by streamlining customer service and marketing efforts (Schiopu, A., Puiu, S., & Dinu, A., 2022).

Cost Savings: Remote work reduces office space and utility costs, freeing up resources for reinvestment in business growth.

- Weaknesses:

Limited Operational Flexibility: Unlike platforms like TAZZ or Glovo, Jerry’s Pizza's operational flexibility is limited by its internal delivery model, which requires on-site staff.

Employee Engagement Challenges: Remote work can create a disconnect between administrative teams and operational staff, potentially affecting employee engagement and coordination.

Scalability Issues: As a single brand, Jerry’s Pizza may find it difficult to scale its remote work practices as efficiently as larger, multi-service platforms.

- Opportunities:

Expansion of Digital Services: Remote work enables Jerry’s Pizza to improve its digital services, such as online ordering and loyalty programs, further strengthening its market position.

Partnership Opportunities: Jerry’s Pizza could explore partnerships with third-party delivery platforms, expanding its reach and mitigating some logistical challenges.

Sustainability Initiatives: Remote work can free up resources for Jerry's Pizza to invest in sustainability efforts, such as eco-friendly packaging and energy-efficient delivery vehicles.

- Threats:

Competition from Aggregator Platforms: Aggregator platforms like Glovo and Bolt Food, which offer a variety of food options, pose a significant threat to Jerry's Pizza's market share.

Operational Disruptions: Any disruptions in the delivery process, whether due to internal issues or external factors, could severely impact Jerry's Pizza's ability to maintain its service levels (Burlea-Schiopu et al., 2022).

Economic Volatility: Economic downturns could reduce consumer spending on non-essential items like pizza delivery, posing a threat to Jerry's Pizza's revenue streams.

Interview answers:

"1. From my perspective, virtual teams could offer flexibility, but the company's refusal to fully embrace remote work is limiting our potential. Without remote work, we're stuck in outdated practices, unable to take advantage of modern technology. Virtual setups could improve efficiency, but instead, we're bogged down by the daily grind and physical presence requirements.

2. I believe virtual teams could open doors to better scalability and sustainability, but the company's reluctance to embrace this model is a threat in itself. We're missing out on cost savings, global reach, and a more environmentally friendly approach. By sticking to traditional work models, we're limiting long-term growth and risking our competitiveness in the industry.

3. The company's refusal to adopt remote work has a negative impact on motivation. Remote work could offer better work-life balance, but instead, we're forced into rigid schedules and environments that stifle creativity and engagement. The lack of flexibility makes employees

feel unappreciated and disconnected, leading to lower morale and job dissatisfaction." – Technical Manager

Table 2. SWOT Analysis Overview

Company	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
TAZZ	Scalability, Enhanced Digital Infrastructure, Employee Satisfaction	Coordination Challenges, Limited Monitoring, Technological Dependencies	Access to Diverse Talent, Service Expansion, Cost Reduction	Increased Competition, Regulatory Changes, Cybersecurity Risks
Glovo	Global Experience, Cross-functional Efficiency, Technological Leadership	Cultural Challenges, Communication Barriers, Resource Allocation	Service Localization, New Partnerships, Employee Retention	Local Competition, Regulatory Pressures, Market Saturation
Bolt Food	Integration with Bolt, Operational Agility, Cost Efficiency	Delivery Coordination Challenges, Team Cohesion, Dependence on Digital Tools	Market Expansion, Technology Integration, Sustainability Initiatives	Technological Vulnerabilities, Economic Uncertainty, Competition
Bringo	Specialization in Grocery Delivery, Retailer Partnerships, Adaptability	Operational Complexity, Quality Control Issues, Logistical Challenges	Service Diversification, Increased Grocery Delivery Demand, Sustainability	Supermarket Competition, Logistical Disruptions, Regulatory Changes
Jerry's Pizza	Control over Delivery Chain, Brand Loyalty, Cost Savings	Limited Operational Flexibility, Engagement Challenges, Scalability Issues	Digital Services Expansion, Partnerships, Sustainability Initiatives	Aggregator Competition, Operational Disruptions, Economic Volatility

5. Conclusions

The implementation of remote work across various industries presents both advantages and specific challenges (Traqq, 2024). A SWOT analysis provides a useful framework for assessing the impact of this transition and for developing effective strategies to manage these changes. Sectors such as HORECA, and food delivery illustrate the diverse ways in which remote work can be integrated, each with its own particularities and lessons to be learned. Continuous adaptation

and innovation remain essential for the success of remote work in any economic sector. The aim of this paper is to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with organizations' adoption of remote work strategies through a thematic analysis of the available literature.

Based on the selected academic literature, the general conclusion is that the paper has achieved its objective by suggesting that a SWOT analysis of remote work supports future investigations of remote work from a strategic management perspective. Despite the significant growth trend in empirical studies focusing on remote work, very few studies have examined the support and contribution of remote work to strategic management in the context of SWOT analysis. There is limited literature available to demonstrate that the empirically highlighted advantages of remote work can be identified as strengths and opportunities within a SWOT analysis context. While some positive outcomes of remote work have been identified in the literature, it remains difficult to clearly distinguish between strengths and opportunities in the context of remote work.

The same concern applies to the constraints/negative results of telework, as there has been difficulty in distinguishing between weaknesses and threats. Therefore, more research is needed in this area to gain a better understanding of the SWOT components related to telework.

Additionally, the positive outcomes identified as strengths and opportunities in the literature may not be effective or available in practical scenarios if remote work strategies are not properly planned within a specific business environment. Hence, future research should explore whether employees/employers truly perceive or accept the positive outcomes as strengths and opportunities.

The negative outcomes identified as weaknesses and threats based on the literature may not be universal. There may be specific threats and weaknesses unique to a particular workplace

or industry, necessitating further research to understand this area from a broader perspective. Ultimately, it is crucial for researchers to collaborate closely with industry experts and employees in IT, public services, HORECA to better understand the practical context of environmental factors in the SWOT analysis of remote work.

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