

ENGAGING A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

THE CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS OF NFPs/NGOS WITH TECHNOLOGY

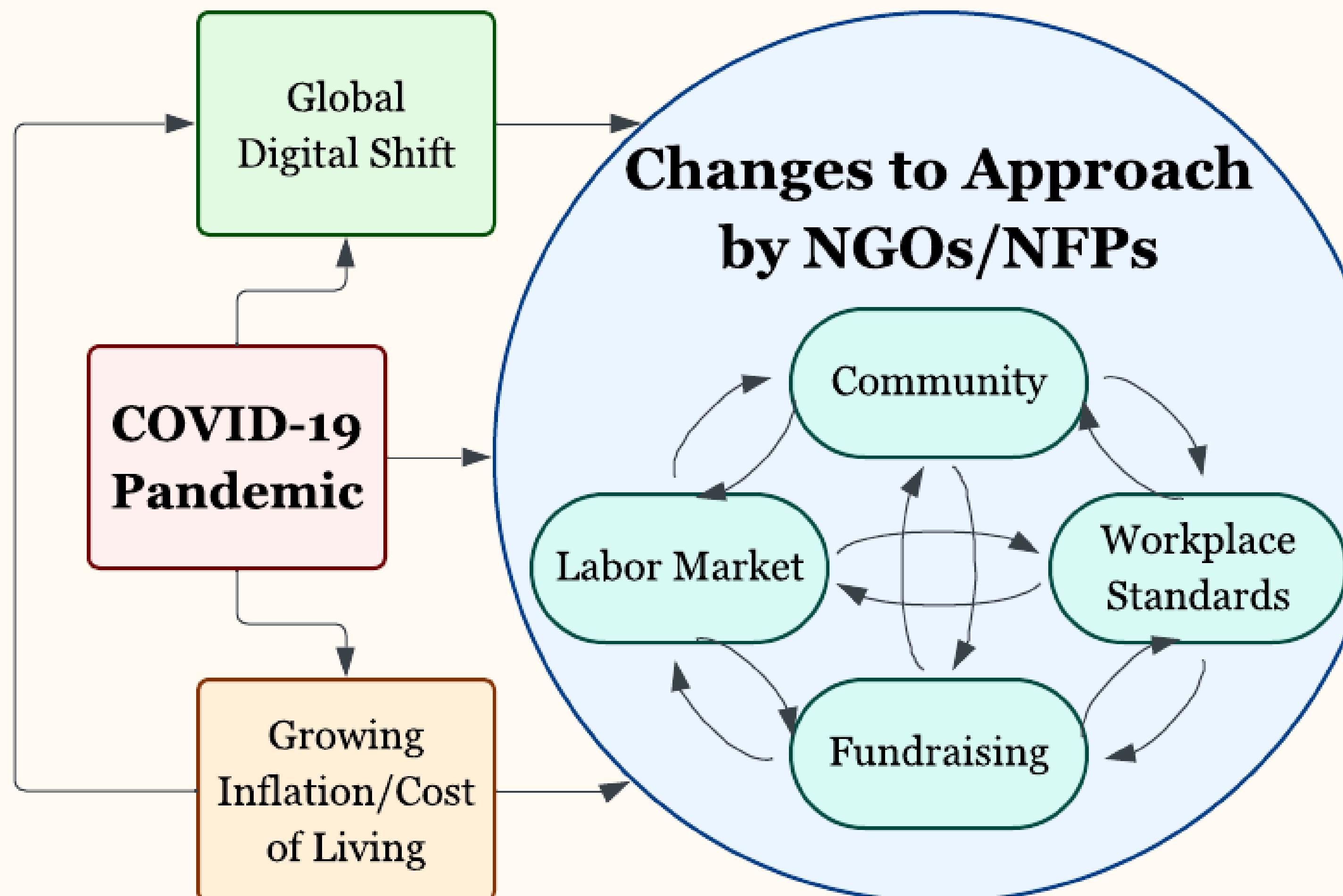


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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic affected massive societal change, much of which we have yet to uncover the true breadth. Nonprofits (NFPs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in particular, faced critical changes in their relationships with technology and their target demographics as a result of shifting needs of the post-pandemic world. In order to assess the true scope of these changes, I utilized a thorough document analysis of existing scholarship and interviewed marketing/outreach professionals at 3 large-scale NFPs/NGOs: The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Volunteers of America (VOA), and the Association of Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC). Utilizing the gathered data, four principal areas of impact are outlined that inform the post-pandemic outreach strategies of these organizations: (1) Community, (2) Workplace Standards, (3) Fundraising, and (4) the Labor Market. These findings emphasize the inherent interconnectedness of NFPs and NGOs with the state of their communities and suggest the need for continual adaptation across the virtual and physical landscape.



LITERATURE REVIEW

- Collaborative efforts among nonprofits and other community based organizations are shown to improve disaster risk reduction (DRR), emergency response, and disaster recovery. Further, using social media to communicate across information to community stakeholders has been found to positively impact an organization's ability to reduce community disaster risk and predict inter-organizational collaboration output. (Fu & Lai, 2021)
- It is critical for nonprofits to be aware of both what their communities need and how to train staff and volunteers to meet those need, especially in times of crisis when such communal needs may fall outside of the standard scope of an organization's regular services. (Hampton et al., 2024)
- NGOs need to be aware of the type of content that their target audience engages with the most in order to optimize the visibility of their mission. (Kim et al., 2024)
- The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the normalization of digital interaction, requiring nonprofits and organizations to increase their digital capacity to keep up with the majority of the population. Simultaneously, this shift toward the digital continues to strain the digital divide globally. (Rosenbusch et al., 2024)
- While social media can be incredibly useful for generating awareness and engagement, it is not explicitly designed as a vehicle for charity. A number of organizations explicitly avoid certain using certain platforms, like Facebook, for direct fundraising due to the way it handles donations. (Shi et al., 2025)
- Lockdown mandates and social distancing policies created significant financial and labor hurdles for NFPs to overcome, necessitating the development of new strategies to engage their target audiences. (Van Steenburg et al., 2022)

RESPONSES

- “From a gift planning and outreach perspective, there was a lot of talk of death... A lot more thinking about death and huge spike in interest... I want to be very sensitive about the scenarios being discussed in advertisements.” (Interview 1, WWF)
- “Everyone worked from home during the height of the pandemic, but as restrictions eased, we realized that we could successfully work from home quite well and they started to allow full-time remote status, when previously we could work from home one or two days a week at most.” (Interview 2, WWF)
- “Our senior nursing facilities were significantly impacted. There were emergency calls at all times of day... it developed into a website and social media over time but was very reactive as opposed to systematically changing things like you would traditionally do.” (Interview 3, VOA)
- Our members were on the front lines, and APIC was a key source of guidance for the broader public, and understanding how to effectively reach the public was vital to our mission. (Interview 4, APIC)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What significant changes were made to the outreach strategies of NFPs/NGOs to account for the changes in societal landscape caused by the Covid-19 pandemic?
- How did the changing needs of communities during the Covid-19 pandemic impact the ways that NFPs/NGOs engaged with their target audiences through digital marketing?
- How significantly did the responsive changes to the Covid-19 pandemic made by NFPs/NGOs internationally differ from those of US-based organizations?
- Did the difference in the overall missions of various NFPs/NGOs necessitate directional changes to digital marketing strategies during and after the pandemic?

RESULTS/OBSERVATIONS

- The observed changes made by NFPs/NGOs during and post pandemic can largely be categorized in their relation to one of four principal categories:
 - Community
 - Workplace Standards
 - Fundraising
 - The Labor Market
- While NFPs/NGOs internationally made different changes on the micro-level, they globally retained similar directional courses.
- The COVID-19 pandemic itself required NFPs/NGOs to break from traditional practice, but it also influenced these institutional changes in more indirect ways, chiefly by contributing to inflation and the growing cost of living and by accelerating the societal shift toward digital community.

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