

Adoption of Gig Economy in the Real Estate Industry: Drivers, Challenges, and Impact on Innovative Business Strategies

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ABSTRACT

The gig economy has transformed various industries, including real estate, by introducing flexible work arrangements and innovative business strategies. Despite its growing significance, research on the adoption, challenges, and strategic implications of gig work in real estate remains limited. This study aims to (i) identify the key factors driving the gig economy in real estate, (ii) analyze the challenges faced by both gig workers and companies, and (iii) investigate the impacts of the gig economy on the industry through innovative business strategies. A qualitative research design was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews with four industry experts through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis revealed that flexibility, cost-efficiency, demand for niche expertise, digitalization, and workforce agility are primary adoption drivers. In addressing the second objective, the study found that companies face difficulties in assessing gig workers' reliability and qualifications due to the absence of standardized regulations. Gig workers, conversely, grapple with job insecurity and intense competition in an unregulated market. The findings of objective three, further demonstrate that the gig economy is shaping real estate strategies through flexible leasing models, co-living arrangements, and short-term rentals that align with gig workers' lifestyles. These trends reflect a broader industry shift toward adaptability and affordability. This study fills a critical gap by providing empirical insights into the relationship between gig work and real estate innovation. It underscores the need for structured platforms and regulatory frameworks to ensure sustainable gig work integration in the industry. Future research should explore policy interventions and the long-term sustainability of gig work in real estate.

Keywords: *Gig economy, real estate industry, drivers, and challenges, business strategies*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The accelerated economic advancement and urbanization in Malaysia have precipitated substantial transformations within the real estate sector, with the gig economy emerging as a prominent phenomenon. In 2019, the Global Gig-Economy Index Report elucidated that independent contractors in the United States

observed the most pronounced revenue escalation at 78%, succeeded by the United Kingdom at 59% and Brazil at 48% (Payoner, 2019). Concurrently, the gig economy in Malaysia is experiencing rapid expansion, with forecasts suggesting that nearly 40% of the labor force could transition into freelance roles within five years, a statistic that is notably higher than the global mean of 20% (Jumbri et al., 2024). Abdullah et al., (2024) state, by 2020, approximately 26% of the Malaysian labor force, or four million individuals, were expected to participate in the gig economy as full-time gig workers.

The gig economy, delineated by its flexible employment structures and the predominance of freelance and contract-based engagements, has fundamentally altered conventional employment paradigms, exerting influence across various industries, including real estate (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2020). Social support networks, including familial, peer, and professional support, contribute to the financial, emotional, and informational well-being of gig workers. These networks provide essential support that enhances resilience (Asmanto, et.al., 2024). The ramifications of the gig economy on the real estate industry in Malaysia are extensive, influencing diverse dimensions such as property development, investment methodologies, and consumer behavior. This transformation is propelled by the emergence of digital platforms and the growing population of gig workers, which have presented novel opportunities and challenges for stakeholders within the real estate sector. For example, the rise of PropTech and digital marketplaces has further accelerated this trend, enabling real estate professionals to work independently while maintaining access to clients and resources (Tagliaro et al, 2024). Concurrently, the emergence of the gig economy has compelled real estate developers to investigate innovative business paradigms, such as short-term rental accommodations (STRA), which have surged in popularity owing to platforms such as Airbnb and Booking.com. These models offer flexibility and cater to the needs of gig workers and travellers seeking temporary housing solutions (Dilak Geoffrey et al., 2024).

On one hand, the gig economy has engendered unprecedented prospects for real estate developers and investors, prompting the exploration of inventive business models and avenues for real estate development and investment. Conversely, it has also instigated concerns regarding the sustainability of these emergent models, encompassing matters related to property management, security, and the potential displacement of traditional tenants. Furthermore, the emergence of gig employment has precipitated a growing necessity for adaptable residential and occupational environments, prompting developers to construct properties that can be readily modified for diverse functionalities, including co-living and co-working arrangements. Not only that, Sharam & Bryant (2017) also agree that the proliferation of digital platforms has created opportunities for investment in technology-driven real estate solutions, enhancing the efficiency of property management and tenant matching processes. Furthermore, the gig economy has notably impacted consumer inclinations, as an increasing contingent of individuals pursue adaptable and cost-effective housing alternatives that correspond with their professional and lifestyle requirements (Nawawi et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the increasing prevalence of gig employment that provides a plethora of prospects for innovation and advancement within the real estate domain, it concurrently introduces challenges that necessitate meticulous contemplation and strategic formulation. Challenges such as job security, regulatory concerns, and fluctuating income remain critical barriers that impact workers and businesses in the sector. While technological advancements and market shifts drive its adoption, the lack of standardized regulations and unclear standards and guidelines complicate the integration of digital platforms into traditional real estate practices (Ali et al., 2025). Besides, Joshi & Jain, (2024) highlighted that gig workers in real estate face job insecurity and lack of protection under traditional employment laws, which can lead to economic uncertainties and social isolation. Furthermore, the competitive dynamics inherent in the gig economy within the real estate sector present novel obstacles on market demand, pricing mechanisms, and the caliber of service provision. Small businesses in the real estate sector encounter challenges related to maintaining quality control over gig workers and managing financial risks associated with flexible work arrangements (Palada et al., 2024).

Even though more professionals are becoming involved in gig-based real estate transactions, there is still a dearth of thorough research on how creative business practices can promote and maximise gig work in this industry. While a few sector-specific studies are focusing on real estate, most previous research has primarily examined the gig economy as a whole or focused on industries such as technology (Brawley, 2017), services (Kozak et al., 2023), transportation (Wu, 2024), or e-hailing food delivery (Penu, 2020; Antara et al., 2022). As a result, little is known about the particular effects of gig work on real estate professionals, such as how it affects business models, service delivery, and housing solutions. This gap

emphasises the need for studies that look at how the gig economy is influencing strategic innovation in the real estate sector, especially in developing nations like Malaysia, in addition to identifying adoption factors and obstacles.

Hence, this study aims to bridge this gap by achieving three objectives: (i) to identify the adoption factors driving the gig economy in the real estate industry, (ii) to analyse the challenge of gig work in the real estate industry and (iii) to investigate the impacts of gig economy on the real estate industry through innovative business strategies. Understanding these factors and challenges is crucial for assessing the sustainability and attractiveness of gig roles within the industry. By identifying the key drivers, challenges, and strategic approaches, it shapes the adoption of gig work in real estate, providing valuable insights for policymakers, industry leaders, and gig workers alike. As the gig economy continues to evolve, policymakers and industry stakeholders need to collaborate in developing gig economy regulations and strategies that support both innovation and stability and foster real estate industry development.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of the existing literature is composed of three themed subsections. First is an overview of the gig economy, particularly on its definition and growth. Second is the drivers and challenges of gig work in the real estate industry, and third, the relationship between the theoretical framework and the gap in the impact of the gig economy on innovative business strategies in real estate.

2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE GIG ECONOMY: DEFINITIONS AND GROWTH

2.1.1 Definition

The late 20th century marked the rise of Internet technology (IT) and digital transformation, driving the emergence of innovative business models (Prameswari & Fachrunnisa, 2020). Among these, the gig economy has evolved as a dynamic market structure where individuals offer services to various enterprises on a fixed-term basis via digital platforms. The gig economy primarily involves temporary, project-based, and outcome-driven employment, characterized by labor exchanged for monetary compensation through digital marketplaces (Lepanjuuri et al., 2018; Donovan et al., 2016). These platforms facilitate connections between service providers and consumers under short-term, task-based payment models. The gig economy encompasses short-term, flexible work arrangements in which individuals serve as independent contractors or freelancers rather than conventional full-time employees. This model is facilitated by digital platforms that connect workers with clients for short-term engagements (de Ruyter & Brown, 2019). In the gig economy, the engagement consists of transient, project-oriented, and result-oriented labor (Harun et al., 2020). It involves a triangular relationship between the worker, the digital platform, and the end-user, which allows for a wide range of services to be offered on a fixed-time basis (Hudek & Širec, 2023). Meanwhile, the gig economy encompasses service-oriented employment, wherein digital platforms facilitate the connection between laborers and consumers, as illustrated by transportation services such as Grab and culinary delivery services such as FoodPanda (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2019). The International Labour Organization (ILO), on the other hand, defines gig workers as workers who "often labour independently, in isolation, over geographically expansive areas, and in direct competition with one another, hence are often classified as independent contractors (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020).

The gig economy in the real estate context refers to a market system where individuals offer real estate-related services on a temporary or project basis, often facilitated by digital platforms. This model allows for flexible work arrangements and is characterized by short-term contracts. According to Sdino & Magoni (2017), the gig economy in real estate heavily relies on digital platforms that connect service providers with clients. These platforms serve to enable transactional activities and establish a marketplace for various services, including property management, real estate photography, and short-term rental accommodations. The services provided within the real estate gig economy are predominantly rendered temporarily, thereby facilitating flexibility and adaptability in addressing the exigencies of market demands. Individuals engaged in the gig economy benefit from a significant degree of flexibility and autonomy, permitting them to determine both the timing and how they provide their services. This is particularly appealing in the real estate sector, where property owners can decide the duration and terms of rental agreements. The adaptability inherent in gig employment within the real estate sector facilitates a wide variety of services;

however, it simultaneously engenders apprehensions regarding job security and income consistency for conventional employees within the industry (Yunita, 2023). The gig economy within the realm of real estate constitutes an element of a more extensive trend wherein digital platforms facilitate the linkage between service providers and consumers, thereby converting conventional work arrangements into increasingly adaptable, on-demand services. This transformation is particularly evident in the short-term rental market, where platforms like Airbnb have significantly impacted traditional real estate practices.

2.1.2 Gig Economy Growth in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the gig economy is regarded as a component of the non-standard or informal sector, distinguished by adaptable employment arrangements. The Human Resources Development Fund (HRDC) (2019) emphasized three key elements of the gig economy, namely (i) Independent workers compensated per task or project, (ii) Consumers seeking particular services, and (iii) Companies that enable direct links between workers and consumers. Throughout the preceding decade, the gig economy in Malaysia has undergone substantial expansion, establishing itself as an essential element of the broader labor market within the nation. Presently, it is characterized by a transition from traditional full-time employment to flexible, independent job engagements often facilitated by digital platforms (Li, 2023). This shift has been driven by the surge in internet accessibility and the extensive embrace of smartphones, facilitating the growth of platform-oriented services like ridesharing and food delivery. The statistics reinforce the narrative of expansion within this sector. The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM, 2021) reported that the proportion of individuals involved in freelance or independent professional work increased from 26% in 2019 to over 35% by the end of 2021. This sharp incline can be attributed to various factors, including economic needs, the desire for flexible working hours, and the growing acceptance of freelance work as a legitimate employment avenue. In terms of revenue, gig economy platforms have seen an exponential surge. A study by the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) found that the digital gig economy contributed approximately RM11.4 billion to the national economy in 2020, reflecting an annual growth rate of 8.25% (Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation, 2024). This trajectory is poised to continue, with projections indicating that the gig economy could contribute up to 20% to Malaysia's GDP by 2025. The types of gigs available in the Malaysian market are diverse, spanning across tech, creative industries, professional services, and delivery services. The latter has witnessed a particular spike in demand, coinciding with the behavioural shifts precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced many consumers to opt for online shopping and food deliveries thus propelling platforms such as Grab, Foodpanda, and Lalamove to new heights in terms of active users and overall transactions (Le et al., 2022).

Recognition by the government of the gig economy's role in the national economic composition has led to policy responses aimed at sustaining its growth. Initiatives such as EPF's i-Saraan and SOCSO's employment injury scheme are examples of the Malaysian government accommodating the social protection and welfare needs of gig economy workers (Abdullah et al., 2024). In summary, the Malaysian gig economy is not only growing but evolving. It presents lucrative opportunities for workers and businesses alike, while driving innovation in how labor is structured and compensated. Taken together, these growth and trends indicate the gig economy's substantial role in shaping Malaysia's future economic landscape.

2.2 DRIVERS AND CHALLENGE INFLUENCING THE ADOPTION OF GIG ECONOMY IN THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

The integration of the gig economy within the real estate sector is shaped by numerous factors and obstacles, as indicated by the research papers provided. The gig economy, known for its flexible, short-term, and freelance work enabled by digital platforms, has transformed traditional employment models across numerous industries, including real estate. However, its integration into the real estate industry is shaped by both opportunities and significant challenges. This section explores these driver factors and challenges of the gig economy in the real estate industry, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Drivers and Challenges Influencing The Adoption Of Gig Economy In The Real Estate Industry

Drivers	Explanation on Factors	Explanation on Challenge
Technological Advancements	The expansion of the gig economy is predominantly propelled by technological innovations and digital platforms, which	Digital platforms like Airbnb have already disrupted traditional real estate markets by enabling short-term rentals, which have

and Digital Platforms	enable adaptive work configurations and establish connections between gig workers and employment prospects. These platforms allow real estate professionals to participate in freelance opportunities, providing services like property management, real estate photography, and virtual tours (Singh et al., 2023) (Shubhadip et al., 2021).	implications for housing availability and affordability (Ekmekçi, 2024).
Flexibility and Autonomy	The gig economy provides real estate professionals with enhanced flexibility and independence, enabling them to oversee their schedules and engage in multiple projects concurrently. This flexibility can attract individuals seeking a better work-life balance and the ability to diversify income streams(Ganapathyraman, 2025) (Li, 2023).	However, this flexibility comes with challenges such as income volatility and the lack of traditional employment benefits, which can deter some professionals from fully embracing gig work in real estate(Ganapathyraman, 2025) (Li, 2023).
Regulatory and Legal Challenges	The gig economy's integration into real estate is hindered by regulatory and legal challenges. The lack of clear regulations governing gig work can lead to issues such as job insecurity and inadequate worker protections(Joshi & Jain, 2024) (Endress, 2024).	Policymakers are urged to develop regulations that ensure fair compensation, worker protection, and social inclusion, which are crucial for the sustainable adoption of gig work in real estate(Endress, 2024) (Li, 2023).
Economic and Social Implications	The gig economy can enhance economic resilience by diversifying income streams and reducing reliance on traditional employment models. This adaptability is particularly relevant in the real estate industry, where market conditions can be volatile (Ganapathyraman, 2025).	Nevertheless, the gig economy additionally exacerbates income inequality and labor market fragmentation, with individuals possessing high-level skills deriving greater advantages than their low-skilled counterparts engaged in gig work. This disparity can affect the overall economic welfare of gig workers in real estate (Ekmekçi, 2024).
Entrepreneurial Opportunities and Business Models	The gig economy presents entrepreneurial opportunities for real estate professionals to develop innovative business models and services. Platforms that facilitate personalized recommendations and matching services can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of gig work in real estate (Cho & Cho, 2020).	Despite the availability of these opportunities, creating sustainable business models that harmonize economic advantages with social equity continues to pose a significant challenge (Cho & Cho, 2020).

2.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND THE GAP IN THE IMPACT OF THE GIG ECONOMY ON INNOVATIVE BUSINESS STRATEGIES IN REAL ESTATE

The gig economy has significantly impacted various industries by introducing innovative business strategies that leverage flexibility (Khaneja, 2024), digital platforms (Ohira, 2021), and a redefined workforce structure. This economic model has transformed traditional employment paradigms, offering both opportunities and challenges for businesses and workers alike (Cho & Cho, 2020). The gig economy's influence is evident in its ability to foster organizational flexibility, enhance product development, and reshape supply chain strategies. Although the literature provides substantial insight into the definitions, growth, drivers, and challenges of the gig economy, limited attention has been paid to its strategic implications within the real estate sector. Most existing studies have focused on general employment patterns, platform operations, and service delivery models in sectors such as ride-hailing, food delivery, and IT freelancing. In contrast, there is a noticeable gap in understanding how the gig economy influences innovative business strategies in the real estate industry, especially in developing countries like Malaysia.

As such, this study seeks to address this gap by exploring the intersection between gig work and emerging real estate strategies, such as co-living spaces, flexible rentals, and platform-based services.

This study is underpinned by the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003), which explains how new ideas, practices, or technologies spread within a social system. Gig work and digital platforms facilitate the adoption of innovative business models in the real estate industry, making the theory particularly relevant. Using this theory, the study investigates how real estate stakeholders (developers, agents, and property managers) adapt their business approaches in response to the increasing presence of gig workers and platform-driven labour. The aim of this study, particularly in addressing the third objective, is to examine the strategic responses of real estate businesses to gig economy trends and to identify how gig-based practices are reshaping service delivery, marketing, and property offerings. The expected outcome is a clearer understanding of the new business models and strategic innovations arising from gig-based labour, such as digital service outsourcing, flexible tenancy arrangements, and tech-enabled property management.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This research was designed to address three main objectives: (i) to identify the adoption factors driving the gig economy in the real estate industry, (ii) to analyze the challenges of gig work in the real estate industry, and (iii) to investigate the impacts of the gig economy on the real estate industry through innovative business strategies. This research utilizes a qualitative methodology to investigate the integration of gig work within the real estate sector, emphasizing its motivating factors, obstacles, and the effects of the gig economy on the industry through innovative business approaches. Qualitative research is effective for capturing in-depth insights into complex social and economic phenomena. By focusing on the perspectives of participants, qualitative research captures the complexity and diversity of social interactions, offering insights that are often missed by quantitative approaches (Dźwigoł, 2024). A semi-structured interview method is adopted to facilitate an open yet guided discussion with industry professionals (Kallio et al. (2016). This method was chosen because it allows researchers to explore predetermined topics while also being flexible enough to probe deeper based on participants' responses. According to Bryson, (2022), this approach allows for flexibility in exploring respondents' perspectives while ensuring consistency across interviews. For this study, a purposive sampling technique is used to identify respondents with relevant experience in both the real estate sector and the gig economy. This method ensures that participants possess the necessary expertise to provide meaningful insights (Campbell et al., 2020). A total of four respondents have been selected, as it represents a growing real estate market with emerging gig work trends. The sample size of four respondents was deemed sufficient based on the principle of data saturation—the point at which no new information or themes emerge from additional interviews (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Since this was an exploratory qualitative study focused on an under-researched area, a small, information-rich sample allowed for depth and detail without being constrained by the need for generalizability. Owing to the accelerated urban development and the amalgamation of residential, commercial, and industrial sectors, Shah Alam, Selangor, emerges as a salient site for investigating the implications of gig economy platforms on real estate dynamics. Professionals in this region are likely to have firsthand experience with a variety of client demands, property management challenges, and market fluctuations. Their insights can provide valuable information on how gig economy platforms are reshaping real estate practices, client interactions, and overall market trends in a major urban area of Malaysia. As shown in Table 2, the selection criteria for key informant for this study include:

- i. Professional experience in the real estate industry.
- ii. Direct involvement in gig-based real estate work (minimum five years of experience)
- iii. Availability and willingness to participate in the study.

Table 2: Key Informant's Profile

Respondent	Position	Year of experience
R1	Freelance Real Estate Agent	6 years
R2	Property Manager	5 years
R3	Independent Contractor	6 years
R4	Marketing Specialist (Gig Worker)	5 years

The interviews were conducted face-to-face, each lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes. All sessions were audio-recorded with informed consent, and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework (Vagisha, 2023). Transcripts were systematically coded to identify recurring patterns, themes, and categories relevant to the study's objectives. For data screening, the interview transcripts were reviewed for clarity, consistency, and completeness before analysis. Incomplete, unclear, or off-topic responses were noted and considered during the coding process to ensure that only relevant data informed the final themes. Transcripts were cross-checked against audio recordings to ensure transcription accuracy. This process enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings and helped maintain the integrity of the data interpretation. This structured process ensured a rigorous and transparent interpretation of qualitative data. Ethical principles were upheld throughout the research process. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and their rights, including anonymity, voluntary participation, and the ability to withdraw at any stage. All data were stored securely, and identifying information was removed from transcripts to protect respondent confidentiality.

4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis of interview findings, summarizing key themes related to the adoption of gig work in the real estate industry. The findings highlight the drivers, challenges, and innovative strategies shaping gig-based real estate work, offering a comprehensive understanding of its impact within the real estate industry.

4.1.1 Factors Driving The Development And Growth Of Gig Economy In The Real Estate Industry

This section delves into the principal elements propelling the embrace of the gig economy within the real estate domain. It explores respondents' perspectives on the motivations, market dynamics, and industry conditions that influence the integration of gig-based work. The analysis highlights the drivers facilitating gig job adoption in real estate, particularly from the employers' standpoint, providing insights into emerging trends and workforce transformations.

Respondent 1 believes that:

"Gig work's flexibility is a game-changer for employers. They explained that it allows businesses to adjust quickly to changes in market demand without the long-term commitment of hiring full-time employees. For example, during busy periods or for specific projects, employers can hire gig workers to fill the gaps without worrying about overhead costs like benefits or permanent salaries. This makes operations more streamlined and efficient."

"Flexibility in work hours allows me to manage my personal and professional life better. Being able to set my own schedule means I can attend to family matters, pursue personal interests, and still meet my professional commitments without feeling overwhelmed. This balance is crucial for my overall well-being and productivity".

However, Respondent 2 provided a contrasting perspective, stating that:

"While the gig economy is doubtless highly advantageous in several ways, it promotes cost savings and casts a wide net for specialized talent. For example, structured platforms or standardized processes to manage gig workers are very few and far between. Performance that cannot be effectively monitored is often unable to hold a person responsible for a constant work product. Legal and regulatory frameworks, especially contract enforcement and workers' rights, make employers chary of the gig work model in totality."

"The gig economy in real estate is growing because it's cost-effective and flexible. More people are accepting it, but the lack of standard platforms is slowing its full potential. Once these systems are in place, it will likely grow even faster."

Meanwhile, Respondent 3 stated that:

"I see the acceptance of gig work steadily improving as companies realize the value of having a flexible workforce. Employers appreciate the efficiency of outsourcing specific tasks for short-term needs, which contributes to operational agility."

"One of the main reasons gig works is on the increase in the real estate industry is digital tools and platforms. These tools make hiring easier and working with gig workers effective for employers. These can manage short-term projects or piecework more efficiently. An example could be gig professional platforms that focus on the real estate business. Through these platforms, it is easy for the employers to post their requirements for a job, search and assess candidate profiles, and communicate effectively with the gig professionals. This no doubt is boosting efficiency and is persuading more and more employers to use gig work. Besides, this scaling up and down of the workforce capacity according to the projects' requirements adds competitiveness-especially to such a dynamic industry like real estate."

Finally, Respondent 4 highlighted:

"In my opinion, the gig economy's growth potential is largely tied to the integration of digital tools and innovative approaches in real estate. Traditional agencies must adapt and recognize the value gig workers bring in terms of efficiency and creativity."

"The workforce's preference for flexibility and project-oriented work has turned gig work into an attractive option for employers. A lot of professionals are concentrated on work-life balance and prefer short-term or freelance jobs, which exactly corresponds to the gig economy. It will continue to benefit employers in the real estate industry because it opens them up to a talent pool that is very motivated and hungry for specialized assignments. Moreover, gig workers bring in new ideas and innovation that can help in improving the outcomes of the projects. The employers who will move with this trend and incorporate gig workers into their operations will have an edge regarding adaptability, efficiency, and access to diversified expertise."

The analysis highlights several factors driving the rise of gig work in the real estate industry from respondent's perspective as summarised and shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Factors Driving the Gig Economy in The Real Estate Industry

Code	Factors Driving the Gig Economy in The Real Estate Industry	R1	R2	R3	R4
F1	Flexibility in work hours	/			/
F2	Cost-effectiveness	/	/		
F3	Demand for the development of structured platforms		/		
F4	Demand for specialized skills			/	/
F5	Digital tools & platform adoption			/	/
F6	Demand for the development of clear legal and regulatory frameworks		/		
F7	Employer workforce agility	/		/	
F8	Innovation & fresh perspectives				/

The findings highlight critical factors driving the gig economy in the real estate industry, with flexibility in work hours (F1), cost-effectiveness (F2), demand for specialized skills (F4), digital tools & platform adoption (F5), and employer workforce agility (F7) emerging as the most influential. Conversely, demand for the development of structured platforms (F3), demand for clear legal and regulatory frameworks (F6), and innovation & fresh perspectives (F8) were identified as the least significant factors. This indicates a strong emphasis on operational efficiency, workforce adaptability, and technological integration rather than regulatory or structural concerns.

The gig economy's appeal in real estate is driven by flexibility (F1) and cost-effectiveness (F2), both of which were highly selected. Flexibility allows professionals to operate beyond traditional employment

structures, aligning with the rise of freelance property agents, digital marketing specialists, and short-term consultants in the industry. This aligns with prior studies that emphasize gig workers' preference for autonomy and adaptable work schedules to optimize productivity (De Stefano, 2016). Additionally, cost-effectiveness (F2) reflects how real estate firms and independent professionals leverage gig-based models to reduce overhead costs, making real estate services more accessible and competitive (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016).

The high selection of demand for specialized skills (F4) and digital tools & platform adoption (F5) highlights a shift toward technology-driven and expertise-based roles in the industry. The adoption of digital platforms, such as online property marketplaces, virtual tours, and AI-driven analytics, is transforming how real estate professionals engage with clients and manage transactions (Baum, 2017). The gig economy fosters a demand for specialized skills in areas such as data analytics, digital marketing, and property technology (proptech), reflecting the industry's increasing reliance on niche expertise. These findings support the broader trend of technology reshaping real estate employment models, where digital tools enhance efficiency, scalability, and market reach.

The recognition of employer workforce agility (F7) by multiple respondents underscores the growing preference for dynamic and flexible employment strategies. Employers are shifting toward on-demand hiring models, allowing real estate firms to scale operations in response to market fluctuations. This supports existing research suggesting that workforce agility is essential in fast-changing industries, where businesses must quickly adapt to consumer demand, economic shifts, and technological advancements (Jyothirmai et.al., 2022).

In contrast, the least selected factors—demand for structured platforms (F3), clear legal and regulatory frameworks (F6), and innovation & fresh perspectives (F8)—suggest that respondents do not yet perceive these elements as pressing concerns. While regulations and structured platforms are essential for long-term industry stability, their lower selection may indicate that gig workers and employers prioritize immediate operational flexibility over long-term regulatory clarity. Similarly, the low emphasis on innovation & fresh perspectives (F8) suggests that while creativity is valued, the current focus is on leveraging existing tools and skill sets rather than groundbreaking innovations.

4.1.2 Challenge of Gig Work In The Real Estate Industry

This section explores the key challenges associated with gig work in the real estate sector, as highlighted by respondents. It scrutinizes the challenges encountered by both enterprises and gig workers, offering perspectives on the obstacles that impede the comprehensive integration of the gig economy within the sector. Respondent 1,2,3, and 4 comment on the challenges of a lack of trust in gig workers' reliability and skills, difficulty in assessing skills and qualifications and lack of standardized practices and regulations that are faced by companies, as shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Analysis on Interview Transcription on Challenge Faced by Companies

Respondent	Interview transcription	Keypoint	Code	Challenge
R1	"One major challenge is the lack of trust in gig workers' reliability and skills. Companies often hesitate to assign important tasks to gig workers because they are unsure about their commitment and expertise."	Companies hesitate to assign important tasks due to uncertainty about gig workers' reliability.	CC1	Lack of Trust in Gig Workers' Reliability and Skills
R2	"In my experience, there is a significant trust issue when it comes to hiring gig workers. Employers are often skeptical about their ability to deliver quality work consistently."	Employers are skeptical about gig workers' ability to consistently deliver quality work.	CC2	
R3	"A major obstacle is the doubt companies have regarding the dependability of gig workers. This lack of trust can prevent	Doubts about dependability prevent companies from fully utilizing gig workers.	CC3	

	companies from fully utilizing gig workers for critical projects."			
R4	"Companies are often unsure about giving key tasks to gig workers. They're concerned that gig workers might not be dependable or that they might lack the necessary skills."	Concerns about dependability and skill gaps make companies reluctant to assign key tasks.	CC4	
R1	"Companies face challenges in assessing the skills and qualifications of gig workers. There are no standardized systems to evaluate their expertise, making it difficult to ensure they meet the required standards."	Lack of standardized systems makes skill verification difficult.	CC5	Difficulty in Assessing Skills and Qualifications
R2	"In my opinion, evaluating the qualifications of gig workers is a significant challenge. Without formal systems in place, it's hard to verify their capabilities and ensure they are a good fit for the job."	Employers struggle to verify the qualifications of gig workers without formal evaluation systems.	CC6	
R3	"The assessment of expertise in gig workers is a problem for companies. Without formal ways of evaluation, it's hard to determine their actual skill levels."	The absence of structured evaluation processes makes assessing gig workers' expertise challenging.	CC7	
R4	"One of the main issues is an inability to verify the skills and qualifications of gig workers. That uncertainty can make it difficult for companies to hire them out for specialized tasks."	Uncertainty in verifying skills creates hiring difficulties, especially for specialized tasks.	CC8	
R1	"The absence of standardized practices and regulations creates uncertainty for employers, making it difficult to integrate gig workers effectively into their operations."	The absence of structured regulations creates uncertainty for employers.	CC9	Lack of Standardized Practices and Regulations
R2	"In my view, the lack of uniform practices in the gig economy leads to confusion and inconsistency, which can be a barrier for companies trying to incorporate gig workers."	Inconsistent practices in the gig economy create confusion for companies.	CC10	
R3	"I think the absence of clear guidelines and standards for gig work poses a challenge for companies. This lack of structure makes it hard to manage gig workers efficiently."	The lack of clear guidelines makes it difficult for companies to manage gig workers efficiently.	CC11	
R4	"From my perspective, the lack of standardized procedures in the gig economy creates difficulties for employers. It's challenging to ensure consistency and quality without established norms."	Employers struggle to ensure consistency and quality without standardized procedures.	CC12	

This finding highlights that while gig work offers flexibility and independence, it also presents significant challenges for companies. One of the major challenges that companies faced is the **lack of trust in gig workers' reliability and skills** to deliver quality work consistently, which highlights the point of CC1, CC2, CC3 and CC4. This finding is consistent with the literature, which underscores trust as a major barrier to the integration of gig workers in professional industries (Nath, 2020). Employers remain skeptical about gig workers' ability to deliver work consistently (Singh, 2024) and concerns about dependability and skill gaps contribute to reluctance in assigning key responsibilities (Morris, 2015) which affects hiring decisions (Ashford et al., 2018).

Another critical challenge is **difficulty in assessing skills and qualifications**, which highlights the point of CC5, CC6, CC7 and CC8. This finding is consistent with the literature, which highlights the lack of standardized skill assessment results in hiring uncertainty, especially for specialized tasks (Friedman, 2014). Thus, there is a need for structured assessment mechanisms in gig work environments (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016).

One of the other significant challenges in the gig economy is the **lack of standardized practices and regulations** governing gig work in the real estate sector, which highlights the point of CC9, CC10, CC11 and CC12. This finding aligns with existing research, which highlights the detrimental effects of regulatory ambiguity on the financial security and working conditions of gig workers (Duggan et al., 2020). Besides, De Stefano (2016) stated that, without clear legal frameworks, gig workers often face employment uncertainties, lack of benefits, and inconsistent job protections.

Respondent 1,2,3, and 4 comment on the challenges of a lack of job stability and market competition faced by gig workers as shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Analysis on Interview Transcription on Challenge Faced by Gig Workers

Respondent	Interview transcription	Keypoint	Code	Challenge
R1	"Gig workers often struggle with job stability and lack access to benefits like health insurance or retirement plans, which hinders their career growth."	Gig workers face instability and lack essential benefits, limiting career growth.	CG1	Lack of Job Stability
R2	"In my opinion, gig workers are highly concerned about job security. Without stable employment and benefits, they cannot plan for anything."	Job insecurity prevents gig workers from planning for their future.	CG2	
R3	"I think gig workers face a lot of problems because of the insecurity of jobs and benefits. An instability is a big barrier in long-term career development."	Insecurity in jobs and benefits hinders career development.	CG3	
R4	"In my experience, the lack of job stability and benefits is a major drawback that gig workers face. It's hard to build a sustainable career without these essential supports."	Lack of stability and benefits makes it difficult for gig workers to sustain their careers.	CG4	
R1	"The gig workers very often must compete hard with the traditional employees, making it tough to get regular opportunities in such a competitive market. Traditional employees will be at an advantageous position by having already established networks and employer-provided resources that might give them great leverage over gig workers."	Gig workers struggle to compete with traditional employees due to lack of networks and employer resources.	CG5	Market Competition

R2	“The main challenge they face, in my point of view, is the competition arising between gig workers. They very often must compete with full-time employees who, in addition to enjoying more secure positions, very often get company-sponsored resources and privileges, making it harder to establish oneself as a gig worker and be able to compete.”	Competition with full-time employees and lack of resources make it harder for gig workers to compete.	CG6	
R3	“I observe that gig workers are often unable to compete with regular employees. Unlike their full-time counterparts, gig workers may not have the same access to consistent opportunities, which limits their ability to secure steady work and achieve long-term career growth in the real estate sector.	Limited access to opportunities restricts gig workers' career growth.	CG7	
R4	“In my opinion, the competition in the market itself puts gig workers at a great disadvantage. The lack of regular opportunities and the problematic nature of career advancement within such a competitive environment means that gig workers can only marginally survive, especially without support systems that may be offered to other traditional employees.”	Gig workers face disadvantages in career advancement due to intense competition and lack of support.	CG8	

From the findings above, it highlights that while gig work offers flexibility and independence, it also presents significant challenges for gig workers. One of the most significant challenges facing gig workers is **job instability**, which highlights the point of CG1, CG2, CG3 and CCG4. This finding is consistent with the literature, which emphasizes how gig work often lacks the structural support systems found in traditional employment (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2016). In the absence of consistent employment, individuals engaged in gig work encounter obstacles in strategizing for their long-term professional trajectories, which may result in financial instability and heightened stress levels (Ashford et al., 2018). The nature of gig work, which often depends on fluctuating demand, further exacerbates this instability, making career progression unpredictable and unsustainable for many workers (Friedman, 2014).

Another pressing issue is the intense **market competition** gig workers face, both against traditional employees and among themselves. As noted by the respondents, which highlights the point of CG5, CG6, CG7 and CCG8, gig workers struggle to secure opportunities due to their lack of access to employer-sponsored resources, networks, and privileges. This finding is consistent with the literature, which suggests that traditional employees benefit from established workplace structures, providing them with greater bargaining power and stability (Boeri, 2014). Gig workers, on the other hand, must navigate a highly competitive and often oversaturated market, where securing consistent work requires significant personal effort, marketing, and skill differentiation (Spreitzer et al., 2017). The high level of competition can limit job security and make long-term career sustainability a challenge.

4.1.3 Impact of Gig Work In The Real Estate Industry: A Business Strategy Perspective

This section will examine the impact of the gig economy on key aspects of the real estate industry, based on respondent insights. It will particularly explore how gig work influences the rental property demand in the perspective of business strategies.

(i) Demand for Flexible Rental Options

Respondent 1 emphasized the increasing demand for short-term rental options that highlight the gig economy offering flexibility as a competitive advantage:

“There’s been a noticeable shift in demand. Gig workers often need short-term options, so we’re seeing more landlords offer flexible rental spaces to accommodate them. It’s like the market is adapting to meet their transient lifestyles.”

The transient nature of gig work necessitates flexible leasing terms, as stated by Respondent 3:

“Quite a lot, flexibility on lease terms is important. Gig workers find themselves in a situation where they are forced to relocate because of employment. I’ve seen landlords mainstream their contracts around this.”

(ii) Affordability as a Primary Decision Factor

While affordability remains a critical factor, which emphasizes how the gig economy drives the market segmentation, as Respondent 2 pointed out:

“Affordability is a big issue. Gig workers are always looking for affordable rental properties. They tend to go for budget-friendly options that still meet their needs due to the uncertain income they have.”

(iii) Short-Term Rentals as an Emerging Model

Meanwhile, the other impact of the gig economy in terms of rental property demand is short-term rentals as an emerging business model echoing the demand for flexibility, is the point that Respondent 3 noted:

“For me, it’s all about short-term rentals. Gig workers tend to move frequently for work, and landlords are now catching up by offering leases that do not tie tenants down for long periods.”

(iv) Co-Living as a Growth Opportunity

Next, Respondent 4 highlighted the growing appeal of co-living spaces as the impact of the gig economy that emphasizes co-living as a strategic growth opportunity:

“To be honest, co-living spaces are becoming popular. Gig workers love the idea of affordable shared spaces where they can also network and collaborate with others.”

Respondent 1 also emphasized the increasing preference for shared accommodation among gig workers:

“I am prepared to believe that workers in the gig economy are turning the rental market on its head. They are perpetually seeking possibilities of shared accommodation, they want to do so jointly with at least one other person. Culturally, it’s the way they do it.”

The analysis highlights several impacts of gig work in the real estate industry from respondent’s perspective as summarised and shown in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Impact of Gig Work in The Real Estate Industry: A Business Strategy Perspective

Code	Impact of Gig Work in The Real Estate Industry: A Business Strategy Perspective	R1	R2	R3	R4
IRP1	Demand for Flexible Rental Options	/		/	
IRP2	Affordability as a Primary Decision Factor		/		
IRP3	Short-Term Rentals as an Emerging Model			/	
IRP4	Co-Living as a Growth Opportunity	/			/

From the table above, it showed that IRP1 (Flexible Rental Options) and IRP4 (Co-Living), which each received 2 responses, showing that flexible lease terms and co-living spaces are significant trends in the real estate market for gig workers. While IRP2 (Affordability) and IRP3 (Short-Term Rentals), which each received only 1 response, indicating that while affordability and short-term rentals are concerns, they are not as dominant as flexibility and co-living trends.

The rise of gig work has led to notable shifts in rental property demand, influencing how landlords and real estate businesses adapt their strategies to cater to this growing workforce. The increasing mobility of gig workers has driven a preference for short-term and flexible leasing arrangements, which increase the **demand for flexible rental options**. Respondent 1 highlighted that gig workers prioritize rental spaces that align with their transient work schedules, leading to an industry shift where landlords and property managers are offering adaptable rental terms. This aligns with prior studies suggesting that flexibility in

lease agreements enhances occupancy rates and attracts a diverse tenant base (Martin et.al, 2022). Moreover, the nature of gig work often requires frequent relocation, making lease flexibility a priority for gig workers. Respondent 3 highlighted that traditional long-term rental agreements are less appealing, leading landlords to introduce short-term and adaptable leasing models. Previous research supports this observation, indicating that dynamic rental agreements improve occupancy rates among transient workers (Lee & Tan, 2023). From a business strategy standpoint, property owners and developers are responding by offering shorter lease terms, fully furnished units, and digital lease management to attract mobile gig workers. This flexibility accommodates changing tenant preferences, enhances occupancy rates and reduces vacancy risks.

Affordability remains a critical concern among gig workers, primarily due to their irregular income streams. Respondent 2 emphasized that budget-friendly rental options are a key consideration when selecting a residence. This finding is consistent with the literature on economic uncertainty among gig workers, where financial instability influences housing choices (Huang et.al., 2020). To align with this demand, landlords are adopting pricing strategies such as tiered rental models, co-living arrangements, and all-inclusive rental packages. Real estate businesses are also targeting budget-conscious gig workers through micro-apartments and shared living spaces.

Short-term rentals have emerged as a preferred housing option for gig workers who frequently relocate for job opportunities. Respondent 3 noted that landlords are adjusting their strategies by offering month-to-month leases, furnished units, and leveraging online rental platforms. This prevailing trend is indicative of the extensive metamorphosis occurring within the real estate sector, wherein digitalization and demand-oriented pricing assume pivotal significance (Wang et al., 2023). In order to sustain a competitive edge, real estate enterprises are necessitated to incorporate technologically advanced solutions, including automated lease agreements, artificial intelligence-driven pricing methodologies, and platform-oriented marketing strategies to engage short-term lessees. Many landlords are now adjusting their rental strategies by leveraging platforms like Airbnb and digital rental marketplaces offering month-to-month leases, hybrid models combining short-term and long-term stays, and dynamic pricing based on demand fluctuations to capitalize on this shift.

Co-living spaces have gained traction as an alternative housing solution, particularly among gig workers who value affordability and social networking opportunities. Respondent 1 and 4 highlighted that co-living environments provide not only cost-effective living arrangements but also access to collaborative and professional networking opportunities. This finding aligns with previous studies that indicate shared living models enhance social capital and economic efficiency (Nelson et al., 2022). From a business standpoint, developers and property managers are investing in co-living spaces with communal areas, flexible lease structures, and added services such as coworking facilities. This approach not only meets the needs of gig workers but also maximizes property revenue through shared accommodations and service-based income streams.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the drivers, challenges and impact of the gig economy, particularly in the real estate industry. Thus, this study has shown that the gig economy is increasingly shaping the real estate industry by introducing flexible, technology-driven employment models. This study identified key adoption factors driving gig work in the real estate sector, is primarily driven by flexibility, cost-efficiency, technology adoption, and workforce adaptability. While regulatory and structural considerations exist, they are perceived as secondary to the immediate benefits of agility and digital transformation. These factors have facilitated a shift from traditional employment structures toward a more dynamic, on-demand workforce, particularly in real estate services such as property sales, rentals, and short-term management. Despite its advantages, the gig economy presents notable challenges for workers and businesses in the real estate sector. Issues faced by the companies such as skill assessment difficulties, trust issues, and regulatory gaps hinder its full potential in the real estate industry, which is significant to be highlighted. While for the challenges faced by the gig workers, issues including job instability and market competition also need to be addressed. Addressing these issues requires a collaborative effort between policymakers, businesses, and gig platforms to establish more robust labor protections and regulatory frameworks. Future research

should explore potential policy solutions, such as portable benefits systems and legal reforms, to enhance the security and sustainability of gig work. Additionally, despite its challenges, the gig economy is reshaping real estate by driving demand for flexible leasing options and co-living spaces, while affordability and short-term rentals are secondary but relevant concerns. The rise of platform-based solutions, AI-driven property matching, and on-demand real estate services has transformed how properties are marketed, leased, and managed. These innovations contribute to greater efficiency and accessibility but also necessitate policy reforms to address worker protections and industry sustainability. Future research should explore how the evolving gig-based employment model in real estate interacts with regulatory frameworks, job security, and service quality, ensuring a sustainable and balanced approach to gig work in the industry. In conclusion, while the gig economy presents both opportunities and challenges, its impact on the real estate industry is undeniable. Future research should focus on developing policy frameworks that balance flexibility with worker security, ensuring that gig-based real estate services remain sustainable and beneficial for all stakeholders.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies

This work was prepared using ChatGPT and Grammarly for idea refinement, language enhancement, and proofreading. This ChatGPT and Grammarly allowed the author(s) to examine and edit the content and accept full responsibility for the publication.

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