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BUSINESS STRATEGIES FOR ARCHITECTS: GROWING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AND REGAINING MARKET SHARE IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY.

Abstract:

The purpose of this research is to explore innovative business strategies in order to recast the role of the Architect, from a traditional profession in its contemporary business environment in Europe. The outcomes serve as a practical method for architects to re-position themselves in their local market, and from creative consultants to be re-established as key players in the building industry and the public domain.

The research evaluates the current business environment for architect's SME in the construction industry of Europe. In the last decades business-driven professionals like Project Managers, Estate Developers and others have entered the market of architects. This leads to a commercialisation of building and design services with more competitive fees, higher standardisation and minimal time limits. As a result, quality of space, innovation and creativity have been compromised and subsequently have become subordinate to financial indicators, profit margins and growth rates.

The role of the architectural profession within its field of business has undergone a significant change over this trend. Estate developers, construction firms and management consultants are partaking in the market and are increasing competition for shares. The architect, one of the most regulated traditional professions in Europe is facing an existential challenge against a growing wave of commercialisation of the building environment.

The objectives of the research are to identify how the current changes have affected the way architects' SMEs operate in the new market context. The second objective is to evaluate the current disadvantages that these SMEs have under the new business market conditions. Thirdly to critically review the current business development models that are applied to architectural SMEs, and underline the reasons of their ineffectiveness. And finally to draw the distinctive characteristics of the architectural profession that can be the foundation of new business strategies. In conclusion, this study searches the social, cultural and creative values that distance the architect from the financially dominated building environment, and the particular values that can frame the profession with its unique advantages.

Keywords:

architecture, promotion, strategy, real estate, construction, marketing, SME

JEL Classification: L79, L74