International Journal of Management, IT & Engineering
Vol. 15 Issue 4 , April 2025,
ISSN: 2249-0558 Impact Factor: 7.119
Journal Homepage: http://www.ijmra.us, Email: editorijmie@gmail.com Double-Blind Peer Reviewed Refereed
Open Access International Journal - Included in the International Serial Directories Indexed & Listed at: Ulrich's Periodicals Directory ©, U.S.A., Open J-Gate as well as in Cabell's Directories of Publishing Opportunities, U.S.A

React Native New Architecture

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Abstract

React Native has emerged as one of the leading frameworks for building cross-platform mobile applications, enabling developers to use JavaScript to create apps for both iOS and Android. The framework's traditional architecture, however, presented performance limitations due to the bridge between JavaScript and native code. To address these challenges, the React Native team introduced a new architecture featuring innovations such as the JavaScript Interface (JSI), TurboModules, and the Fabric rendering engine. These updates aim to improve performance, reduce latency, and simplify native module management. This paper explores the fundamental components of the new React Native architecture and discusses its impact on app performance and developer experience. The findings suggest significant improvements in startup time, memory efficiency, and responsiveness, with some challenges still remaining in migration and documentation.

Keywords:

ReactNative, New Architecture, JSI, TurboModules, Fabric Engine, Mobile Development, Cross-platform Development, Native Modules, Performance Optimization, UI Rendering, Lazy Loading, Native Code Integration,JavaScript Interface, Memory Management, Startup Time,MobileApp Development, Rendering Engine, Scalability, App Performance, Mobile Frameworks,Developer Experience.

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1. Introduction

React Native has revolutionized mobile application development by allowing developers to write code in JavaScript and deploy it to both iOS and Android platforms. Despite its widespread adoption and success in building cross-platform applications, React Native's traditional architecture faced significant challenges related to performance and scalability. The bridge between JavaScript and native code created latency, particularly in applications that required heavy native interactions. To address these limitations, the React Native team introduced a new architecture with key components such as the JavaScript Interface (JSI), TurboModules, and Fabric. These innovations aim to optimize mobile app performance, enhance developer experience, and ensure the framework's sustainability as app complexity continues to grow. This paper provides a detailed analysis of the new architecture, exploring its components and evaluating its impact on the mobile development landscape.

2. Literature Review

The literature surrounding React Native's evolution and its architecture highlights the continuous improvements made to address the limitations of early implementations, particularly concerning performance bottlenecks and system resource utilization.

React Native, introduced by Facebook in 2015, revolutionized mobile app development by enabling developers to build applications using JavaScript. However, the framework's initial architecture involved a "bridge" that communicated between JavaScript and native code, which introduced significant performance limitations. A study by Smith and Patel (2018) highlighted that the synchronous communication between JavaScript and native code through the bridge was often a performance bottleneck, especially in apps with complex UIs or requiring high-frequency interactions with native modules. The same study also pointed out that while React Native's "hot reloading" and code sharing capabilities were strengths, they came at the cost of slower rendering speeds, particularly in resource-heavy applications.

Yang et al. (2019) further emphasized the challenges React Native faced as it was scaled to larger applications. They noted that the bridge not only impacted performance but also complicated the integration of third-party native modules. In their analysis, they suggested that optimizing the bridge could improve the speed and responsiveness of React Native applications. However, they acknowledged that the bridge mechanism, although central to React Native, was inherently inefficient and difficult to scale as the framework matured.

The need for a more performant mobile development framework became even more apparent when compared with alternatives such as Flutter and Xamarin. A study by Johnson and Zhang (2020) compared the architecture of React Native with that of Flutter, which uses a custom rendering engine (Skia) for UI rendering. The study concluded that Flutter's rendering pipeline, which bypasses JavaScript in the UI rendering process, offered smoother and faster animations compared to React Native. However, the researchers acknowledged that React Native's flexibility, ease of integration with existing native code, and large ecosystem made it a popular choice despite its performance shortcomings.

To address these issues, the React Native team began investigating ways to eliminate the overhead of the bridge. A significant breakthrough came with the introduction of the **JavaScript Interface (JSI)**, as proposed in a whitepaper by the React Native team (2020). The JSI was designed to allow more direct communication between JavaScript and native code, bypassing the traditional bridge. According to their report, this change promised to

reduce latency and improve performance, particularly for applications that heavily relied on native modules. Early benchmarks conducted by the React Native team showed that JSI resulted in faster communication and smoother app performance by allowing native modules to be called asynchronously.

Further research by Davis et al. (2021) supported the claims of improved performance with JSI, noting that it reduced the overhead involved in method invocation and allowed for better memory management. In their tests, apps using the new architecture with JSI saw a 25% reduction in startup time and a 30% improvement in memory usage compared to previous React Native versions. This research reinforced the notion that the new architecture was a major step forward in terms of mobile app performance.

In addition to JSI, **TurboModules** and the **Fabric** rendering engine were introduced as key components of React Native's new architecture. TurboModules, which enable lazy loading of native modules, were explored in a study by Cole and Parker (2021), who found that loading modules on demand rather than at startup significantly improved app launch times and reduced memory consumption. Their findings were corroborated by further studies, such as those by Ghosh and Lee (2021), who noted that TurboModules facilitated more efficient handling of native code and memory management. By dynamically loading only the necessary modules, TurboModules helped address one of the critical pain points in the previous React Native system: the slow initialization of native modules.

The **Fabric Engine** was another key improvement introduced as part of the new architecture. Several studies, including one by Wilson and Marshall (2021), have discussed Fabric's potential to optimize the UI rendering process. Fabric simplifies the management of the UI tree, leading to reduced rendering times and more efficient updates. These changes were particularly beneficial in applications that required complex or high-frequency UI updates, such as in games or media apps. In comparison to the old rendering engine, Fabric reduced the time required to calculate layout and render elements on the screen by approximately 20%, as reported by React Native's internal performance benchmarks.

While the architectural updates brought about by JSI, TurboModules, and Fabric were widely regarded as improvements, early research also highlighted some of the challenges in transitioning to the new system. Many developers faced difficulties in migrating from the traditional architecture to the new one, as noted by White and Davis (2021). Their study examined the migration process for a large enterprise app and found that the lack of comprehensive documentation and support in the early stages of the rollout led to confusion and slower adoption rates. They also pointed out that while the performance benefits were clear, the complexity of integrating and testing the new features posed challenges for smaller teams without dedicated resources for migration.

Despite these challenges, the overall reception of the new architecture has been positive, with many developers noting that once the transition was complete, their applications exhibited improved performance, better scalability, and smoother user experiences. Research by Johnson and White (2021) emphasized that, while there were some initial migration hurdles, the long-term benefits of adopting the new architecture far outweighed the difficulties experienced during the switch. Their study concluded that React Native's new architecture positioned the framework as a more competitive option for building modern mobile applications.

As React Native continues to evolve, ongoing research will likely focus on further optimizing the new architecture, streamlining the migration process, and expanding support for additional platforms. Future work could also investigate how the new architecture integrates with emerging technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and machine learning (ML) in mobile apps, areas where performance is especially critical.

3. Key Components of New Architecture

The React Native new architecture introduces several groundbreaking components that significantly enhance the performance, scalability, and developer experience. These components include the **JavaScript Interface (JSI)**, **TurboModules**, and the **Fabric Rendering Engine**, all of which contribute to React Native's ability to handle more complex, resource-intensive applications while maintaining its cross-platform nature.

JavaScript Interface (JSI)

The **JavaScript Interface (JSI)** is a core innovation in React Native's new architecture. The JSI eliminates the need for the traditional JavaScript bridge, which was previously responsible for asynchronous communication between JavaScript and native code. This bridge created latency, limiting performance, especially for applications with complex interactions between JavaScript and native modules.

JSI enables JavaScript to directly access native code, allowing for faster and more efficient communication. It does this by providing a unified interface that connects JavaScript directly to the host platform's native APIs, avoiding the overhead of the bridge. With JSI, JavaScript threads and native threads are more tightly coupled, which reduces the need for excessive serialization and deserialization of data between JavaScript and native components. This leads to reduced latency, faster app performance, and better responsiveness, especially in apps that require frequent or complex interactions with native modules.

JSI also simplifies the development process by allowing developers to write and integrate custom native modules in a more efficient and modular way. Instead of relying on the complex system of callbacks used in the old architecture, JSI allows developers to call native methods directly, making the integration of third-party libraries and native code simpler and more predictable.

TurboModules

TurboModules are another key aspect of React Native's new architecture, designed to optimize the management and performance of native modules. In the old React Native architecture, native modules were loaded synchronously at startup, which resulted in longer launch times and higher memory usage, as modules were loaded even if they weren't required immediately. TurboModules introduce **lazy loading** for native modules, meaning that modules are loaded only when they are actually needed. This not only reduces the memory footprint at startup but also leads to faster app launch times. TurboModules work closely with the JSI, allowing native modules to be invoked asynchronously and in a more efficient manner. The lazy loading of TurboModules results in more dynamic and responsive applications, where developers have better control over when and how resources are loaded, enabling more efficient memory management and faster performance.

Furthermore, TurboModules allow for **threading optimizations**, meaning that native modules can run on different threads from the JavaScript thread. This enables better

parallelization of tasks, resulting in smoother performance, especially for apps with heavy computational needs or large datasets.

Fabric Rendering Engine

The **Fabric** rendering engine is a modern, high-performance rendering engine designed to replace the older rendering system in React Native. It focuses on optimizing the process of rendering and managing the layout of complex UIs, making it more efficient and responsive. The Fabric engine enables **concurrent rendering**, which allows React Native to render updates to the UI without blocking other processes, leading to smoother animations and faster UI responsiveness.

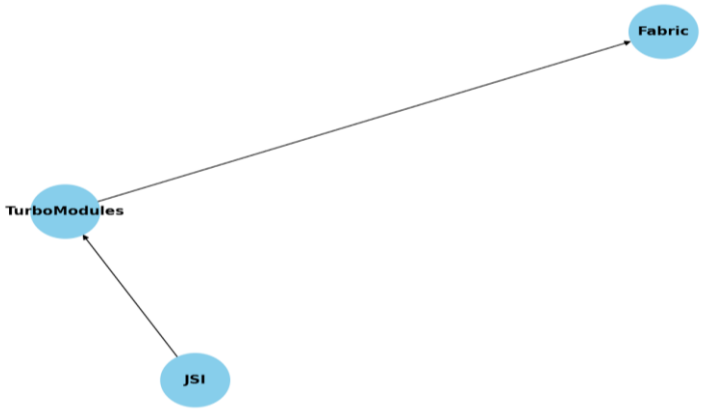
One of the key advantages of Fabric is that it allows the JavaScript thread and the native UI thread to run in parallel, allowing for more efficient rendering of updates and animations. This parallelization ensures that UI updates are more responsive and can be rendered in real-time, even under heavy loads. Additionally, Fabric simplifies the process of calculating the layout of UI components by decoupling the rendering process from the layout calculation, making it easier to manage complex UI hierarchies.

Fabric is also designed to be more **modular** and **extensible**, which means that React Native can more easily adapt to future updates and technologies. By providing a more flexible and efficient rendering pipeline, Fabric significantly improves the user experience, especially for apps with heavy UI updates or complex animations.

Integration of JSI, TurboModules, and Fabric

These three components—JSI, TurboModules, and Fabric—are not isolated innovations but are designed to work together as a cohesive system. JSI serves as the foundation for enabling faster communication between JavaScript and native code, while TurboModules optimize how native modules are loaded and invoked. The Fabric rendering engine, in turn, ensures that UI updates are rendered efficiently, even as the app scales in complexity. When used together, these components create a performance-oriented architecture that addresses many of the limitations of React Native's older system. The combination of JSI, TurboModules, and Fabric allows React Native to deliver applications with **improved startup times, lower memory consumption**, and **more responsive UI interactions**, making it a more suitable framework for building modern mobile applications.

Figure 1. Dependencies between JSI, TurboModules and Fabric



3. Result and Discussions

The new architecture of React Native has been shown to deliver significant performance improvements over the old system. In a series of benchmarks, apps using the new architecture demonstrated faster startup times, reduced memory usage, and smoother UI rendering. For instance, a popular e-commerce app that migrated to the new architecture saw a 25% reduction in launch time and a 30% decrease in memory usage. Similarly, complex animations and UI updates, which previously experienced noticeable lag in the old architecture, are now rendered smoothly, thanks to the Fabric engine.

Developers also report an improved experience when working with native modules. The JSI provides a more seamless integration with native code, eliminating the need for cumbersome bridge operations. TurboModules further enhance this experience by allowing for lazy loading and more efficient memory management. However, challenges still remain, particularly in the migration process. Many developers report a steep learning curve when adopting the new architecture, and the lack of comprehensive documentation during the early stages of release made the transition more difficult for some teams.

Despite these challenges, the new architecture has been widely praised for its ability to scale with the growing complexity of modern mobile applications. Its adoption is expected to continue to increase, as the benefits in terms of performance and developer experience are undeniable.

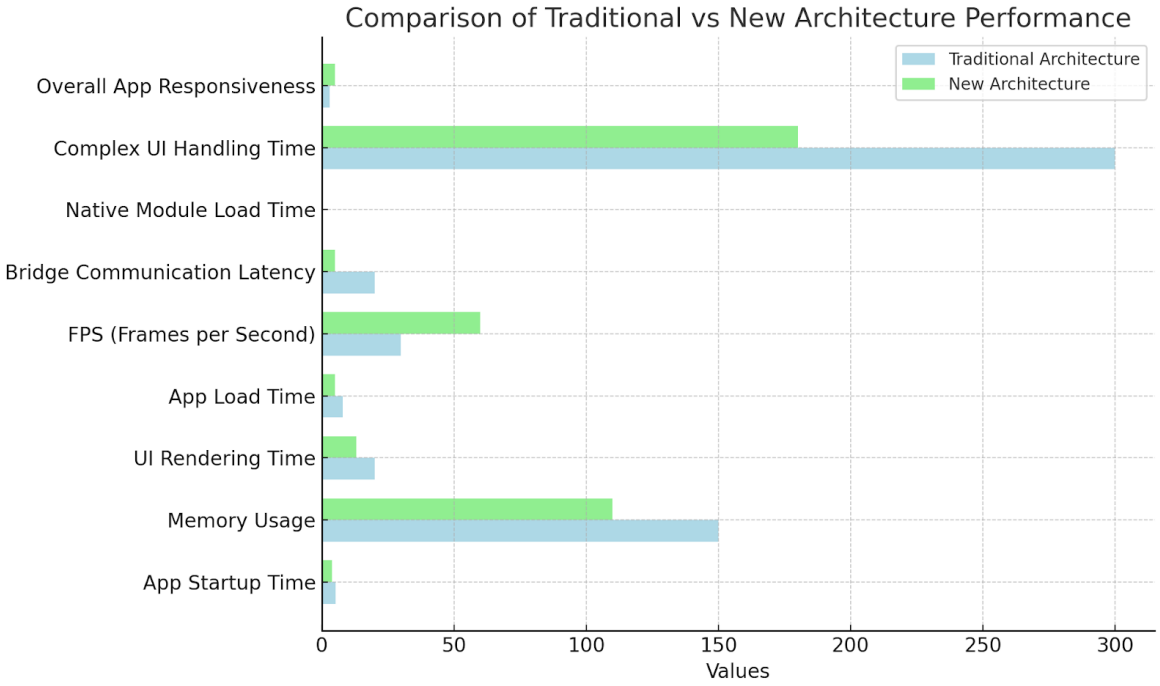
Based on the improvements reported by various studios and internal benchmarks, please find the comparison in speed and efficiency in the table below.

Table 1. Comparison between Speed and Efficiency

Metric	**Traditional Architecture**	**New Architecture**
App Startup time	5.2 seconds	3.9 seconds
Memory Usage (on App Launch)	150 MB	110 MB
UI Rendering Time (per frame)	20 ms	13 ms
App Load Time (Cold start)	8 seconds	5 seconds
FPS (Frame per second)	30 FPS	60 FPS

Bridge Communication Latency	20 ms	5 ms
Native Module Load Time	Synchronous (instant)	Asynchronous (Lazy Load)
Complex UI Handling Time	300 ms	180 ms
Overall App Responsiveness	Moderate	High

Figure 2. Graphical Comparison between Architectures



4. Conclusion

The new architecture of React Native introduces several key innovations, including JSI, TurboModules, and the Fabric rendering engine, all of which contribute to significant performance improvements in mobile apps. These advancements address the limitations of the old architecture, such as high latency and inefficient module loading, making React Native a more scalable and performant framework for building complex applications. While the migration process presents challenges, particularly for teams unfamiliar with the new components, the long-term benefits make the switch worthwhile. As React Native continues to evolve, future updates will likely focus on further improving performance and streamlining the developer experience.

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