

DIGITAL PLATFORMS UTILIZATION FOR CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG ART AND DESIGN STUDENTS: A STUDY AT THE SCIENTIFIC COLLEGE OF DESIGN

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Abstract

The study explores students' knowledge and use of digital platforms to cultivate creative, entrepreneurial skills in art and design at the Scientific College of Design. With the growth of tech-based entrepreneurship, it was important to evaluate students' understanding of how the creative industries rely on digital platforms for collaboration, commercialization, and visibility, to enhance academic support and career readiness. The study investigates students' awareness of various digital platforms, including social media, online services, and e-commerce websites. It examines the use of tools for self-branding and for creating entrepreneurial opportunities. The use of a mixed-methods approach comprising a literature review, a survey, and focus groups to examine patterns in digital awareness and engagement. The research findings reveal that students are aware of these platforms and actively use TikTok, Instagram, Behance, and Etsy to showcase their work. However, there is a lack of structured guidance on how to use them effectively in digital entrepreneurship. Hence, the study highlights the need to integrate digital marketing, personal branding, and platform analytics into the curriculum. Recommendations are to include tailored presentations or workshops with digital industry stakeholders. The study concludes that digital platforms play a pivotal role in shaping creative entrepreneurial pathways for emerging young artists and designers.

Keywords: Digital literacy, digital entrepreneurship, art and design fields, creative industries, and innovation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The revolution in digital platforms has significantly reshaped entrepreneurship and its relationship to art and design. This led artists and designers to move away from traditional gallery systems and local networks, instead gaining broader exposure to a global audience through digital platforms such as Instagram, Etsy, and Behance. These platforms are widely used because they have evolved into entrepreneurial ecosystems, offering wider visibility, easier sales, and increased customer

engagement. However, success in using these platforms depends on a deeper understanding of customer needs, greater adaptability, and staying up to date with market trends. This study examines the impact of emerging digital platforms on entrepreneurial outcomes among artists and designers, and further explores the opportunities and challenges in this context. The surge in the use of digital platforms led artists and designers to establish their careers by connecting with customers and commercializing their work (Kollmann et al., 2021). Proprietary e-commerce websites and other digital platforms, such as Instagram, Behance, and Etsy, helped lower entry barriers and created easy access to a global audience (Wu et al., 2024). This shift in business led to the democratization of distribution channels, enabling artists and designers to market and build their professional brands with autonomy (Pietrobruno, 2018). However, this shift and new environment came with its own challenges, as the vast volumes of digital content have led to market saturation. However, enhancing digital literacy helped artists and designers automate processes, improve efficiency, and develop innovative business models (Akpan & Ibidunni, 2021). In addition, reliance on digital platforms, open models, and content creation created economic hurdles and raised concerns about intellectual property protection (Dekker, 2021; Mesfin Awoke Bekalu & McCloud, 2020). In this paper, the focus is on examining the impact of various digital platforms on the success of artists and designers as entrepreneurs. The paper examines explicitly how digital platforms have expanded markets and facilitated brand development, and investigates the challenges related to visibility, monetization, and intellectual property rights.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Creative Entrepreneurship

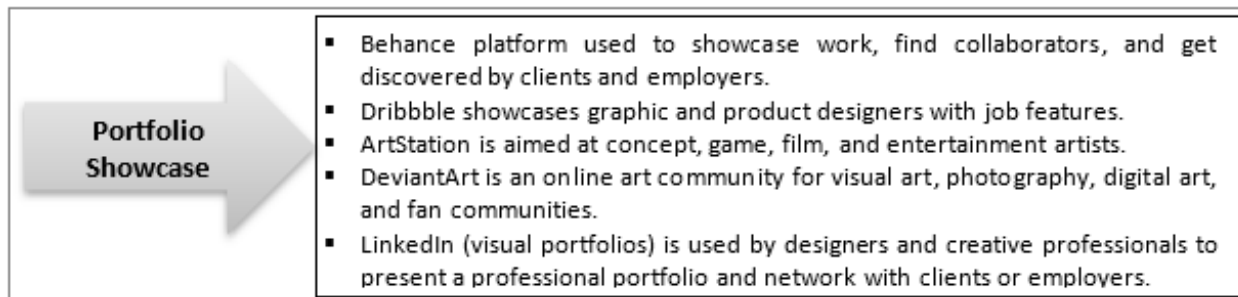
Researchers, academics, and business professionals are contributing significant information to the rapidly evolving field of entrepreneurship. It is regarded as an instrument of economic progress because entrepreneurs not only make money for themselves but also create jobs. Innovation of valuable elements and knowledge restructuring are associated with the term creativity (Anjum, 2020). The potential to become an entrepreneur is significantly influenced by a person's ability to think creatively and recognize opportunities for growth and improvement. To achieve successful, profitable entrepreneurship, a business needs both innovative ideas and profit-generating strategies (Rungrisuwat, 2019). To create new opportunities in both creative and commercial domains, entrepreneurial art and innovation combine creativity, a business attitude, critical thinking, and problem-solving. This idea aims to bridge the gap between artistic expression and business endeavors, highlighting the importance of creating fundamental, financially viable projects. Using an artist's creativity as a catalyst to create value in cultural, societal, or economic terms is known as entrepreneurial art. This enables artists to integrate their creative skills with business strategies, assist in creating sustainable models for financing and showcasing their work, and devise strategies for attracting customers and viewers. This is evident in a wide range of artistic media, including musicians starting their own record labels, digital illustrators earning money from NFTs (a digital, unique, and irreplaceable piece of media), and fine artists, such as sculptors, who create models and statues on commission for both public and private projects (Iyamah, 2024). This requires a lot of risk-taking, flexibility, and teamwork, which in turn allows artists to showcase and adapt

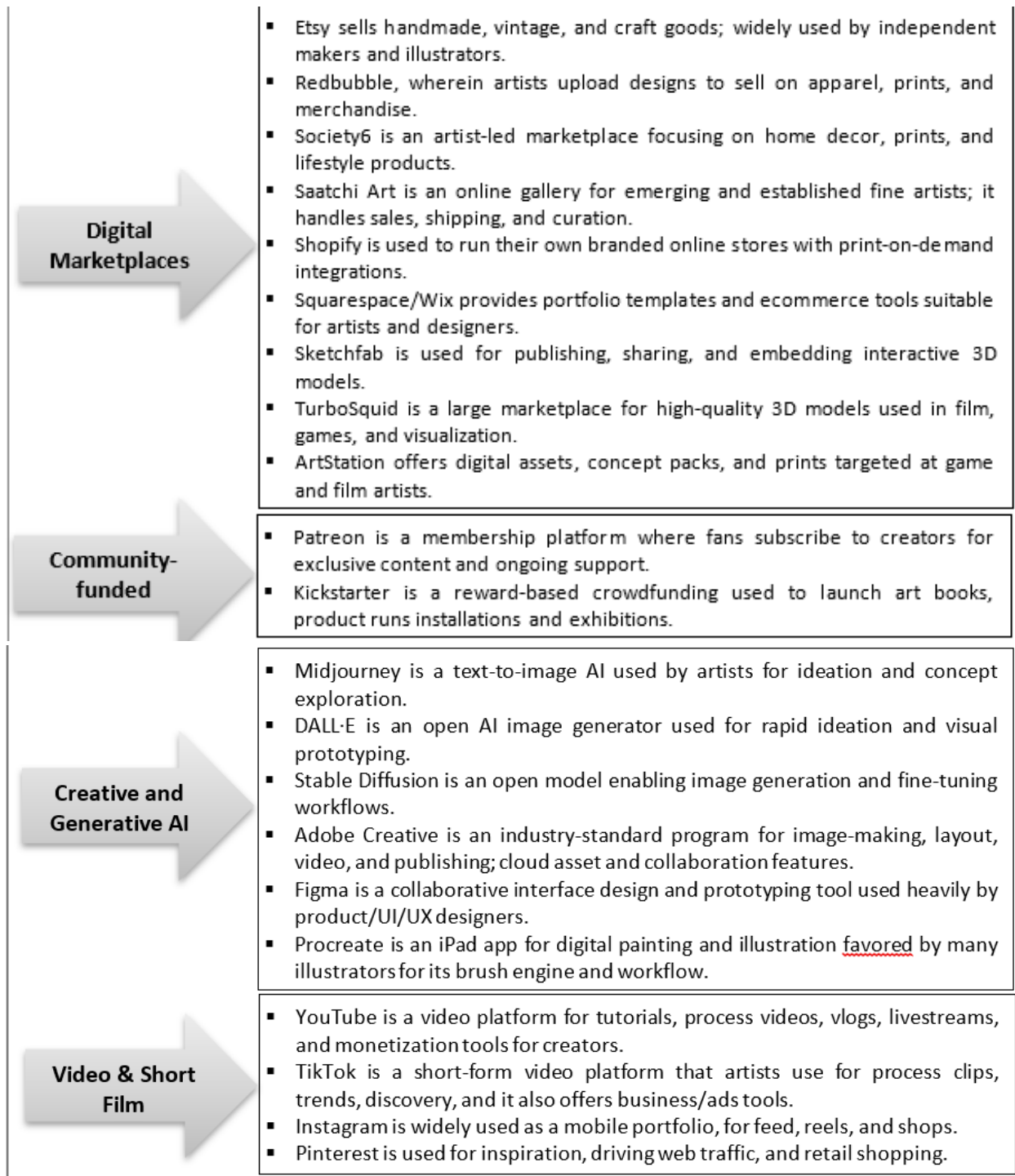
themselves in creatively demanding settings while also broadening their audience by collaborating with companies and other artists.

2.2. Digital Platforms and Creative Practice

When it comes to their work, creatives value control, and digital platforms give them the freedom to create the content they want and choose where and when they work. Gardiner, D. (2024). Digital platforms have the potential to increase creative employment as they continue to evolve, but they may also raise concerns about what those roles will require in the future. Digital tools, such as software, machine learning, and artificial intelligence, are not the only technologies that influence creative activity. Robots, autonomous camera systems, drones, and 3D printing are examples of machines that assist in creative efforts. Through AI, machine learning, and biometrics, these digital tools are learning to perform complex and imaginative tasks. These systems have a significant impact on how creative work is produced and shared in our creative economy (Hearn, 2020). According to a study by Ceh and Benedek (2021), sharing time-lapse drawing videos with music in the background or organizing an Instagram page to make it visually appealing are examples of how posting online can become a creative act in itself. People use these digital platforms for inspiration and entertainment. The survey suggests that people are more creative in how they share their work online when digital platforms provide a range of tools to showcase and enhance their content. While tools like AI are making creativity easier, they also raise questions about how creative work will evolve in the future, even as creative workers adapt to new technologies to share their work online. Overall, digital platforms play a significant role in reshaping creative work by giving users the freedom to create anything they want while inspiring viewers.

Comprehensive list of Digital Platforms used by Artists and Designers (Open AI, 2025)





2.3. Theoretical Framework

This study examines two interconnected theoretical frameworks: Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) developed by Rogers (2003) and Social Capital Theory (SCT) introduced by Bourdieu (1986). Artists and designers use these frameworks as complementary views to leverage digital platforms for entrepreneurial success. According to IDT, technology progresses through stages such as knowledge, decision, implementation, persuasion, and confirmation (Rogers, 2003).

Advances in technology and the growth of digital platforms have led to the digitalization of business models in the creative and cultural sectors, enabling the use of innovative technologies that accelerate diffusion and broader adoption in artistic and design fields beyond traditional limits (Ortiz-Ospino, González-Sarmiento, & Roa-Pérez, 2025). Moreover, recent research confirms that digital diffusion, such as the digitalization of small and medium-sized enterprises, significantly boosts unique and innovative performance when absorptive capacity is present (Weiss et al., 2024). Therefore, within the IDT framework, adopting online marketplaces, design-sharing platforms, and social media offers benefits to artists and designers, helping them align their creative work with existing practices and observe their peers, which fosters platform adoption. Complementing ICT, SCT emphasizes the importance of social networks and resource mobilization (Bourdieu, 1986). These digital environments support the development of social capital through connections with networks, colleagues, collaborations, and followers, fostering reciprocity, trust, and opportunities for mutual collaboration and growth. Recently, it has become evident that social capital within online networks plays a vital role in securing funding for start-ups and improving business performance (Cheng, 2025). Additional research suggests that online networking and coordination have a significant impact on entrepreneurial success, particularly through social networking among artists and designers (Zhang et al., 2024). Thus, in the creative entrepreneurial landscape, strong online networks supporting peer-to-peer engagement help artists and designers expand their ventures. Furthermore, integrating IDT and SCT promotes innovative use of digital platforms and social networking among creative professionals, facilitating interaction and progress toward entrepreneurial success as artists and designers.

2.4. Challenges of Digital Entrepreneurship

Digital platforms offer benefits but also present challenges due to technical glitches in algorithms, digital fatigue, and user dependency on platforms (Cotter, 2019). These platforms also risk infringing on intellectual property rights, potentially undermining sustainability for entrepreneurs in the creative fields. On the one hand, digital platforms offer innovative opportunities that come with complex challenges, which must be carefully analyzed for long-term success. Rapid technological advancements and changes lead to increased market competition, prompting creative entrepreneurs to continually develop and adapt novel business models and upgrade their skills to keep pace with technological growth. A review of digital innovation and entrepreneurship in 2023 revealed challenges in global digital markets that organizational interventions and new technological developments can impact, ultimately affecting entrepreneurial outcomes. Mainly, challenges are observed in small and medium-scale enterprises due to resource limitations, a lack of technically skilled human capital, limited digital infrastructure, and insufficient financial investment (Restrepo-Morales et al., 2024). Another challenge is the digital regulatory environment, in which creative entrepreneurs must comply with regulations governing trade, taxation, and data privacy (Alshaar, 2023). In addition, another challenge is the digital divide, exacerbated by inadequate digital literacy and unstable internet access, particularly in underdeveloped regions (Alrashdi et al., 2023). Additionally, there is an obstacle related to the ecosystem and sustainability, wherein, as explained by Alzamel (2024), digital entrepreneurship

must contend with growth in the field and inclusion in creative work. These challenges stem from socioeconomic changes and ecosystems that hinder long-term outcomes. To sum up, digital platforms offer significant potential for entrepreneurial innovation; however, the key is to address challenges to ensure inclusive, robust, and sustainable creative business ventures.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. To evaluate primary factors that contribute to creative and innovative entrepreneurial growth in the digital era.
- 3.2. To assess the fundamental relationship between the use of digital platforms and the entrepreneurial success rate among artists and designers.
- 3.3. To propose business strategies that help in the integration of digital entrepreneurial skills into art and design pedagogy.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Design

In this study, the authors used a mixed-methods research approach to gather responses and gain a comprehensive understanding of the use of digital platforms in entrepreneurial activities and the underestimation of students pursuing art and design disciplines. The purpose of the data survey was to capture learners' knowledge, both broadly and in depth, of the use of technology in creative fields and entrepreneurial ventures. In the study, quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to examine general patterns among participants and their viewpoints on the use of digital platforms in creative business practices. A survey tool was used in the quantitative component to evaluate variables such as the use of digital platforms by clients and promoting art and design businesses, creative entrepreneurial motivation, showcase of artistic work, clients' convenience in making payments, ease of starting and operating a business, sharing creative work and collaborations, limitations and challenges, and identifying significant trends. This survey aligned with the research objectives to evaluate the factors contributing to creative entrepreneurial growth in the digital era. The study assesses the relationship between the use of digital platforms in the tech era and entrepreneurial success among artists and designers. To complement this, an open-ended question was included to elicit narrative responses, which revealed a range of strategies, challenges, and personal experiences. Integration of these approaches supported the triangulation method, ensuring the validity and reliability of the results by consolidating experiences, trends, and the impact of digital platforms on innovative entrepreneurship. This method was appropriate in the context, as it enabled a broader understanding of how digital platforms foster entrepreneurship.

4.2. Sample and Data Collection

A sample of 417 students from the fields of art and design was surveyed across fine arts, photography, fashion design, graphic design, animation, interior design, and architecture. In addition, using an open-ended, semi-structured indicator, data were collected to examine students' viewpoints on how digital platforms further assist designers and artists. The selection of diverse art and design disciplines ensured that the study gathered data at varying levels of technology

engagement across the field. In addition, the structured question enhanced the study by assessing students' exposure to digital platforms, their use in showcasing their creative work, and their intention to pursue creative entrepreneurship to build their professional careers, build networks, and pursue commercial opportunities. The semi-structured prompt, used as a quantitative tool, gathered students' in-depth views on how digital platforms support artists and designers in sharing their professional paths, professional networking, and lived experiences, and on students' perceptions, which enriched the study's analysis and conclusion.

4.3. Data Analysis

Survey data were analyzed using descriptive and average mean statistics to examine the relationship between students' engagement with digital platforms and entrepreneurial awareness. Further qualitative data were analyzed to examine students' perceptions and strategies. Key findings include:

4.3.1. Promotion and Visibility (Highest Scores)

- *“Digital and social media platforms are essential for promoting art and design businesses.” – 3.93*
- *“Online platforms make it easy to showcase my artistic or design work to a broad or global audience.” – 3.90*
- *“Using digital platforms helps me reach new audiences and potential clients.” – 3.87*

These findings emphasize the strong reliance on digital presence for professional success. Respondents see digital platforms as essential tools for promotion and visibility, indicating that online exposure greatly influences market opportunities in the art and design industry.

4.3.2. Digital Tools for Creative Business Management

- *Digital tools and e-commerce platforms help in business organization – 3.81*
- *Digital platforms offer convenient ways to acquire clients and process payments – 3.79*
- *Online platforms make it easier to start and operate a business – 3.81*

These responses reveal that digital systems are not only promotional tools but also essential in operational functions, such as client management, digital storefronts, and workflow organization.

4.3.3. Creativity, Innovation, and Collaboration

- *Digital platforms support creative idea generation and innovative concepts – 3.84*
- *Sharing work enhances networking and collaboration – 3.77*

This shows that students see online platforms as creative spaces that encourage innovation, inspiration, and networking. Digital ecosystems are viewed as collaborative environments where designers can learn, connect, and grow.

4.3.4. Audience Understanding and Market Insight

- *Digital channels help me understand audience preferences – 3.77*

This reflects the usefulness of analytics and audience engagement features embedded in digital platforms. Respondents appear aware of how digital indicators (likes, comments, shares, insights) can guide their creative decisions and improve market alignment.

4.3.5. Challenges and Limitations (Lowest Score)

- *Challenges faced while using digital platforms – 3.66*

Although this is the lowest rating, it remains above the neutral midpoint (3.0). Challenges may include:

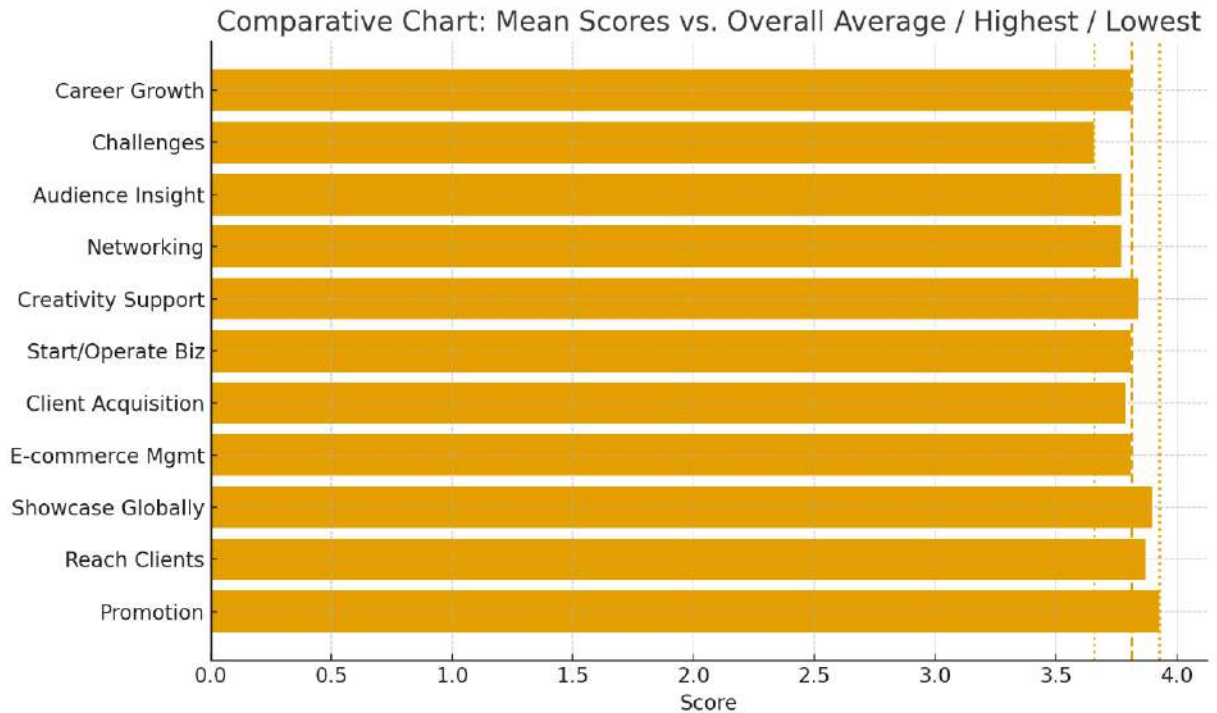
- Increasing competition and algorithm barriers.
- Skills gaps in digital literacy or marketing.
- Time and effort required to maintain digital presence.
- Unequal visibility or platform saturation.
- Technical issues and platform fees.

This presents an opportunity for institutions to offer support, training, workshops, and structured digital literacy programs.

4.3.6. Career and Business Growth Support

- *Specific platforms support my career development – 3.81*

Respondents believe that digital platforms play a significant role in advancing careers and supporting professional growth in the art and design fields.



The summary of overall patterns indicates that every statement scored between 3.66 and 3.93, indicating uniform agreement about the value of digital platforms. For promotion, reach, and global visibility, students depend on digital presence to build professional identity and gain exposure. Furthermore, digital platforms support not only promotion but also management, client services, and operational workflows, indicating a high level of maturity in how respondents use digital tools. They support creativity and collaboration as sources of inspiration, idea generation, and collaborative networking. However, institutional support is needed, as the lowest-scoring item indicates a gap in digital literacy and platform navigation. Students acknowledge benefits but also require guidance in overcoming limitations.

4.4. Ethical Considerations

In this study, ethical procedures were adhered to throughout the research process to protect survey participants. Respondents' participation in the study was voluntary, and the respondents were informed that the survey was anonymous. They were also informed that the study results are used solely for research purposes. This was done prior to the data collection by stating a clear explanation of the study purpose and ensuring informed consent. Data were collected using the college system, which protects participant privacy by not disclosing identifiable personal information, and all responses were kept strictly confidential. The study was conducted within the college's information and communication technology system, with data protection and clear guidelines in place for its use. This ensures the protection of respondents and also enhances the integrity and credibility of the research findings and conclusions.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Digital Engagement and Market Reach

Given the high level of digitization today, market reach can be significantly expanded through digital interactions. This describes the method by which artists and designers communicate with clients and other investors via internet platforms. Clients rely on these digital platforms to browse, communicate, ask questions, and make purchases. As a result, the client experience improves, brand visibility increases, audience size grows, and relations are strengthened. However, social media interactions are only one aspect of digital involvement. Additionally, it is a way to promote a good or service in the online marketplace. Artists, designers, and customers can efficiently connect through a two-way channel made possible by this kind of engagement. This kind of interaction enables them to truly understand consumer preferences, which helps them customize work to meet those needs. In this manner, brands can meet the needs of their target consumers while also personalizing their experience and better understanding them. Because there are fewer financial and geographical restrictions, digital marketing is far less expensive than traditional marketing, which is relatively costly. Developing a meaningful relationship with customers through digital platforms is the fundamental basis of digital engagement. In terms of art and design, a designer can use a variety of platforms to increase interaction and reach the target market through sales and profits. A designer can exhibit their work and projects on a variety of platforms, the most popular being Behance. This portfolio-sharing platform offers opportunities for collaboration and the chance for the designer to be found by potential employers and clients. Another such example is LinkedIn, which is a great place to showcase your professional or personal portfolio and to find employment opportunities. It serves to highlight the artist's unique talent and promote the brand identity. Artists can sell their handcrafted, vintage, and crafted goods on websites like Redbubble and Etsy. These platforms help artists by promoting their work in the marketplace and generating sales to reach their target audience.

The number of potential clients a business can contact through its market strategy initiatives is referred to as market reach. On social media, market reach is directly correlated with participation. User engagement is crucial to Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. The algorithm is strengthened by

online metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and saves, which help efficiently promote the brand to consumers. A company should aim higher to reach international markets rather than just local ones when it comes to art and design. As previously mentioned, there are relatively few geographical restrictions in digital marketing, which enables designers and companies to present their work internationally to boost followers and buyer potential. However, there must be a good balance between promotional content and genuine customer engagement, as digital fatigue can leave customers bored and desensitized to digital advertising. To attract clients and maintain authenticity, the company needs to plan and deliver effective digital content. In conclusion, market reach and digital engagement are closely related. The abundance of digital tools in today's technological environment enables businesses to achieve a broad market reach, a necessity in the modern economy. Companies can use this digitization to gather market data, which will help them position themselves in the current market and economy and enhance client satisfaction.

5.2. Branding and Self-Promotion

Branding is a successful technique because it helps individuals legally market their creative work online; this is crucial because it develops a person's career and allows businesses to flourish. Digital platforms enable individuals to create their brand identity and effectively promote their work online. Branding is essential because it will enable a person to stand out; this can be seen in the content shared, the style of the work, logos, and more. A strong brand can effectively promote work, attract loyal customers, and increase recognition. Behance and LinkedIn are examples of digital platforms used to facilitate work, discover collaborators, and attract new clients and staff. Behance is primarily used to showcase creative work online, such as graphic design, photography, illustration, and art; this allows individuals to present their work professionally, promote it efficiently, and build a strong brand image. On the other hand, networking and professional presentation are the primary purposes of LinkedIn. To show they know what they are doing, the person uses a clean profile image and a brief synopsis of their abilities, expertise, and educational background. When these components are put together, they may build a personal brand identity for the person. Posting projects online, sharing successes, and engaging with others are all examples of self-promotion on LinkedIn. Self-promotion on LinkedIn might involve publishing projects online, sharing successes, and communicating with others by liking and commenting on their postings. This helps the individual to boost their exposure, attract consumers, and maybe locate new career prospects.

Individuals can quickly showcase their work on short-form platforms like Instagram and TikTok, reaching millions of people. Branding on these platforms is developed through consistent style and content; when consumers see the same kind of material often, they come to feel familiar with it, helping them recall the brand more easily. It is easy to promote yourself on these platforms: all you need to do is regularly share your offerings. By following trends, using popular music, and leveraging hashtags, you can expand your audience and attract new clients. Individuals may also employ creative and generative AI tools, such as Midjourney to convert words into images, and Adobe Creative Suite for image creation, layout, video editing, and publication. These tools may help individuals develop logos, posters, and social media postings more easily and quickly,

resulting in a stronger company identity. AI technologies may swiftly provide ideas for how a person might effectively promote themselves, whilst artistic tools such as Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop can refine and improve the final product. These technologies, when used together, may save time, help people generate new ideas, and enhance creativity. It also allows the person to present themselves more professionally online. When it comes to branding and self-promotion, digital platforms like Behance and LinkedIn are essential tools for sharing and showcasing your creative work online. Having a strong brand identity increases the likelihood that consumers will like and trust the brand. To create a strong brand, individuals can use AI tools such as Midjourney to create a faster design style and Adobe Creative to enhance the final content. All of these tools, when used, may help individuals prosper on digital platforms.

5.3. Implications for Art and Design Education

Based on the findings, the following implications are recommended for academic programs and creative institutions:

- Integrate digital literacy into the curriculum by offering courses in Digital marketing for artists and designers, E-commerce for creative professionals, Portfolio development, online branding, and Social media strategy and analytics.
- Provide technical training workshops in Adobe Creative Cloud, Canva, Procreate, Photography/videography for social media, and Website creation (Behance, Wix, Squarespace).
- Encourage digital entrepreneurship through real client projects, online freelancing sessions, and entrepreneurship modules tailored to creative fields
- Strengthen industry partnerships with creative agencies, online galleries, digital media companies, and e-commerce marketplaces.
- Support students in overcoming challenges by providing resources for algorithm navigation, pricing and online selling, time management, content planning, and safety and ethics on digital platforms

6. CONCLUSION

Advancements in technology and the emergence of diverse digital platforms have made them essential tools, particularly for professionals in the creative industries, leaving behind traditional modes of creating, marketing, and distributing creative works. Digital platforms support artists and designers by offering avenues to enhance visibility, foster innovation in creative work, provide economic independence, and connect with global audiences. Artists and designers use digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Behance to showcase their work, communicate with clients, and self-brand. These platforms help emerging artists and designers to compete with established creative professionals and establish their identity in the creative industries. The study reveals that advanced technological tools facilitate experimentation, fostering innovation, exposure, and collaboration with interactive features that allow artists and designers to analyse audience preferences. Additionally, among young artists and designers, these platforms serve as incubators that enhance their creative skills, which are essential for a digital presence, offering both creative freedom and a way to navigate the evolving technological landscape. However, the

study also underscores the need for sustainable growth, given a lack of strategic digital literacy, awareness of platform dynamics, and consistent engagement. Creatives must enhance their knowledge of digital platforms' policies, how algorithms work, digital audience behavior, and expansion opportunities. Use of limited platforms, sporadic posting, and inconsistent branding limit growth. It is important to focus on strategic engagement across diversified platforms, client/audience interaction, and effective analytics to build a sustainable and resilient digital presence.

Furthermore, digital entrepreneurship creates new dynamics in global economic competition, offering unprecedented opportunities to an audience. It expands competition among creators, potentially leading to the exploitation of intellectual property rights and market saturation. These risks need to be addressed by enhancing technical skills that balance creative integrity and commercial viability. From the results, the study concludes that digital platforms offer varied opportunities, visibility, creative experimentation, and economic independence to artists and designers. However, long-term success demands strategic engagement and ongoing knowledge of platform-specific features and dynamics.

To move forward with this subject, future research should focus on evaluating sustained digital engagement, the longitudinal effects of digital entrepreneurship, and creative development. In addition, a study of cross-cultural variations in digital creativity will expand insights into global digital markets, sociocultural contexts, and the challenges faced by digital creative entrepreneurs at the regional and global levels. This expansion in future research would contribute to a detailed understanding of the evolving tech-based creativity and entrepreneurship in the digital world.

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