SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT MONETIZATION: A SYNERGY BETWEEN DIGITAL MEDIA AND BUSINESSS LANDSCAPE

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ABSTRACT
With the birth of social media came the evolution of content monetization, which has to do with the commercialization of contents created and posted on social media by individuals. Such platforms which include Facebook (Meta), Instagram, Tiktok, YouTube, etc., provide avenues for commercializing contents through which individual content creators generate income. Adopting the qualitative method of data gathering, this paper explored secondary sources/literatures in areas of communication, advertising, social media, marketing, Digital media, and statistics; in an attempt to establish a synergy between social media and business enterprise through content monetization. It was established that in content monetization environment, social media platforms have transformed into sales points for Users' Generated Contents; where subscribers upload, post, view, comment and share digital contents (monetized) among themselves. It was thus revealed that not only is social media content monetization a digital pathway for business transaction on social media, it is a lucrative enterprise with a huge potential for many Nigerians to earn a living legitimately. Through the data presented, top 10 social media content creators in Nigeria have earned an estimate of 6.5 million dollars from content monetization, with top earner profiting as much as 3 million dollars in 2024. The study thus recommended that digital media literacy be prioritize in Nigeria, to encourage and equip Nigerians with adequate tools to partake in the revolutionary content monetization.

Keywords: Social media, Content Monetization, Commercialization, Business industry, Advertising

INTRODUCTION
Internet technology graced the world with astounding innovations like the social media platforms. The creation of the internet based social media platforms provided an array of opportunities for users to explore different areas of life through social interaction and exchange of information. Not only did the emergence of social media revolutionize many aspects of life, it equally added value to most social institutions particularly in the areas of marketing, advertising, entrepreneurship, and business enterprise. It equally birthed the concept of digital economy, a business and economy activities conducted online, (Ahuja, 2023).

Serving the purpose of communication, interaction, and information sharing which it was initially meant for, social media platforms have since metamorphosed into powerful economic tools which allow users to earn income by sharing valuable and creative contents online. Social platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and other social media platforms are now being used for income generation through content sharing, affiliate marketing, sponsorships, brand deals, fan subscriptions, online trading and so on; which has empowered many social media subscribers all over the world (Paljug, 2025).

By description, social media are a collective term for internet-based platforms and technological channels which enable subscribers to create and share multimedia contents, exchange ideas and information to a virtual audience. As Kaplan & Haenlein, (2010) put it, the term 'Social media' encompasses a wide array of tools and services, including social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), microblogging platforms (e.g., X, formerly Twitter), photo and video sharing sites (e.g., Instagram, YouTube, TikTok), discussion forums (e.g., Reddit), and professional networks (e.g., LinkedIn). These platforms promote interaction, collaboration, and real-time communication across different geographical boundaries.

Fueled by content creation and social interaction, social media platforms have become viable means for entrepreneurial engagements through which users generate income and earn financial benefits. Deel (2023) explained that social media platforms have evolved beyond social interaction tools into commercial ecosystems where content creators can monetize their creativity. Digital entrepreneurs such as creators of monetized contents share, post, and circulate products (creative contents) on the social media platforms, for subscribers, followers, and fans to access through same platforms. This transactional activity between content creators and their followers is similar to the basic trade of buying and selling.

Statement of Problem: Attracting attention of potential customers to goods and/or services through advertising, is a role mass media has been playing for businesses from time immemorial, (Dominick, 2013). With the evolution of social media platforms however, media role for the business sector transcends beyond marketing and advertising to involve trading of digital contents on social media. By providing a viable platform for digital entrepreneurial ventures, social media invariably took up the role of a business trade point where exchanges (transactions) in monetized contents take place.

Originally, social media was intended for people to connect and establish social relationships. With the conception of Content monetization however, social media quickly metamorphosed into a thriving business hub. Introduced in the early 2000s, content monetization did not become widespread in Nigeria until 2024 when META officially announced the commencement of Facebook content monetization (for Nigerians) in June 2024 (Okorie, 2024). Clearly, one year is not enough time for the basic knowledge of content monetization to be fully integrated in Nigeria.

Besides, many people understand social media to be platforms used for social interactions, but are now being platforms utilized to monetize digital contents; which is clearly at variance with the main objective for its invention. This in itself is a knowledge gap for media researchers to explore, in order to further establish the integration of social media and content monetization for entrepreneurship purposes.

Research Questions

1. Is there a connection between social media terrain and the business sector?
2. Is the functionality of content monetization dependent on active users' participation on social media?
3. Are there financial benefits for monetizing contents on social media?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The term 'Content monetization' is a new coinage birthed in the digital era and it describes the process through which social media users utilize generated contents to earn monetary benefits legitimately. Similar to Pay TV where subscribers are charged for receiving television channel signals (Scrbd, n.d.), social media content creators generate income when other social media users subscribe to their monetized contents. This could be through reposting a monetized content, commenting on it, sharing it or following the page for monetized contents. These contents range from video clips, blog posts, podcasts, photographs, music, and other forms of creative outputs (Stripe, 2024).

In other words, content monetization refers to the activities of some social media users who create contents in other to earn financial benefits by posting such contents on social media platforms for other subscribers (individuals who pay to view other people's platforms on social media) to access. The concept of content monetization chiefly hinges on the act of transforming creativity, purpose, and audience engagement into economic value. Simply put, content monetization is a social media marketing strategy where content creators generate income from followers or fan, who subscribe to their social media profile updates. Same goal as with business which according to Hayes (2025), is described as an enterprise that provides goods and/or services to interested parties in exchange for financial payment.

Paljug (2025) writes that, social media companies offer monetization programs and rewards to social media platform users, who successfully attract and retain a certain number of subscribers to their accounts on the platform. In other words, users of social media platforms could gain financial benefits from the contents they post, share, or upload on social media platforms, having gained a certain number of followers to their social media platform. The viability of content monetization is so huge that it is on record that the demands for the booming social media content monetization market is expected to almost double from \$250 billion in 2023 to about \$480 billion by 2027 (Stripe, 2024). According to an online post by Meta (2025), content monetization on Facebook has grown exponentially, specifying that, "Since we announced Facebook-funded monetization in 2017, more than four million content creators have earned money on Facebook… Facebook has paid content creators more than two billion dollars for videos, reels, photos, and text posts.

During that time, payout for reels and short videos have grown more than 80%". Bertoni (2024) writes that; "Creators are now harnessing their social influence to evolve from entertainers to entrepreneurs. MrBeast, Khaby Lame, the D'Amelio sisters, the Paul brothers, and Emma Chamberlain run their own brands, hawking hamburgers, cooking tools, shoes, energy drinks, and coffee nationwide".

Enormous entrepreneurial potentials abound in social media platforms and the envisaged massive business successes. This is because social media platforms provide unparalleled access to a global audience, allowing individuals and businesses to connect with millions of potential customers across the world without any geographical limitations. In today's digital age, social media has become so popular that is estimated that about 94.7% of internet users between ages 16 and 64 visit at least one social networking site, (Kemp, 2024).

Despite the fact that billions of people worldwide subscribe to social media, not every subscriber is qualified to monetize contents on social media. Like every other formal organization, there are guiding rules which govern content monetization on social media. Users are required to meet specific eligibility criteria, such as subscription/follower counts, consistent engagement, and level of viewership. Although each social media platform has its specific requirements of eligibility to monetize contents, an online blog by Stripe (2024) provided a list of general requirements for content monetization on social media. These include; creation of valuable contents, build an audience/fan base, choose a niche, implement a plan for the niche, refine and grow, as well as to maintain constant engagement on monetization platform.

Theoretical Framework: Fundamentally, theories provide foundational footing upon which concepts, ideas, or studies rely for clarity and ease of understanding. This study was therefore anchored on the Technological Determinism theory. According to Hauer (2017), Technological Determinism Theory was developed by an American sociologist Thorstein Veblen in the early 20th century and later popularized by Marshal McLuhan in the 1960s. The theory proposes that technology is the principal initiator of a society's transformation. To reiterate the core principle of Technological Determinism Theory, Hauer (2017) stated that; "…social changes are controlled by the technology, technological development, communications technology and media. The modern information society arises as a result of the development of innovations, new technologies and their social and political implications".

The concept behind the proposition of Technological Determinism theory as stated above, correlates with the core variable of this study, which centers on the synergy between the social media and business industry. Suffice to say that content monetization came into being with the evolution of digital media, which was in-turn birthed following the invention of internet technology. A legitimate means to earn income through the internet, functionality of content monetization relies solely on the existence of social media platforms. Besides, the proliferation and rapid integration of social media across the globe, facilitated easy popularity of content monetization in various societies the world over, including Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study is a qualitative research work which chiefly employed secondary data to highlight on the objectives for which the study was conducted. Through the review of existing literature in areas of social media, advertising, marketing, and communication, an interpolation was established between the fields of communication and commercial industry.

Thus, textbooks, journal articles, lecture notes, blogs, and online materials were consulted to gather data for the research. Specifically, many of the material consulted (both hardcopies and softcopies) lay strong emphasis on social media content monetization as a business enterprise in the media landscape.

To further elucidate on the economic potentials of social media content monetization as a business enterprise on the media landscape, statistical data were gathered on the earnings of some content creators locally and internationally. Below are some statistical data presented in bar charts.

Topping the chart for the content creator with the most subscribers/followers on social media is Mark Angel, with an estimated followers' rate of over 39.8 million. Even kiekie with the least followers (3.9 million social media subscribers), has garnered a mammoth of viewers for her monetized contents.

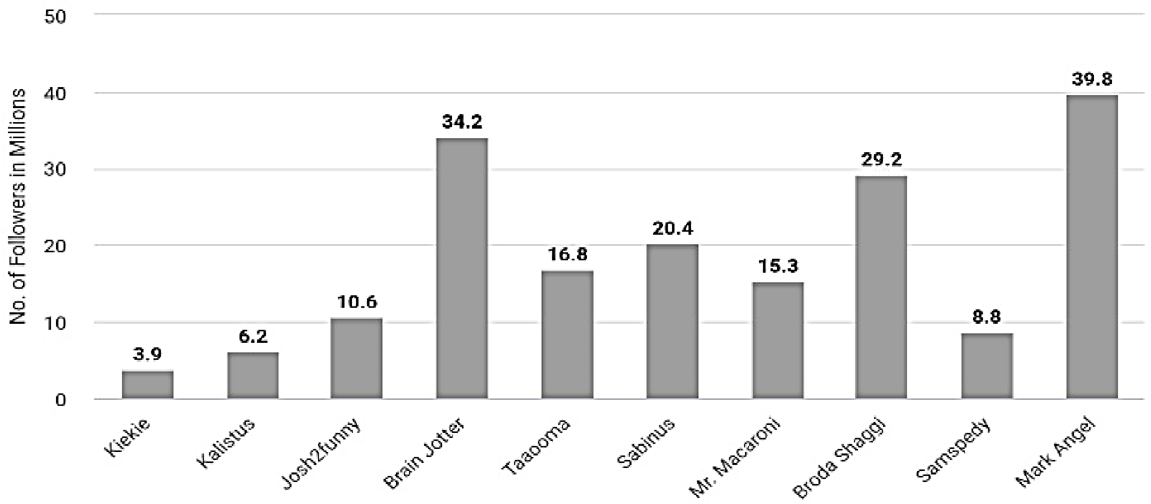

Fig. 1: *Top 10 Social Media Content Creators in Nigeria & Estimated Number of followers in 2025*

Source: *Internet Posts, 2025*

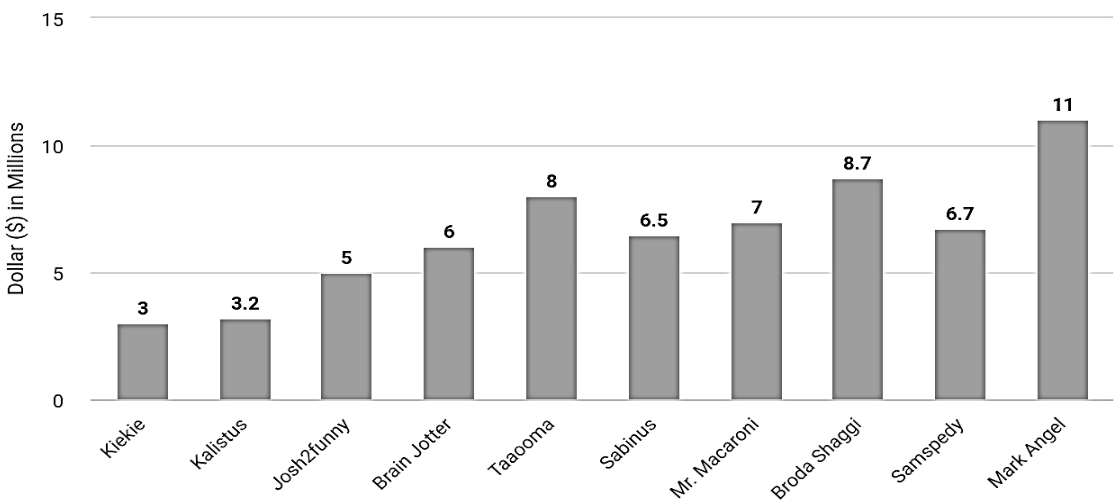

Fig. 2: *Top 10 Social Media Content Creators in Nigeria and their Estimated Gross Earnings (2024)*

Source: *Afro-10 YouTube Channel, 2025*

Data presented in the second bar chart above was extracted from a YouTube video posted by on a channel named 'Afro 10'. The chart clearly confirmed the economic potentials of content monetization as a lucrative business, going by the earnings presented which are valued in US Dollar. The monies earned by these content creators range from between 11 million dollars to 3 million dollars, which are lots of money when converted to Nigeria local currency. According to the YouTube video (Afro 10, 2024) the earnings were achieved through various strategies of content monetization which include affiliate marketing, sponsorships, and advertisement.

Chart 3 above did not only confirm that the content monetization is not practiced in Nigeria alone, but it is a worldwide phenomenon which establishes robust financial stability for many. Extracted from an article posted by Bertoni (2025) published on Forbes website, this bar chart presented the data of 10 most influential social media content creators with staggering earnings in tens of millions of dollars.

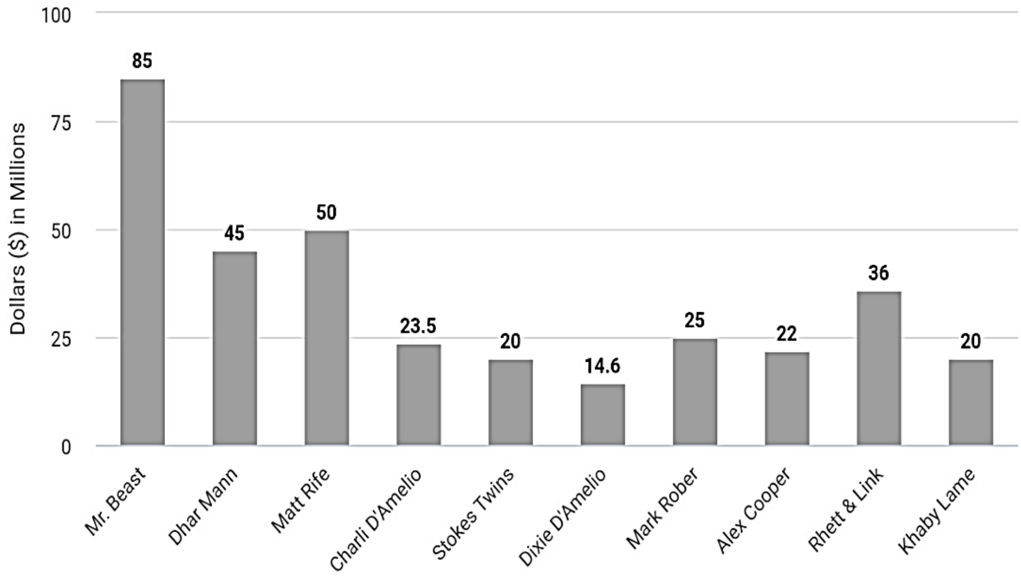

Fig. 3: *Top 10 Global Social Media Content Creators and their Estimated Gross Earnings (2024)*

Source: *Internet Data, 2025*

From the chart above, this category of social media content creators around the world have earned an estimated total of 341.1 million dollars, for just engaging with fellow subscribers on social media. Even the content creator with the least earnings is estimated to have profited about $14.6 million; which is a huge amount of money. The highest earner on the chart (Mr. Beast) has an estimate of 85 million dollars in earnings from social media content monetization.

DISCUSSIONS

The act of social media subscribers' patronage of monetized content for which the content creator generate income, is similar to a business transaction with the social media platforms serving as transaction hub where content creators and followers/subscribers/viewers interact. Besides posting monetized contents on social media, affiliate marketing and sponsorship which are also forms of social media content monetization allows content creators to engage in entrepreneurship activities through the promotion of other companies' products or services, partnership with brands to create sponsored content or the integration of company products into their existing content (Stripe, 2024). This clearly shows the synergy between social media and the business sector.

Buttressing this point, Meta (2024) writes that; "Since we announced Facebook-funded monetization in 2017, more than four million content creators have earned money on Facebook… Facebook has paid content creators more than two billion dollars for videos, reels, photos, and text posts. During that time, payout for reels and short videos have grown more than 80%". In the second bar chart, the earnings of Nigerian content creators is clearly revealed to run in millions of dollars. The chart indicated that even the least earner on chart profited in millions of dollars from monetizing contents on social media.

In fact, it was stated by Keyser (2024) that "Social media platforms provide unparalleled access to a global audience, allowing individuals and businesses to connect with millions of potential customers across the world without any geographical limitations. By leveraging networks like Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube, users can tap into diverse demographics, cultures, and interests, which significantly broadens their market reach. These platforms enable highly targeted advertising, ensuring content reaches the most relevant audiences." Clearly, these answer the first research question in the affirmative, which sought to find out if there is a connection between social media terrain and the business sector.

Besides, Bertoni (2024) writes that; "Creators are now harnessing their social influence to evolve from entertainers to entrepreneurs. MrBeast, Khaby Lame, the D'Amelio sisters, the Paul brothers, and Emma

Chamberlain run their own brands, hawking hamburgers, cooking tools, shoes, energy drinks, and coffee nationwide". These business ventures are mostly marketed and traded through social media platforms.

Among the conditions for cash payouts in social media content monetization is the number of audience activities (followings, subscriptions, views, postings, comments, and so on) a content creator attracts to his social media account. According to Meta (2024), it is a must for a social media account to build a strong audience-base to be able to monetize contents on social media. However, the ideal number of followers required to monetize contents on social media varies according to a specific platform and type of monetization. PartnrUP (2024) writes that the minimum number of followers required for monetization on Tiktok is 10,000, while that of YouTube is pegged at 1,000 (with at least 4,000 watch hours in 12 months). For Facebook, at least 10,000 followers are also needed to be eligible for content monetization.

The general rule for social media content monetization is simply; "…the more followers you have, the higher the potential fir ai collaboration", (The Media Lab, *n.d.*). Clearly this was confirmed in the first bar chart above, which shows the number of followers each of the top 10 Nigerian content creator garnered for themselves. In the chart, Mark Angel is revealed to have around 39.8 million followers who subscribe to his different social media accounts. Even the Kiekie with the least number of followers, has around 3.9 followers in total. Invariably, this indicated that posting contents alone on social media is not sufficient to generate income for a content creator. Rather, monetization also requires active social media engagement and participation in order to attract more followers/subscriber. Hence, the second research question which attempted to ascertain if the functionality of content monetization dependent on active users' participation on social media, is answered in the affirmative.

Furthermore, from the data in chart one above, Mark Angel whose earnings tops the chart is said to earn an estimate of about $11 million. Going by the current dollar to naira exchange rate of around ₦1,537.0748 to a dollar (CBN, 2025), the naira equivalent of Mark Angel's accumulated social media earnings is put at around 11.5 billion naira. This staggering amount he has earned by simply filming and posting short comic video clips on different social media platforms for the viewing pleasure of social media users, who are charged (through data packages) for viewing. Even the 3 million dollars (equivalent to 4.6 billion naira) payout received by the least earner on the list, is not small amount of money. For a country grappling with abject poverty, and civil servants earning 45 dollars (70 thousand naira) monthly national minimum wage as salary (Adeduyite, 2024), content monetization could be a safe haven for many. Indeed, social media content monetization has proven to be a highly lucrative business venture with a potential for huge financial benefits. This answers the third research question which sought to establish the financial gains derivable from social media content monetization.

CONCLUSION

Following the versatility of the social media and its use to accomplish diverse operations through interconnectivity, business opportunity was identified by way of monetizing contents posted on social media. Not only do these social media activities generate revenue and profits for the social media platform owners, it also offers huge financial benefits to the content creators who post their creative ideas on social media for other users to access this provides a win-win situation for both parties involved in monetization of contents.

Not only would it contribute to the improvement of creative skills amongst social media, content monetization is also a legitimate means to make money and earn a living, which is the ultimate goal of business establishments. By extension, this could to a large extent provide a means of livelihood for many, particularly for youths who are the majority of social media users. As a result, content monetization could be a strong catalyst to combat fraudulent activities on the Internet. Since social media is an internet-based platform, content monetization certainly is a more desirable and legitimate alternative to fraudulent activities online. Besides, it rewards handsomely.

By and large content monetization on social media is like being paid for engaging in one's leisure activities, since many users generated social media contents center around individual's creative ideas, personal experiences, and resourceful information. Social media are no longer just a leisure activity; they are powerful tools for creativity, learning, social activism, and economic advancement. Understanding its broader concept especially its income-generating possibilities are essential for youth empowerment in today's digital age. Being knowledgeable and well-grounded in social media content monetization strategies, could unlock new pathways to self-reliance, digital entrepreneurship, and poverty reduction.

RECOMMENDATION

1. To increase digital media literacy, online courses should be organized on popular social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, and YouTube.
2. To encourage youths to engage in social media content monetization as a business venture, content creation strategies should be included in school curriculum as an entrepreneurship course.
3. To dissuade youths from engaging in fraudulent online activities, government should launch content monetization sensitization campaign in the media.
4. Government should also strive to incentivize creative content creation, to encourage youths to develop their mental capacity, not only to earn a living through content creation, but to develop mental skills that would be beneficial for societal development
5. Further studies should be carried out, particularly in the areas to dissuade youths from engaging in internet fraud (*yahoo-yahoo*) to opt for a legitimate alternative of content monetization on social media.

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