

Navigating Economic Challenges in the Digital Photography and Video Industry: An Analysis of Monetization Strategies Through Subscription Models and the Role of Online Platforms

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Abstract

The digital photography and video industry has undergone a significant transformation due to technological advancements and changes in consumer behavior. This research aims to analyze the industry's economic challenges and explore more effective monetization strategies through subscription models and the role of online platforms. The research method used was qualitative, employing a case study approach that involved semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with industry players. The findings show that the main challenges include technological unemployment, financial constraints, and the complexity of digital marketing. The subscription model is a relevant monetization strategy to provide a steady revenue stream, while online platforms play an essential role in supporting monetization through influencer marketing and product sales. This research emphasizes the need for adaptation and innovation to enhance the sustainability of the digital photography and video industry in the digital era.

Keywords: Photography Industry, Digital Video, Economic Challenges, Subscription Model, Monetization, Online Platforms, Influencer Marketing, Tech Unemployment.

A. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, rapid advances in digital technology and changes in consumer behavior have led to a significant transformation in the digital photography and video industry. Industry players must adapt their monetization methods and strategies to survive in this business. This transformation presents many challenges, including marketing, product development, and consumer relations. We need to understand the ever-changing digital ecosystem to address all of these.

Technological advancements and changing consumer preferences are closely correlated with the economic difficulties facing the digital photography and video industry. Among the key issues are technological unemployment, financial problems, and challenges incorporating effective digital marketing strategies. Additional problems arise from the piracy of movies and music through networks and CD and DVD bootlegs.

Another concern is the economic viability of the current model of scholarly publications as well as conventional publishing, such as television networks and newspapers ¹.

In the face of these changes, industries must find ways to develop sustainable and adaptable monetization models for the digital age. As education evolves, media literacy provides a means to connect classroom technology with the popular culture that increasingly dominates children's leisure time and to do so with a critical rather than celebratory approach. It raises essential questions that many information technology methods in education often overlook, making media literacy more than just an instrumental use of technology. To deal with these changes, the industry needs to find ways to create monetization models that are sustainable and adaptable to the digital age. Media literacy connects the use of technology in the classroom with the popular culture that increasingly dominates children's leisure time, taking a critical rather than celebratory approach as the education landscape evolves. It highlights important issues often overlooked by many educational approaches to information technology. Therefore, media literacy encompasses much more than just the practical use of technology ². The photography industry faces the problem of technological unemployment, especially in the affected countries. The need for professional labor has changed with the advent of contemporary technology. As a result, traditional tasks in photography studios have been streamlined. This situation makes photography directors uncertain. Due to current economic challenges, they hesitate to expand their business and hire more employees. Although the technological changes that occurred throughout the lives of previous affected generations did not lead to an increase in long-term unemployment, today the risk needs to be evaluated more carefully. To assess this danger, we must consider total digitalization and automation in the informal sector and how this impacts permanent unemployment ³

¹ Hal R. Varian, "Copying and Copyright," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19, no. 2 (2005): 121–38, <https://doi.org/10.1257/0895330054048768>.

² Earl Aguilera, "Defining Digital Literacy," *Digital Literacies and Interactive Media*, 2022, 17–44, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003011750-2>.

³ Stepan Zemtsov, "New Technologies, Potential Unemployment and 'Nescience Economy' during and after the 2020 Economic Crisis," *Regional Science Policy and Practice* 12, no. 4 (2020): 723–43, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsp3.12286>.

In addition, individuals aspiring to launch a photography business frequently encounter financial challenges. New entrants in the market often struggle with the initial costs of equipment and technology. High overhead expenses and significant government taxes contribute to the operational burden. Industry leaders express concerns about increasing costs that drive customers to cut back on spending.⁴

This challenging situation exacerbates unemployment in the sector, indicating a need for quick adaptation and innovation to tackle complex problems. Digital marketing presents the next challenge, as the digital age provides significant opportunities for improved market positioning through the use of big data and social media.⁵ However, challenges arise from the complexity of multichannel integration, as each channel has unique characteristics and a different user base. Additionally, developing a consistent and successful marketing strategy becomes more challenging due to the large number of channels. Building effective marketing strategies also grows more difficult as consumer preferences shift rapidly and demand for diversity increases. The ability to analyze data becomes essential for understanding and meeting the changing needs of consumers.⁶ When consumer preferences and demand characteristics change rapidly, it becomes challenging for companies to maintain an effective marketing approach. To understand and fulfill consumer needs, continuous data analysis capabilities must be regularly updated and enhanced to cope with this volatility.⁷ The digital photography and video industry may eventually learn monetization models from other sectors, such as gaming and NFTs, which have utilized strategies like free-to-play, subscription-based services, and in-game purchases.⁸ By enabling new value creation and innovation across various industries, NFTs have emerged as revolutionary tools for business models. Numerous studies and implementations have demonstrated the impact of NFTs

⁴ Ebenezer Kofi Enninful, "Technological Unemployment Galore in Ghana: The Spotlight on the Digital Photography Industry," *International Journal of Education, Learning and Development* 11, no. 4 (2023): 9–44, <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijeld.2013/vol11n4944>.

⁵ Zihua Li, Hazrita Ab Rahim, and Tingyu Liu, "International Theory and Practice in Humanities and Social Sciences Marketing Strategies in the Digital Age : Opportunities and Challenges" 1 (2024): 216–28.

⁶ Li, Rahim, and Liu.

⁷ Li, Rahim, and Liu.

⁸ Kumar Divya -, "Monetization Models in the Gaming Industry: A Comparative Analysis of In-Game Purchases, Subscriptions, and Free-to-Play Strategies," *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research* 6, no. 1 (2024): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i01.13817>.

on business models. In gaming, NFTs (non-fungible tokens) are unique digital assets representing in-game items or characters, which can be traded on blockchain marketplaces. The influence of NFTs has transformed business models, fostering innovation and value creation in many sectors. The effect of NFTs on business models has been illustrated through various implementations and research. They provide players with rightful ownership of virtual assets, allowing those who engage with NFT games to earn money through gameplay (play-to-earn) and sell their digital assets.⁹ These models influence economic viability and consumer engagement levels. The photography industry can diversify its revenue streams while increasing customer engagement by adopting similar models, such as offering subscription services for digital content or implementing a freemium model where basic services are free, but premium features require payment. Heightening consumer engagement and diversifying revenue streams can be achieved through strategies like these.¹⁰ With the digital photography and video industry facing many issues, it is important to consider the digital transformation occurring in various sectors, such as healthcare. Both healthcare and traditional businesses also grapple with challenges like digital trust, data management, and organizational resistance to change.¹¹ The increasing digitalization of the economy has raised awareness of the importance of digital transformation and its capacity to help companies remain competitive in the market. However, these changes affect society, the environment, and institutions, not solely at the company level. This is why research on digital transformation has garnered growing attention over the past twenty years, covering many topics in the literature. A co-occurrence analysis was conducted using VOSviewer¹² to visualize the literature's node network graphically.

⁹ Mitra Madanchian and Hamed Taherdoost, "Business Model Evolution in the Age of NFTs and the Metaverse," *Information (Switzerland)* 15, no. 7 (2024): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.3390/info15070378>.

¹⁰ -, "Monetization Models in the Gaming Industry: A Comparative Analysis of In-Game Purchases, Subscriptions, and Free-to-Play Strategies."

¹¹ Syamsuddin Syamsuddin et al., "Adapting to Digital Transformation: Challenges and Strategies for Traditional Businesses," *Global International Journal of Innovative Research* 2, no. 3 (2024): 704–11, <https://doi.org/10.59613/global.v2i3.121>.

¹² Sascha Kraus et al., "Digital Transformation: An Overview of the Current State of the Art of Research," *SAGE Open* 11, no. 3 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211047576>.

The photography industry can gain insights to overcome its challenges by studying and adopting successful strategies from other industries. Embracing digital transformation, driving innovation, and leveraging strategic partnerships can assist the industry in navigating the complexities of monetization in the internet age. In the creative sector, monetization theory is used through various methods, such as subscription business models, direct sales, and influencer-based monetization. According to Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010), a good business model should be able to answer questions about how value is created, distributed, and captured ¹³. In this research, the monetization strategy in the digital age is not just a reaction to market conditions; it is also an innovation that requires a deep understanding of technology and consumer behavior. In this industry, there is a considerable difference between current developments and what is expected. To increase profits and customer engagement, effective monetization models, such as subscriptions and integrated digital strategies, are expected to be adopted. However, many industry players have not fully embraced these models or are unable to implement them well. This suggests that significant issues still exist regarding technological infrastructure and market readiness to adopt new business models. The results show that, from the review of existing literature, most previous studies concentrate on one aspect of the creative industry, such as how social media affects marketing or how effective subscription models are ¹⁴.

This research provides a broader view of the financial issues the digital photography and video industry faces, including which types of monetization models should be used to achieve sustainability. This research aims to offer a new understanding of monetization by integrating technology and marketing by comparing the experiences of other industries, such as gaming and small businesses. The objective of the problem statement is to discover and analyze the various economic challenges faced by the digital photography and video industry and to explore monetization methods that can be used to improve business sustainability. For example, what are the

¹³ Nurzi Sebrina and Erni Masdupi, "Model Bisnis Berkelanjutan Dan Isu Strategi Pengembangan Model Bisnis Berkelanjutan Pada UKM: Tinjauan Literatur Sistematis" 8, no. 2 (2024): 1536–54, <https://doi.org/10.33087/ekonomis.v8i2.1914>.

¹⁴ Sebrina and Masdupi.

economic challenges the industry faces in the digital age? How can subscription models serve as a monetization strategy in this industry? This research aims to identify and analyze the economic challenges faced by the digital photography and video industry and to determine more efficient monetization strategies that can be implemented through subscription models and online platforms. This study is expected to provide practical recommendations for industry players to overcome these challenges and capitalize on the opportunities available in the modern era.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs qualitative methods aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of monetization strategies and economic challenges within the digital photography and video industry. This approach was selected because it enables the exploration of complex social and economic contexts and offers profound insights into the experiences and perspectives of industry stakeholders. This case study is designed to examine the digital photography and video industry across various online platforms. This enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of the specific context of this industry and the factors influencing its monetization dynamics. Moreover, the research involved various stakeholders from the digital photography and video industry, including independent photographers and videographers, marketing managers from online platforms such as Instagram, Shutterstock, and Adobe Stock, entrepreneurs who own photography studios, and users of photography and video services. To ensure diversity of opinions, a purposive sampling technique will be employed to select participants. The selection process will take into account professional background, demographics, and experience. To collect data, semi-structured interviews will be conducted to solicit participants' perspectives and experiences on economic issues and monetization strategies in the digital photography and video sector. Additionally, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held to gather opinions from various industry players. Furthermore, prior documents or data were evaluated, including industry reports, academic articles, and publications from relevant online platforms, to provide context and support for the interview data. Data analysis employed thematic analysis, which

included several stages: transcription of interviews and focus groups, identification of patterns and themes through data coding, organization of themes to explain challenges and monetization strategies, and drafting a narrative to explain the findings.

C. DISCUSSION RESULT

1. Economic Challenges in the Digital Photography and Video Industry

The digital photography and video industry has struggled with high unemployment, and economic issues have exacerbated the situation. Many graduates are also encountering challenges in securing jobs due to the financial difficulties faced by the government and the private sector ¹⁵. Technology-related unemployment is one of the many challenges confronting the digital photography and video industry, according to several previous studies. The adoption of new technologies, such as AI and automated editing software, has diminished the demand for traditional jobs, leading to unemployment among individuals with the necessary skills. In this context, many professional photographers view technologies that can generate content quickly as a threat to their jobs.

The technological revolution impacts unemployment rates, yielding both positive and negative effects. Technology enhances efficiency and productivity, creating new jobs in digital and innovative sectors. However, digitization and automation diminish the need for labor in traditional sectors, resulting in unemployment for those who lack the skills required by technological advancements. Proactive measures are essential to mitigate this negative impact. The primary solutions include upskilling and reskilling the workforce, implementing technology-based education, and enacting government policies that support the transition to the digital sector. With the right strategy, Indonesia can reduce unemployment resulting from the technological revolution and capitalize on

¹⁵ Enniful, "Technological Unemployment Galore in Ghana: The Spotlight on the Digital Photography Industry."

the opportunities that arise in the digital era to cultivate a more skilled and future-ready workforce. ¹⁶.

New entrepreneurs often face financial challenges in the field of digital photography and video, including the costs of photography equipment and the need for advanced technology. Many industry players encounter difficulties in obtaining the necessary capital to survive and innovate in a highly competitive business landscape. Starting a business in digital photography and video requires significant investment, particularly for purchasing advanced technology and equipment. The cost of becoming a professional photographer, including complete gear such as full-frame cameras, high-quality lenses, lighting, and accessories, can reach IDR 150–200 million. The minimum capital for amateur photographers is around IDR 6–7 million, while for semi-professional photographers, it is approximately IDR 20–30 million. Additionally, expenses such as studio rentals, editing equipment, and operating costs should also be considered. ¹⁷. In the field of digital photography and video, there is a large initial investment. However, with good financial planning and the use of financial technology, these challenges can be gradually overcome. Industry players find it difficult to reach their target audience and tailor products to customer needs because of the complexity of digital marketing, which stems from limitations in understanding and implementing effective strategies. They must constantly update their knowledge and adapt quickly as technology and algorithms change rapidly, meaning that effective strategies today may no longer be relevant tomorrow. ¹⁸.

As more and more businesses go digital, the competition becomes increasingly fierce, posing a significant challenge. This drives businesses to be more creative and innovative in their marketing campaigns. However, it can lead to several issues, such as algorithm changes on digital platforms, heightened competition, and a lack of resources

¹⁶ Tsamrotul Fikriyah, “Dampak Revolusi Teknologi Terhadap Tingkat Pengangguran Di Era Digital Konten Ini Telah Tayang Di Kompasiana.Com Dengan Judul ‘Dampak Revolusi Teknologi Terhadap Tingkat Pengangguran Di Era Digital’, Klik Untuk Baca: <https://www.kompasiana.com/Tsamrotulfi>,” Kompasiana, 2025.

¹⁷ Handy Dannu Wijaya, “Finansial Berapa Sih Biaya Buat Jadi Fotografer?,” ayoBandung.com, 2021, <https://www.ayobandung.com/finansial/pr-79727336/berapa-sih-biaya-buat-jadi-fotografer>.

¹⁸ Admin Acer, “7 Tantangan Bisnis Di Era Digital Dan Strategi Menghadapinya,” Acerid.com, 2024.

or expertise in technology-based marketing management.¹⁹ Especially, UMKMs encounter difficulties with digital skills and financial resources due to limited knowledge and capabilities. Optimizing strategies becomes challenging as they do not understand analytics tools, market segmentation, and data management. Without a thorough grasp of consumer behavior and preferences, industry players will struggle to target the right audience. Ineffective marketing campaigns and low ROI stem from incorrect segmentation. Consumers become restless due to excessive content and marketing messages. For messages to penetrate the noise in digital media, content must be relevant, engaging, and meaningful.

2. Subscription Model as a Monetization Strategy

The subscription model is a monetization method considered the most effective in the video and digital photography industry. The study also found that subscription models offer several advantages, such as recurring revenue and ease of access for consumers. This model creates a more stable and predictable revenue stream, critical for guaranteeing business continuity. It has become a popular monetization strategy in the digital economy, essential for the digital photography and video industry, as well as for software, stock media, and online courses. For example, platforms like Adobe Stock and Shutterstock have managed to provide users with access to high-quality images and videos.²⁰

The ability to adapt to the needs of the business and customers determines the success of a subscription model. From a business perspective, subscriptions increase customer loyalty and generate predictable revenue. For customers, subscription features often provide cost savings and convenience because they can access a variety of resources without needing to make individual purchases. By facilitating easier access to a wide range of products and resources through regular payments, this model helps customers obtain the services they need without incurring high fees per transaction. The media industry is adopting the subscription business model, or subscription model, as

¹⁹ Admin, "Tantangan Digital Marketing Dan Cara Mengatasinya," *garuda.website*, 2025.

²⁰ Madanchian and Taherdoost, "Business Model Evolution in the Age of NFTs and the Metaverse."

its primary strategy to survive in the digital age, particularly due to the decline in revenue from advertising. This model allows media to reduce their reliance on advertising and concentrate on high-quality content that appeals to readers. The subscription model empowers digital photographers and videographers to gain more value, access exclusive content, and explore ongoing monetization opportunities. The ability to adapt to the needs of both the business and its customers is a key factor that determines the success of a subscription model. From a business perspective, subscriptions enhance customer loyalty and generate predictable revenue.

For customers, subscription features often offer cost savings and convenience, as they can access a variety of resources without requiring individual purchases. By providing access to a wide range of products and resources through regular payments, this model simplifies access for customers, helping them obtain the services they need without incurring high fees per transaction. The media industry is adopting the subscription business model, or subscription model, as the main strategy to survive in the digital age, especially due to the decline in revenue from advertising. This model allows media outlets to reduce their reliance on advertising and focus on high-quality content that appeals to readers. Additionally, the subscription model enables digital photographers and videographers to gain more value, access exclusive content, and create ongoing monetization opportunities.

3. The Role of Online Platforms in Monetization Strategies

In this industry, online platforms such as social media and e-commerce are proving crucial in supporting monetization. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok enable content creators to promote themselves and generate revenue through influencer marketing, contributing to their monetization success. Social media also allows content creators to build a broad audience, which opens up monetization opportunities through marketers. Creators can now sell items directly to their followers through features like Instagram and TikTok Market Stores. These features significantly increase earning potential. A report from the YouTube channel Dewa Eka Prayoga, which has 632 thousand subscribers, indicates a high possibility that the trend of social media monetization will

emerge in 2025. According to AyoBacaNews.com, the live shopping feature is estimated to generate 4.9 billion dollars worldwide.²¹ The growing trend of social media monetization greatly benefits small businesses and content creators. TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are leading the way with innovative new features; TikTok claims that more than forty-four percent of its users discover new products on the platform. The main strategy is to optimize the TikTok store and live streaming. Instagram now offers a live shopping feature that allows users to buy items directly in the app. This strategy enhances consumer satisfaction. Ultimately, collaborative content and short videos boost conversions and engagement. While e-commerce platforms provide direct sales channels for digital and physical products, such as photographic and videography works, this increases accessibility and market potential for photographers and videographers. Dynamic pricing on the platform also shows positive results, leading to increased sales and customer conversions²²

4. Overcoming Obstacles of Technology, Unemployment, and Financial Constraints

Training workers to master new technologies can help reduce the impact of technological unemployment and prepare them for relevant roles in the digital age. This training enables workers to acquire new skills (reskilling) or upskill, making them more adaptive to changes in the job market that technology increasingly influences. The government offers a range of free, high-quality training programs, including the Ministry of Manpower's Skillhub, which certifies participants through the latest competency-based training modules. Additionally, other institutions such as PPKPI Jakarta and the Digital Talent Scholarship provide information technology training with BNSP certificates to enhance competitiveness in the digital industry. Technology training helps employees adapt to a dynamic work environment and supports them in adjusting to technological changes. Retraining, also known as upskilling, provides workers who have faced automation the chance to transition to new, more relevant jobs. To enhance employment opportunities and ensure that the workforce meets industry

²¹ L Sundana, "Optimasi TikTok Shop Dan Instagram: Strategi Baru Raup Cuan Di 2025," Ayobacanews.com, 2025.

²² Hendra Riofita Sofiyantu, "Optimalisasi Platform Digital Sebagai Strategi Pemasaran Dalam Meningkatkan Penjualan UMKM," *IME Inovasi Makro Ekonomi* Vol.6,No.3, no. 3 (2024): 131–32.

standards, competency certifications are offered. Another important point is the role of collaboration and networking; training often involves partnerships among government, industry, and educational institutions, while also creating opportunities for professional networking.

Small industry players can more easily obtain start-up capital by collaborating with funding institutions or the government. With this support, the companies will generate innovation and sustainability. The first type of support is access to business capital; for example, obtaining grants, soft loans, or working capital loans on more favorable terms than those offered by traditional financial institutions. Second, business actors will receive assistance and training in the areas of management, marketing, and technology. This will help them manage capital and operate their businesses effectively. With sufficient capital, business actors can develop new products, improve production processes, or implement digital technology to increase the value of their products and services. Third, improved marketing networks, product diversification, and sound financial management are essential for companies to survive. Fourth, expanding their position in the industry through network support and collaboration with suppliers and other business actors is crucial. Small industry players can grow and contribute more to the national economy by working with funding agencies and governments. This cooperation also provides them with opportunities to learn, innovate, and strengthen their long-term business competitiveness.

D. CONCLUSION

Today, the digital photography and video industry is facing several significant economic issues, including technological unemployment, financial problems, and the complexity of digital marketing strategies. The rapid development of technology has altered the needs of the workforce, which reduces conventional jobs and creates uncertainty for the industry. Furthermore, beginners looking to enter this market are deterred by the high initial costs of equipment and technology. On the other hand, the fierce competition in the digital industry demands swift changes and a deep understanding of consumer behavior. By leveraging the potential for easier customer

access, the subscription monetization model is regarded as a vital strategy for enhancing financial stability. Furthermore, the study highlights that online platforms, including social media and e-commerce, play a crucial role in facilitating monetization through influencer marketing and digital product sales. Industry players are encouraged to tackle this issue by adopting a sustainable learning and skills development approach, collaborating with funding agencies and governments to secure capital, and utilizing technology-based training to enhance competitiveness in the market. The digital photography and video industry can be better positioned to meet the challenges of the ever-evolving digital age and boost its sustainability by integrating technology and innovation into its marketing strategy.

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