




# CONTENT PLATFORMS AND CREATORS IN ARGENTINA:

Analysis of the Value Chain and Production and Monetization Modalities.

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The use of non-discriminatory language avoiding sexist stereotypes and making all genders visible is a priority for those who have worked on this publication. A choice was made to distinguish between genders in some passages, and to use the generic form of the masculine in others, according to the clearest and most fluid way of reading, and always aiming at including all persons in these pages.

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# ABSTRACT

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Addressing the Creator's Economy phenomenon, in which an increasing number of individuals and companies are using online platforms to monetize their creative content and services, has so far been approached largely on a global or case-by-case basis. This paper aims at analyzing the dynamics and features of this new Argentine ecosystem, where there are 36 million social media users who spend an average of 3 hours and 22 minutes per day on social media. Based on an analysis of the value chain, platform governance, production, and monetization modalities, and by exploring certain outstanding verticals (gaming, eSports, music, and digital art), this document attempts to map the stylized facts, barriers, and challenges of this new sector, which may be shared by other non-central and developing countries. It also highlights some local characteristics that strongly influence the strategies, incentives, and behavior of actors, such as the relatively lower "click value" driving the need to scale innovation across borders. It also underlines the relatively lower availability of monetization options and the dependence on their specialization as a key challenge.



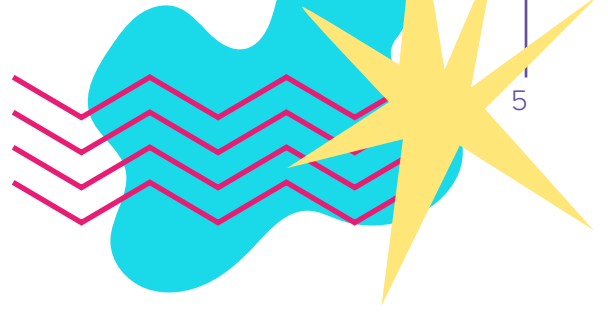


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This report would not have been possible without the generosity of many people; to begin with, those who agreed to be interviewed, a dozen different leading actors of the ecosystem, such as content creators, representative agencies and aggregators, record labels, streaming platforms and accelerator consultants.

Most of them decided to remain anonymous, so, for the sake of consistency, we do not mention the names of testimonials. However, we would like to highlight that, without their generous contribution and invaluable situated knowledge, this report would have much less to offer its readers. Likewise, it should be clear that any mistake or omission is the sole responsibility of its authors, rather than its kind primary sources.



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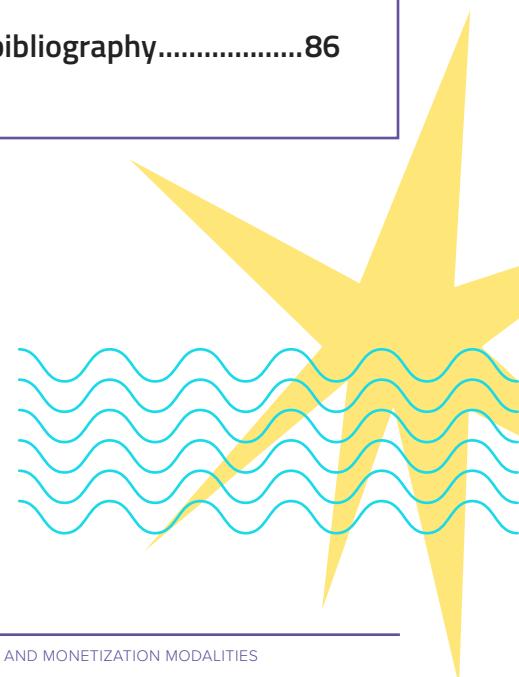
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# 1. Introduction

The key question of the report is:

**Who are the content creators and how are their main dynamics in Argentina characterized?**

For the purpose of this report, we understand that *creators* are those who use digital technology to create and publish unique creative content, whether it is a video, film, art, music, design, text, games or any other media that audiences may have access to and respond to (Florida, [2022](#)), and who get to monetize their content through different methods, for example, memberships, subscriptions, digital advice, advertisement, brand associations, sponsorships, direct platform funding and other forms of digital payment.

On the other hand, and beyond the scale or the capacity to monetize their content, the way itself that creators usually introduce themselves shows some degree of difficulty to define the unit of analysis. There are “youtubers”, “influencers”, “instagrammers”, “streamers” or “tiktokers”, among others. Here, we start off the consideration that such differences are not really self-defining but expressions of the complexity of the political economy underlying the emergence of an ecosystem based on entertainment via streaming, and the different modalities that creators have displayed to respond to the conditions set by platforms and brands, as key actors of the ecosystem.

In the last two decades, the traditional ideas of value chains in the entertainment and information industries have been disrupted by the emergence and expansion of a set of streaming platforms, each of them dominant in some aspect of the content ecosystem. “Supernodes”, according to Galloway and Thacker (2007). For example, *Youtube* published its first video in 2005 and *Facebook* added the Like button in 2010, to name a few milestones. In this sense, the advent of a content creators’ ecosystem -on a global, regional and local level alike- is part of the platformization processes that define the data-based economy, marked by the co-existence of centralization dynamics (in some platforms) and of decentralization (because of the disintermediation of productive processes) (Bonina et al, 2020).

In turn, brands, as commercial companies that use digital media and content creators to reach out to their audiences, sponsor contents, events and creators’ careers. Here, the main distinction is not focused on the distribution formats but on the verticals each brand and creator belongs to, and which make it possible to segment audiences. In part, the literature looking at the issue of the content creators’ ecosystem from a marketing perspective does so with this outlook (Amsellem, 2020; Arriagada and Ibañez, 2020; Forsyth, 2022; Mears, 2022).

If the categorizations focus on the relationship between creators and platforms, we find formulas such as “twitcher”, “youtuber”, “tiktokker” or “instagrammer”; on the other hand, if we focus on the relationship between creators, audiences and ideas (or products), we find the general formula of “influencer” or, more abstractly, of “gamer”.

However, beyond the techno-centric narratives underlying both ways to address the question of who creators are (characterizing the digital age since its beginning), here we start off the notion that we can talk about content “ecosystem” because, around those two big gravitational centers, platforms and brands, a complex universe of content developers with dynamics of their own has taken shape. Let us call them “creators”.

Now then, even though these digital entrepreneurs develop genuine value by means of emerging business models and practices, it is rather a minority that has been able to obtain some sustainability, and if so, quite recently (for many, since the Covid-19 pandemic). A study by Influencer Marketing Hub (2022) mentions that out of the 50 million content creators globally, only 2 million monetize their creations on a full-time basis. That is to say, only 4% of the total number. Another study by Linktree (2022) is even less enthusiastic, as it notes that out of the 200 million creators globally, only 2 million produce in a professional manner, that is to say, 1% (Signal Fire, 2022)<sup>1</sup>.

This report started off the exploratory hypothesis that the creators who have been able to give their entrepreneurship some sustainability have devised some professionalization strategy that has entailed moving towards an “agency” model, optimizing their means of production, distribution and monetization. Indeed, although

1. Made up by creators analyzed who are monetizing beyond advertisement and branding: 4.6% who started their brand, 2.9% promoters links, 2.7% fans donations, 1.9% courses and 0.5% subscription service. See: <https://signalfire.com/blog/creator-economy/>



we find very different ideas of “professionalization” and different strategies to achieve it among the actors interviewed and the creators surveyed, the general trend is towards a greater rationalization of content production processes, and a greater complexity of channels, which entails combining the specialization in some formats, platforms and verticals with the scalability of networks of agents, aggregators, accelerators, associated creators, sponsoring brands and loyal audiences.

In the face of this scenario, most studies developed in the last years are focused on developed markets (Amsellem, [2020](#); Arriagada and Ibañez, [2020](#); Day, [2022](#); Linktree, [2022](#); Forsyth, [2022](#); Influencer Marketing Hub, [2022](#); Mears, [2022](#)). On the one hand, the literature coming from the commercial sectors prevails over the academic one. On the other hand, the dynamics and practices in Latin American digital ecosystems have been less studied.

The aim of this report is to map the players and the dynamics of the content creators’ ecosystem in Argentina, its value chain and reach. For that end, we have considered and studied creators as a starting point. Specifically, we analyze those who manage to turn the production of contents into a full-time, or at least part-time, job.

Additionally, the work seeks to answer five research questions:

- ▶ Who are the content creators in Argentina? and together with it, what barriers and challenges do they face? and, how can their profiles, verticals and segments be defined?
- ▶ How is the content creation ecosystem value chain made up in Argentina, and what are the new business models enabled in the country?
- ▶ How do the terms and conditions of platforms affect content creation? and together with it, how are they limited by the particular conditions imposed by the platforms and by the local and regional contexts?
- ▶ What are the main content production and monetization modalities in Argentina?
- ▶ How are creators in verticals with a given degree of consolidation characterized? What specificities do some sectors with their own dynamics, such as music, eSports and gaming, and digital art have?

The report is structured into four parts:

- value chain,
- platforms governance,
- production and monetization modalities,
- and case analysis according to verticals (gaming, eSports, music and digital art).

The first step was to identify the links of the value chain, describing the stylized way in which players making up the political economy of the ecosystem based on entertainment via streaming are productively related. The players reviewed are: audiences, creators, brands, aggregators, facilitators and platforms. Each of them is described on a more abstract and global level and they are characterized, if possible, according to the availability of information, on a level of functional dynamics and peculiarities of the Argentine case.

The next step was to describe a central aspect of platform governance: the terms and conditions regulating the traffic of contents designed by creators, as they affect their dynamics of creation and socialization. The general features of platforms are described in different comparative matrixes and tables. In particular, we focus on the monetization methods available in each platform, as well as the moderation filters for inappropriate content, looking into the dynamics generated around the so called “demonetization” filters.

The third step was to stylize the dynamics and strategies identified in the previous stages. Two opposing (but not incompatible) stylized strategies were identified, which any creator may pursue: focusing on creators’ personalities or on the intellectual property value of the product generated. Based on this, an original matrix is presented, which makes it possible to map, at

the same time, the main factors affecting the way creators may produce, distribute and monetize their contents. Four factors are taken into consideration: *content formats, monetization methods, brand and audience development strategies, and content temporality*. The presentation resorts to different examples that make it clear that any ideal typification, strictly speaking, showcases special hybridizations but, even so, they are more intelligible in the light of the matrix proposed.

Finally, we explore four specific verticals that have quite diverse and, in some cases, more incipient dynamics: online games and sports (from now on, gaming and eSports), non-fungible tokens (from now on, NFT), and music. The analyses are presented in the form of exploratory, non-exhaustive case analysis, which does not allow us to systematize them in a comparative analysis following a consolidated comparative matrix.

In any case, we think that these analyses are useful as there is an implicit consensus among the players of that ecosystem themselves, both global and national, regarding the lack of accurate information and data about these non-traditional sectors of the digital economy. We believe that these approaches help provide definitions that make it possible to understand the emerging dynamics and metrics of these novel private, public and social value creation media.



## 2. Methodology

The research took place between May 2022 and March 2023. An empirical and exploratory-descriptive study was carried out, based on a method triangulation. The analysis period is 2020-2022, that is to say, since the pandemic until the beginning of the present research, even though it has a long-term outlook.

The object of analysis is the “content creative ecosystem”, but, in order to limit the unit of analysis, the work kept to: i) creators born, residing or with a monetization basis in Argentina; and ii) who manage to devote themselves, full-time or part-time, to content creation.

In terms of research techniques, primary and secondary sources were combined, as well as quantitative and qualitative ones. The main primary input was a dozen interviews to key players, held between June and October 2022, to individual creators, aggregators, facilitators and platforms representatives, aggregators and representative agencies, record labels, streaming platforms and accelerator consultants.

Firstly, a revision of the literature and databases of the sector was made (ranked highly by consultants), as well as an analysis of descriptive statistics (from secondary sources).

On an exploratory level, we worked later on a classification matrix (made on the basis of the software Notion and modeled with the software ATLAS.ti) of the practices followed by creators in terms of monetization, production, associativism and positioning. Tens of cases were described, trying to identify general trends. This exercise provided information for interviews, but it was also reconfigured based on them.

In a second stage, the study was structured into four parts: a descriptive analysis of the value chain globally and locally, a comparative analysis of the terms and conditions of streaming platforms (focusing on monetization and demonetization schemes), a stylized analysis by means of type-ideals of what we call “production and monetization modalities” available in the Argentine market, and four case analyses in different verticals with varying degrees of economic consolidation, looking into its effect on the creation of contents: gaming, eSports, music and digital art.





## 3. State of the art

A provoking article published in May [2021](#) in *The Economist* explores the concept that, today, any person with an idea and a cell-phone with access to internet is a potential content creator, and that, besides the remarkable market concentration in a handful of dominant players, platforms have been forced to start competing for the best content to build audiences' loyalty, which entails some displacement of the bargaining power from platforms to [creators](#). This somewhat enthusiastic perspective of the degree of “agency” of creators (their capacity to fully own the rules defined by platforms) requires shades, such as the ones offered by a situated analysis, in particular in emerging markets with limited “click value”.

To begin with, the article in *The Economist* itself presents some clues to navigate this complexity. On the one hand, the rules are imposed by platforms, which exert control on an increasingly wider base of social media participants who are capable of developing content (albeit with varying quality and consistency). This renders the competition among creators so strong that their offer tends to be

commoditized, even before the integration of AI for the production of given contents (for example, journalistic ones). As a result, we find a world of oversupply of content that, in terms of income per creator, has a “long tail” (Anderson [2004](#)) where very few cases are really successful and manage to stand out, and they take most of the income, and the rest of the suppliers are interchangeable and have “as little bargaining power as Uber drivers” (The Economist, [2021](#)).

On the other hand, not all content is successful and builds traction among audiences. According to this article, the competition between platforms to attract the most effective creators, at the same time, keeps growing. Here, elements like interoperability (if their content adapts to the formats distributed by the platform) and the bargaining capacity of each actor come into play. Thus, in order to survive in this highly competitive ecosystem, content creators start to need a continuous learning process and more sophisticated strategies and production discipline. The dynamics of those who get to monetization, and their professionalization, show that this is an industry proper, where everything “amateur” is more and more limited and is only an entry point, but it is nurtured by the massiveness of social media.

The analysis of the secondary literature made it possible to verify a growing interest in phenomena such as the emergence, consolidation and evolution of digital ecosystems. Nonetheless, this interest becomes more evident in the commercial literature related to marketing. In particular, there is a rich development of studies by digital marketing consultants about the consumption of contents and, to a lesser extent, about the design of strategies, but they come mainly from polls and estimations of varying thoroughness. Most of these sources focus on the global level (Day, [2022](#); Linktree, [2022](#); Influencer Marketing Hub, [2022](#)), and only to a lesser extent on the regional level (Hype

Auditor, [2022](#)). The gap in terms of number of publications grows in emerging markets, such as Argentina, with some exceptions (Influencer Marketing Hub, [2022](#)). It is important to highlight that the private dynamics of this ecosystem renders data availability modest, almost non-existent in the case of public sources.

However, in the world of academics, there are increasingly more studies problematizing the dynamics inherent to creators. In particular, different research tends to look mainly into the operation of platforms and, to a lesser extent, into the freedom of action of the players who make up the ecosystem and their direct and indirect impact.

For example, from the outlook of institutional ecology, Arriagada and Ibañez ([2020](#)) explore how the Chilean case highlights the complex relationship between platforms mutations and creators’ practices. A relevant contribution of their study is the concept of creators’ “mechanisms to adapt to the environment”, which are deployed in the face of “platforms evolutions”, including the permanent updates of their possibilities (and we add their terms and conditions). According to the study, these mutations give shape to content creators’ interpretative activities and processes, which can be verified on three interrelated levels: (a) as communication styles, (b) regularity or frequency of content creation and publication, and (c) as constant negotiation with other players of the social network through which commercial activities are configured.

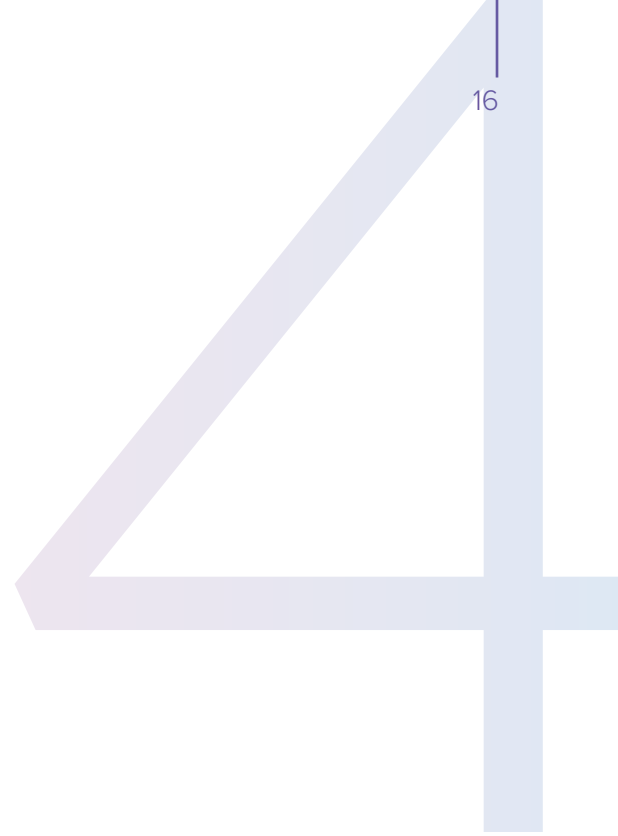
Another relevant study is the one by Susanne Kopf ([2020](#)), who examined how the fact that platforms impose their rules affects content creators, but focusing on the way social media companies regulate the monetization schemes that allow them to concentrate content revenue. Kopf’s findings show that creators’ monetization schemes driven by platforms are limited to the capacity of the platforms themselves to

respond to content demands. That is to say, as long as the content demand is covered by creators willing to generate free content, platforms will limit their creators' monetization strategies and their "empowerment".

Finally, Kelley Cotter (2018) points out that the interpretations of the Instagram algorithmic architecture by the so called "influencers", and the "game" in general, act as a lens through which we can see and systematize the new rules of the game. The author explains that there is interdependence among users, algorithms and the owners of the platform, and she shows how algorithms structure, but do not unilaterally determine, users' behavior. This goes along similar lines as Alessandro Baricco's work (2019).

Other studies mention the mapping of companies according to creators' profiles (Amsellem, [2020](#)) an analysis of the evolution of platforms, and the analysis of monetization guides (Forsyth, [2022](#); Mears, [2022](#)).





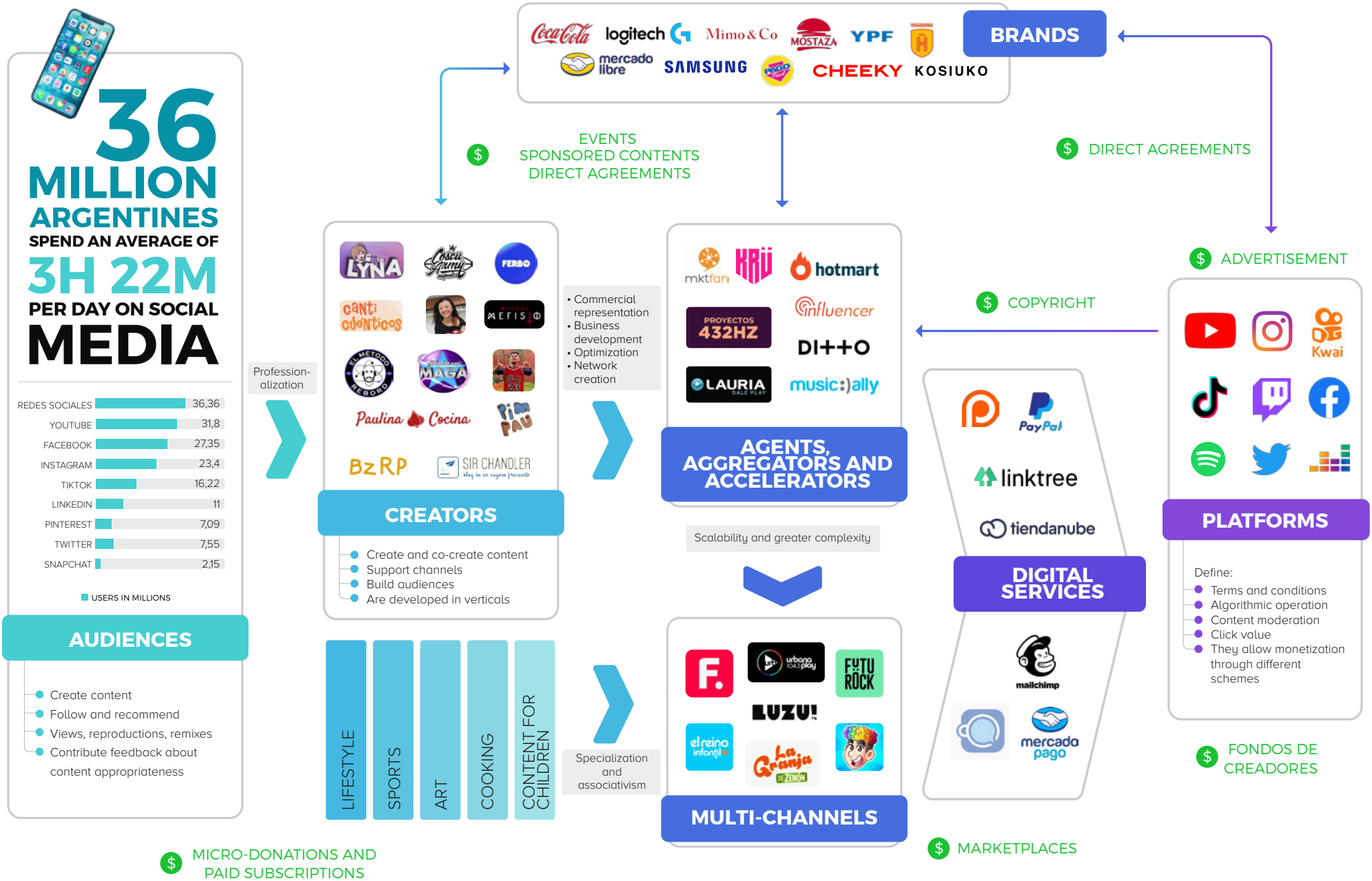
## 4. Value chain

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Graph 1 proposes a modeling of the value chain of content creation. It identifies different links and actors (audiences, creators, multi-channel networks, agents, aggregators and accelerators, brands, digital services and platforms), points out the type of relationship established between each node, and it highlights a number of examples of the Argentine case.



Graph 1 - Value chain of content creation (with examples of the ecosystem in Argentina)



# 1. Audiences

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- 1.** Are the basis to generate *network effects*, which give value to a platform or a creator's channel as per the universality of their node network.
- 2.** Co-create, recommend and reproduce content, especially considering that, to determine the key to success, static metrics (such as the number of followers) are increasingly less relevant, and dynamic metrics (such as interactions and times shared) are increasingly more so.
- 3.** Provide vital feedback about the appropriate nature of content, based on the terms and conditions of each platform.
- 4.** Are an intervening factor in the definition of *click value*, which is a useful metric about the scale of the audience in a given market (for example, the Argentine or the Spanish-speaking markets).

This last point needs some development. The value of the Argentine advertising market and the purchase capacity as measured in constant and comparable currency is relatively below as it is associated to the Argentine Peso. That is why it is relevant to ask ourselves: what impact does a lower click value have compared to the markets of neighboring countries? Here, a creator's monetization capacity faces an incentive to look for foreign audiences that is subject to the consideration of the algorithms of each platform to broadcast contents depending on their geographic location and language. It is clear that, in spite of the global nature of internet and its massification, the current economic scenario is a structural obstacle or condition for creators' payment and possibilities.

In this regard, the sources consulted pointed out that the new generation of social platforms have increasingly more sophisticated algorithms that weigh not only the elements of the content themselves (language, accent, idioms), but also the potential audience it will be offered to. A market with a higher "click value", sources say, entails the existence of a critical mass of users' clicks (in an audience that is massive enough) so as to manage to go up quickly in the priority of positioning algorithms.

As is the case in any other market, platforms prioritize and invest more in bigger markets. For markets that are relatively smaller or peripheral, such as Argentina in several verticals (except for music, perhaps), content may acquire regional scale

and resonance, and revenue may have a more significant scale, but only after crossing some statistical thresholds that only platforms know for sure. While clicks in other markets have a greater relative value in USD, those creators who can transcend borders not only get to expand their reach, but they also grow more proportionally in terms of revenue. Finally, the market volume or size determines the relative importance for platforms of the development of local creators' programs, or for platforms to invest more resources to promote the generation of content and actions with brands.

Therefore, if the market size is associated with the "relative click value", how is that value made up? Sources agree on the fact that it is conditioned by the audience size, the value of the national currency and the advertisement market of each country.

To begin with, to have an audience, there has to be a big population with significant internet connection. Access to Internet in Latin America, with an aggregate population of 660 million people, reached 74% of the population by the end of 2020 (World Bank, 2020). Even though the penetration is quite higher than average in Argentina, about 86% for a population of almost 46 million (INDEC, 2021), the biggest markets are those with the biggest populations, such as Brazil (214 million) and Mexico (130 million). Out of these almost 40 million Internet users in the country, it is considered that 36,35 million use social media (a penetration of 79,7% of the whole population), according to the compilation made by Datareportal (2023).









Besides these structural factors, according to the time the Argentine audience uses Internet (9h01m per day on average and 3h22m specifically to social networks), and from it, the time devoted to social media, it is among the highest in the region (Datareportal, 2023). Regarding the time spent on social media by 2021, the active population of Brazil spends an average of 3h46m of their day in social media, followed by Colombia with 3h41m, Argentina and México with 3h25m (GWI 2021). In that universe, 52,1% of social media users in Argentina are women, whereas 47.9% are men (Datareportal, 2023).

Table 1 shows characteristics of some of the main social media platforms in Argentina. The prevalence of women in most of the networks considered, except for LinkedIn or Twitter, is noteworthy, as is the growth of TikTok compared to the previous year, 43%, where women have a more significant share, for example, than in its most direct short videos competitor: Instagram.

According to a study conducted by Influency (2023), the Latin American digital advertisement market grew from USD 7.92 billion in 2020 to 34.7 billion in 2022. The conditions of its currency have a significant impact on the market value that this audience may have for a creator. Most of this advertisement investment came from Brazil (34% of the total investment), followed by Colombia (21%) and Mexico (16%).

With that in mind, the Argentine “click”, where it is estimated that there are 34,3 million social media users over 18 years old (Datareportal [2023](#)) that would be the “*ad reach*”, has a lower relative value as target public for creators, and local creators are weighed differently by some platforms for the distribution and promotion of contents. Sources point out that this competitive disadvantage is verified even compared to countries with a considerably smaller population, such as Chile or Uruguay. In the Argentine market, the value of advertisement in the local currency is relatively lower, measured in USD, than in other countries with stronger currencies and/or with higher advertisement investment.

**Table 1 - Social media audiences in Argentina in selected platforms**

Platform	Users	% Ad Reach	% Women	% Men
	<b>2.15</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>73.7</b>	<b>25.5</b>
	<b>7.55</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>47.7</b>	<b>52.3</b>
	<b>7.09</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>75.9</b>	<b>17.8</b>
	<b>11.00</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>50.5</b>
	<b>16.22</b>	<b>40.8</b>	<b>61.4</b>	<b>38.6</b>
	<b>23.40</b>	<b>58.8</b>	<b>54.5</b>	<b>45.5</b>
	<b>27.35</b>	<b>68.7</b>	<b>53.1</b>	<b>46.9</b>
	<b>31.80</b>	<b>69.7</b>	<b>51.8</b>	<b>48.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>36.35</b>	<b>79.7</b>	<b>52.1</b>	<b>47.9</b>

Source: Own creation based on data by Datareportal (2023)

## 2. Creators

Creators are individuals who use digital technology to create and publish creative content (Florida, 2022) and who have found in platforms a path to create, communicate and monetize their content. However, the universe of creators is complex and diverse, and the criteria to talk about *professionalization* are varied and exploratory. Next, we will review a series of criteria suggested by the literature. Later, we will incorporate an original classification criterion that we deem complementary to the others.



### Time spent

66%

of creators consider themselves part-time creators.

43%

spend less than 5 hours per week.

36%

have been creating for a year at the most.

Source:  
Influencer Marketing  
Hub (2022)

A first criterion is the **time** spent producing contents, which is strictly related to income as it explores if creators can support themselves thanks to their content, if not fully, at least partially. A study by Influencer Marketing Hub (2022) states that 66% of creators consider themselves *part-time creators*, 43% spend less than five hours per week and 36% have been creating for a maximum of one year.

However, the time spent and the **revenue** obtained do not have a linear relationship (Linktree, 2022). In fact, the expected revenue is anything but a source of certainty, and part of the professionalization entails learning to deal with such fluctuations. Having said that, estimating the income according to the time spent producing content is a valid starting point. In that sense, according to a study by Influencer Marketing Hub (2022), 32% of creators with revenue ranging from 100 to 10.000 dollars per year spend more than ten hours per week, and the vast majority, 53%, have revenue lower than 100 dollars per year, and devote less than five hours per week to content creation. Based on this, we may start by saying that there is a sort of minimum threshold of semi-professionalization that entails spending about one hour per day in content production and publication.

The relationship between revenue and audience measured according to subscribers to channels does not hold a lineal relationship either, and is much more mediated by variables less transparent for the creator, such as total reproductions, remixes, recommendations and interactions in the monthly aggregate of a platform for a specific market (for example, Argentina). In that sense, the scale of channels measured by volumen of unpaid subscribers is no guarantee of a safe and

sustained source of income. For example, 5% of Instagram accounts have more than 100,000 followers and are considered “active influential people” (Mention, 2022), but their capacity to monetize content does not translate automatically.

Another outstanding characteristic is the high level of audience concentration in a disproportionate percentage of creators. The revenue curve follows a “Pareto or 80/20 Law” pattern, marked by a small group of very successful players (less than 20%), followed by a “long-tail” full of multiple creators (more than 80%) whose revenue is not enough to support themselves (Anderson, 2006; Rainville and Levene, 2022).

Less than 1% of YouTube channels globally have more than 100.000 subscribers, while the most important 1% of Twitch streamers retains 50% of the platform revenue (Rainville and Levine, 2022). In Argentina, for example, the difference between the top five Youtubers with more than 20 million subscribers –where those oriented towards children stand out: (@LaGranjadeZenon, @ElReinoInfantil and @Elcanaldeplimplim), and others such as @alejoigoa, @rubentuestaoficial and @bizarrap– and the rest of the top 100 is at least three times higher, as reported by Socialblade.

In that same sense, a recent poll by NeoReach (2022) states that only a fifth (21%) of creators has an annual income above US\$50,000, which the report defines as a critical threshold to make a decent living in the American market (where the poll was made). So, out of all the people who create content, only an exclusive group gets to sustain and expand their digital business. For the rest, it is very difficult to have enough scale to sustain their initial creations.

Age and gender also have an impact on the dynamics of content creation and the capacity to monetize content, but specific statistical sources are rather limited. A recent study by GWI The Creator Economy Report (2022) points out that, on average, creators are more likely to be young adults, and an overwhelming majority (99% of those surveyed) are younger than 40 years old. As for gender, the same study points out that the average salary of male creators was 1.88 times higher than that of female creators during the period analyzed (accounting for 48% of the universe of creators).



## Income curve

It follows a Pareto or 80/20 Law pattern:

A small group of very successful players

**(less than 20%)**

Followed by a long tail with many creators

**(more than 80%)**

Source:  
Anderson (2006),  
Rainville and Levene (2022).

Finally, an additional criterion to categorize creators, prepared on the basis of testimonials from the sources interviewed, are their levels of strategic maturity, which we associate to the complexity of their brand, their product portfolio and their organization. We identify three ideal stages of brand maturity of creators themselves:



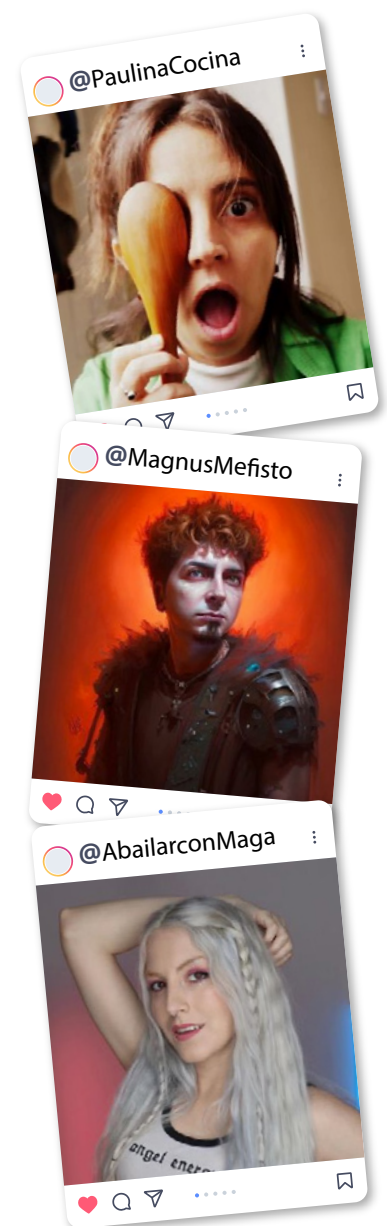
In each stage, creators achieve greater degrees of professionalization of the organization, of production standardization, sustainability and scalability, and of the capacity to develop sub-brands.

Some examples of creators with a **focus on their personality**, albeit with different degrees of complexity in their channels and content offer, are **@SoyLina**, **@SirChandler**, **@PaulinaCocina** and **@MagnusMefisto**; among creators with a **focus on the product**, we find fewer cases, who tend to present some diversification of channels or products, such as **@Bizarrap** and **@TomasRebord**; finally, among **multichannel networks**, we find a minority of entrepreneurship which, based on human teams with some specialization and associativism, have become *media companies* in their own right, as is the case, with generally very different audiences, of **@LaGranjadeZenón** and **@ElReinoInfantil** among children, and **@urbanaplay**, **@futurock** or **@luzutv** among young adults.

But these are, and we insist, ideal-type categories (and quite exploratory) which, in practice, are not so different and, actually, tend to overlap. The ways each creator fits into the value chain are rather varied, although here they are characterized in a stylized way as closer to some ideal-types. Firstly, because every creator proposes a unique balance between focus on personality and focus on product, which is evident in some scales, from @SoyLina to @PaulinaCocina, or from @AbailarconMaga to @Bizarrap. At the same time, although in some cases more stylized strategies can be identified, it may happen that the products designed by each creator (sometimes turned into producing agencies or, as we said, multi-channel agencies) proposes different focus combinations (as well as different creative proposals, or different channels in different platforms).

This trend can be seen in any of the three degrees of modeled maturity. Among creators with a focus on their personality, an interesting case is that of @PaulinaCocina. The creator known by the massive audience as Paulina is actually called Carolina, which is a subtle but clear indicator of her strategic intention to create a distinctive brand value. However, her audience associates the brand mainly to her figure, and the fact that many think that her name is Paulina shows how difficult it is to go from contents with a significant personal element to others, more impersonal, based on design, knowledge or some form of intellectual property. Also the case of @MagnusMefisto follows that development path, as it makes products of #truecrime around his figure, while he tries to create formats with a lasting value. Another peculiar, but quite different, case is that of @AbailarconMaga, as she produces recent contents with much serialization but lower scalability, such as choreographies and challenges, focusing on her personality; however, she also co-creates value with focus on products, as her proposals can become the official choreographies of some music hits.

An example of creators focused on the development of IPs is @AmenazaRoboto, who has been installed as an audiovisual podcast specialized in discussing the dynamics of the appearance of disruptive technologies, while, in an intermediate stage between an organization centered on the development of IPs and a multichannel network (MCN), we may place the creator Tomás Rebord. Yet, his case also shows that the development of brands with intellectual property value is not incompatible with a focus on his own personality. However, if his portfolio presents different channels and products







with a different balance between both approaches, his most successful products are those which try to develop some brand value, especially MAGA (Twitch) or El Método Rebord (YouTube, podcast interview format, evergreen-synchronous temporality, monetization through advertisement).

Although when there is greater complexity in the creator's organization there is a focus on multiplying products and channels, the trend towards some hybridization between a model centered on the development of the personal brand and the development of product brands is maintained. If we go up the scale, something similar happens. For example, @Bizarrap produces content (and he is the object of content) with a high intellectual property value (in an industry consolidated at the top of streaming) and, at the same time, he created his brand identity based on some detachment from the personality (his glasses and cap are inherited from the Daft Punk helmets). He focuses on the development of products with sub-brand value. The first contents of the original channel Bizarrap (BZRP) were the "Combos locos" (crazy combos): edits and comments about YouTube cockfights in the context of the massification of rap in Argentina. Later, he developed a YouTube channel with a differentiated brand, which gave rise to a serialization of new products: the Bizarrap Sessions, which he later started publishing on Spotify, testing the capacity of an elite of creators capable of making their audiences migrate platforms.

However, a consolidated MCN solves this balance between strategies in a more categorical manner, dissolving the personal talent into its own brand identity. Some diverse examples that exhibit this common behavior on a more general level are, for example, @luzutv and @urbanaplay. The former is a MCN focusing on the development of a brand IP, where the hybridization with a



strategy to develop a personal brand is to summon (like a co-creative platform) highly influential creators with audiences of their own to nurture that brand value and, at the same time, create product sub-brands. The case of @urbanaplay focuses in the IP value associated to its brand, but it uses representative figures of the traditional radio scene for the development de sub-brands and products, albeit capable of developing new formats and channels by maximizing streaming technologies and integrating emerging creators in special sections, which also act as series of podcasts. Likewise, its positioning in the music and cultural ecosystem anchored in Buenos Aires as a strategic partner for events entails some hybridization between both stylized strategies, as the focus on music IP is accompanied by co-creation with creators with a focus on the personal self-promotion.

In the section on *Production and monetization modalities*, we will go back to the description of creators, but from a visual modeling of their development paths of available content channels.

### 3. Brands

We define **brands** as the commercial companies that, as part of their marketing strategy in an economic sector (here, *vertical*), invest in content in at least three key ways: advertisement through streaming platforms and social media, campaigns and creators through their agents and aggregators, and events where multiple parties converge and can be characterized as “marketplaces” according to their scale (such as Lollapalooza or Movistar Arena). According to the research by NeoReach/Influencer Marketing Hub [2022](#), actions with brands are the main source of income for creators (more than 77%), followed by advertisements (5%), where brands play a key role.

Indeed, the main mechanism to sustain modern creations is advertisement, which, in the last 15 years, has migrated quickly from the traditional media to internet in general,



## Actions with brands

Key methods:

1. Advertisement through streaming platforms and social networks.
2. Campaigns and creators through their agents and aggregators.
3. Marketplaces (events where several parties converge, such as Lollapalooza or Movistar Arena).

and the most frequently used social platforms and the most visited media in particular. In 2021, Meta concentrated USD 92 billion for the sale of ad space for its 2.8 billion users. Twitter reached a volumen of USD 3.4 billion annually with a base of 350 million collaborators (The Economist, 2021).

According to the annual report of E-Commerce of TiendaNube, social media are the main business allies (in particular, entrepreneurs) which have an e-commerce channel and try to make their brand known through these high-traffic channels. In 2022, they accounted for 41% of conversions on Argentine cloud stores. In 2023, Instagram was #1 to broadcast content and to invest in online advertisement campaigns and offer customer service. It was followed by Facebook and WhatsApp. Instagram tractions 88%, while Facebook accounts for the remaining 12% (Nube Commerce, 2023).

In each **vertical** we find some dynamics of its own, different scales and strategic valuation degrees of the creators and their contents. The companies of each vertical are the first ones interested in sponsoring content of (or events with) creators with influence among their end customers (or increasingly more, users). In Argentina, 7 of the 10 companies that use influencer marketing more frequently operate in the vertical #beautyandfashion. A study by Hype Auditor (2022) points out that La Roche-Posay is the leading company as it has indicators such as 256 influencers, 366 mentions and it reaches 1.64 million people). According to

the same study, another relevant vertical in Argentina is #sports, where two companies with a reach even greater than the leading company in # beautyandfashion: Adidas Argentina (245 influencers, 662 mentions and it reaches 9.3 million people) and Puma Argentina (it reaches 9,94 million people).

A study by the consultant Ipsos (2019) about the “most influential brands” and consumption preferences on a national level pointed out that the best positioned companies are those which can “change the way consumers communicate, interact or make every day purchases”. In these dynamics, the role of creators (in general, conceptualized here as influencers) is critical. It identified six Argentine cases among the first 20 brands of the ranking: Mercado Libre, Pago Fácil, SanCor, La Serenísima, Yogurísimo and YPF.

## 4. Professional services

Creators have very different degrees of dedication, discipline, strategy, talent and above all, resilience and luck. But they are not alone in their professionalization process. Some initial semi-professionalization depends, most likely, entirely on themselves: trying to go from a simple co-creation of isolated content, as part of the most active segment of the audience, to a systematic strategy to develop their own audience, prestige and positioning. But to take the leap, they need specialized teams that combine services such as commercial representation, business development, the creation of networks and relationships, and the optimization of formats according to strategies, verticals and reference platforms. This service node encompasses different sub-types of actors. On the one hand, those who propose expanding their business opportunities (aggregators and agents); on the other hand, actors who try to broaden creators' value proposal (accelerators, coaches and consultants).

The former appeared in Argentina approximately in 2012, and they have become more complex since then, and integrated new services for creators. Some local examples are the agencies Lauria Entertainment, Vane Pellizzeri Management, Farrell, Trendsetters and FaroLatino, among others.

Aggregators help strengthen the catalogue of creators by the consolidation of a concrete offer in a place, which makes it possible to leverage the development of business related to contents, for example, sponsoring new contents and events. In the last decade, the complexity of companies devoted to offering services as aggregators has evolved greatly.

According to the sources interviewed for this report, three stages can be identified:

- ▶ A stage marked by the appearance of basic aggregators, who offered a catalogue of creators to different brands, circa 2012.
- ▶ A stage of relative self-management, when creators tried to manage business and networks using their own means, with the idea that aggregators did not offer true added value, and the rather emerging nature of both channels and audiences.
- ▶ A new stage of professional mediation –during the years immediately before the pandemic, and especially since its beginning– when big aggregators of content curators appeared, offering a global management of their work, business and alliances, coordinating different monetization strategies that go beyond the screen to offer selling goods or their presence at events.

In general, in each of the successful aggregators there is at least one very successful creator, although later they tend to have more drawing power on their peers.

**Accelerators** and **consultants** of business intelligence have appeared quite recently, associated to the exponential growth of the number of creators who try to turn this activity into paid media. This requires very specific knowledge to develop particular contents efficiently and strategically. This type of support requires some knowledge of algorithms logic and engineering and, at the same time, some capacity to do some “coaching” to personalities or “influencers” to maximize their potential. Their mission is to contribute to the professionalization of creators maximizing their audiences, developing new business and optimizing the opportunities each platform brings. Some have even become social media themselves, organizing and promoting exchange and learning among communities of creators, as is the case of [SocialBlade](#) or [Hotmart](#).

## 5. Digital services and facilitators

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In addition to professional services, creators resort to a variety of **digital services** providers who bring in some tools for their processes as they enable monetization, account management, analytics and contents management, among other functions. Thus, these “facilitators” have an impact on the sustainability and efficiency of process management in very different ways, from places where to structure and present the different channels available that a creator supports (e.g., Linktree), present the offer of commercial products (TiendaNube) or monetize the micro-donations of their audiences (Cafecito, Mercadopago, PayPal).

The most representative examples are probably those financial services that make it possible to manage micro-donations. Globally, PayPal is very commonly used to manage micro-donations. Locally, Cafecito App allows creators to receive donations from their followers with the concept of “buying the creator a cup of coffee”. It is a crowd-funding platform created in 2020 that has become a method for many creators who use platforms without direct content monetization, such as Instagram or Twitter. The app works linked to Mercado Pago, which also has a service for donations through the tool Payment Link. The Cafecito App receives 5% of each transaction, whereas PayPal gets 3,4% of the transaction plus a fixed



cost that depends on the payment modality, the country of the donor and the country of the creator.

In some cases, resorting to some decentralized resources allows creators to diversify some margin of dependence from their main platform. For example, a creator specialized in Instagram channels may choose to create a digital store directly in Instagram, or coordinate their own marketplace in a different platform.

## 6. Platforms

As Carla Bonina et al (2020) stated, the outstanding feature of platforms is the co-existence of dynamics of concentration and decentralization. As predicted by Galloway and Thacker (2007), they radically distributed the control among non-connected locales while they focus the control on rigidly defined hierarchies. In order to do so, as explained by Benjamin Bratton (2018), each platform builds its own scales and metrics: “platforms are based on a rigorous standardization of scale, duration and morphology of its essential components”. In a nutshell, each platform provides its own rules, tools and incentives to attract audiences, creators and brands, and to promote their spending as much time as possible immersed in them.

Moreover, the network effects lead to the prevalence of a “winner takes all” logic based on the constitution of those markets of multiple interdependent sides, with sustainable and possibly expansive dynamics from videos, short videos, e-commerce and short messages, among others. Each platform tries to create a world in itself that maximizes audiences’ attention span, which entails seeking the optimization both of algorithms to recommend the most attractive contents and of advertisement micro-segmentation according to users’ preferences. That is how “walled gardens” are built, with significant learning curves and low interoperability

that force creators to specialize and define their professionalization strategies so their creations adapt to the formats and reasoning offered by each platform. Regarding the possibility to migrate their most successful platform products, the Argentine creators interviewed were rather reluctant. Even though they were flexible, as positioning themselves in all the platforms with variations of their original contents is a rational strategy, they argued that they tend to pursue the maximization of their knowledge about the algorithmic rationale of each platform.

The main way for platforms to attract creators is to offer more direct ways to monetize their contents, and the ones standing out are advertisement income, paid subscriptions, contests to gain access to creators' funds, direct funding (for some creators) and royalties (in the case of music).

Likewise, the most important way for platforms to discipline creators is "demonetizing" their contents. This can actually imply very different practices, such as excluding some content from the monetizable content estimation, and even demonetize the entire channel, or downright block it. This is the result of the algorithms complex established in each platform, which is usually opaque for the creator, and stems both from the terms and conditions set unilaterally by corporations, and from the aggregate audiences' feedback (they can say if a content is deemed appropriate or not).

In the coming section, devoted to Platforms, we will analyze in some detail and with a comparative outlook the terms and conditions of platforms in Argentina, focusing on monetization schemes, as well as the so-called "demonetization" filters.





## 5. Platforms: monetization and terms and conditions

This section analyzes some aspects of the terms and conditions of a selection of stream platforms, as well as their content moderation methods, which are critical for the governance of the contents ecosystem in Argentina, and, therefore, critical for creators. The analysis aims to compare selected platforms, with special focus on the monetization schemes and the so-called demonetization filters related to contents deemed inappropriate.



The first part of the section proposes a general description of a selection of platforms, identifying relevant success metrics and formats. The second part focuses on monetization schemes. The last part takes the issue of monetization schemes to the debates about platforms terms and conditions.

## General characterization of the main platforms

Table 2 proposes a very introductory descriptive matrix of the main content platforms in Argentina. It makes a distinction between the main authorized formats, key indicators of the activity and number of users in the country. The formats considered are not comprehensive: ephemeral stories and permanent posts (sponsored or not), videos (in short vertical, short horizontal and long horizontal formats), video streaming (vertical or horizontal), podcast, record, song and streaming.<sup>2</sup> The key indicators of the activity are followers, likes, engagement, number of visualizations, times the content was shared, subscribers, permanence in videos, retweets and replies. Some additional indicators are considered in special cases.

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2. In this report we work with the following definitions of formats according to their duration: i) short video: up to 3 minutes; ii) medium video: 3 to 15 minutes; and iii) long video: more than 15 minutes.

**Table 2 – Characteristics of the main platforms in Argentina**

Platform	Main formats	Most relevant indicators	Users
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Image posting, sponsored and not sponsored</li> <li>Short vertical video</li> <li>Ephemeral story</li> <li>Vertical video streaming</li> </ul>	Followers, likes, engagement, visualizations, permanence in videos, times shared, sales in marketplace	<b>24,700,000</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long horizontal video</li> <li>Short horizontal video</li> <li>Short vertical video (Shorts)</li> <li>Horizontal video streaming</li> <li>Ephemeral story</li> <li>Podcast</li> </ul>	Paid and unpaid subscribers, visualizations, permanence in videos, permanence in channels, engagement, times shared	<b>31,700,000</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vertical video 15 seconds</li> <li>Vertical video 60 seconds</li> <li>Vertical streaming</li> <li>Ephemeral story</li> </ul>	Visualizations, permanence in videos, engagement, followers, choreographies, remixes	<b>11,340,000</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record</li> <li>Song</li> <li>Playlist</li> <li>Podcast</li> <li>Event streaming</li> </ul>	Reproductions, likes, follows, addition to playlists	<b>2,439,705</b> single monthly users, not paid
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post with image</li> <li>Post with text</li> <li>Video</li> <li>Ephemeral story</li> </ul>	Followers, likes, times shared, engagement	<b>28,400,000</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tweet</li> <li>Tweet thread</li> <li>Audio-stream</li> </ul>	Followers, likes, retweet, engagement, replies, new metrics for professionals	<b>5,900,000</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Horizontal video streaming</li> <li>Horizontal videos</li> </ul>	Subscribers, visualizations	Data unknown






Source: Own creation based on observation by Datareportal (2022) and Start.io (2022).

In the first place, we see that there is a limited variety of formats, associated to the distinct characteristics that have turned each platform into a product that audiences understand and find attractive (short vertical video, as in TikTok and Instagram, or

medium or long horizontal video, as in YouTube); and, in the second place, that there is a quite uniform set of relevant metrics for traffic analysis, regardless of some case by case differences, inherent to its specific characteristics (such as the weight of remixes and music choreographies in TikTok, or the content leading to the sale of products published on Instagram Shop).

Moreover, regarding the second point, evidence says that, even though each platform has different metrics that allow it to control the performance of the content, the extent of engagement is particularly relevant in any platform. According to a poll by NeoReach (2022), creators see engagement as the most powerful success factor in all platforms vis a vis the money/remuneration available or the followers and subscribers base they have. Table 3 shows what factor is considered the most important one in some selected platforms (NeoReach, 2022). What that involvement by audiences entails is less clear: in Twitter it will be clicking on a link and replying a tweet, whereas in Instagram it may be commenting an ephemeral story or a sponsored post offering a contest to followers.

**Table 3 – Platforms success measures according to creators' perception**

Platforms	Money	Followers / Subscribers	Engagement
	<b>34.1%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>57.5%</b>
	<b>29.5%</b>	<b>15.4%</b>	<b>55.1%</b>
	<b>40.7%</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>51.9%</b>
	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>66.7%</b>
	<b>0%</b>	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>66.7%</b>

Source: NeoReach (2022) based on 2000 people interviewed globally

## Competition to monetize

The most important method platforms have to draw alluring contents is to offer creators different ways to monetize their content directly, or at least enable the broadcast of content that is attractive to sponsor by third parties (brands).

We can make a distinction between those who are based on indirect monetization (agreements with third parties) and those who enter directly through the platform. Direct mechanisms are royalty income (in the case of some verticals such as #music), advertisement, paid subscriptions, micro-donations, direct contracts with some creators, special funds for creators and products sales. Table 4 summarizes the options available in general in a stylized manner.

**Table 4 – Monetization schemes made available in platforms**

Direct monetization	Indirect monetization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertisement income</li> <li>• Copyright royalties</li> <li>• Paid subscriptions</li> <li>• Micro-donations</li> <li>• Products sales in endogenous marketplace</li> <li>• Creators funds</li> <li>• Direct contracts with creators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreements with third parties for sponsored contents</li> <li>• Agreements among third parties for sponsored events</li> <li>• Agreements among third parties with long-standing sponsors</li> <li>• Marketplaces in external platforms</li> </ul>

Source: Own creation

## Requirements and thresholds to make monetization possible

For each direct monetization method available there are different requirements that set up some entry barriers. In general, they become clearer for creators with the passing of time, as mastering them implies a learning process and, at the same time, complying with them entails crossing a minimum threshold in terms of audience development.



### Affiliate

A minimum of 500 minutes of streaming **x** 7 different days of streaming **+** 3 simultaneous views on average **+** 50 followers in the last 30 days.

### Partner

A minimum of 25 hours streaming **x** 12 different days of streaming **+** 75 views on average in the last 30 days.

In particular, these requirements are imposed when there is a wish to monetize content through advertisement. For example, in the case of **Twitch**, it implies becoming an “affiliate” or “partner”, something that is far from easy. These categories differ in the fee percentage paid to Twitch for their revenue. To be an “affiliate”, it is required to generate a minimum of 500 minutes of streaming, during seven different days of streaming, counting three simultaneous views on average and adding 50 followers in the last 30 days. To be a “partner”, a minimum of 25 hours streaming is required, 12 different days of streaming and 75 views on average in the last 30 days.

Another similar case is that of **YouTube**, which also has its “partners” program that gives access to monetization through advertisement. In this case, the requirement to be part is to have a minimum of 4,000 hours of visualization in the last 12 months and at least 1,000 subscribers. This program, besides the possibility to monetize, gives creators access to special assistance channels for them, as well as a tool to identify coincidences with other videos of the platform (Copyright Match Tool), to identify the creations (Content ID) and the coincidences with other videos of the platform (Copyright Match Tool).



### Partner

A minimum of 4,000 hours of visualization in the last 12 months **+** at least 1,000 subscribers.

## Creators funds

Some platforms have implemented funds specifically seeking to motivate the creation of some type of content. Its strategic sense is often to promote the development of new products and audiences, for example, when a platform gets to a market, or when it adds a new format. In that sense, it meets an objective similar to direct contracts with creators, even though with another complexity, legitimacy and scalability. In general, funds impose some requirements, such as reaching a minimum number of hours of visualization and followers. Now then, terms and conditions and minimum thresholds are not always so clear.



Funds between USD 100 and 10,000, depending on the performance of its videos.

**Guidelines:**

Videos should have the right format + be original + do not have watermarks, logos or metadata of other networks.

An example of a fund created on the occasion of a diversification of a platform portfolio is **YouTube Shorts**. It was implemented in 2021, and it had funds between USD 100 and 10,000, depending on the performance of its videos in “shorts” format. The program did not have a specific growth threshold, but it was adjusted each month based on the performance of the different participating videos. However, it established some clear guidelines, for example, that videos should have the right format, be original, do not have watermarks, logos or metadata of other networks (such as the data of TikTok channels that some creators broadcast in YouTube). In this case, it was not demanded that the channel should have been previously monetized, but it can happen in other funds (YouTube, [2021](#)).

On a global level, there is greater diversity of funds intended for the promotion of a given content, as is the case of Instagram Reels Play Bonus. However, not all these funds are available for creators based in Argentina. Also, some years ago TikTok implemented its own Creators Fund, which it committed to give £ 231 million in a period of three years. This fund is reserved for creators with over 10,000 followers and whose videos have over 100,000 visualizations during the previous 30 days, even though it does not apply to Argentina.

## 1. Monetization in Argentina

Argentina has some specificities as a medium-sized market for platforms. Many of them have offices in the country, but not all the monetization or programs functionalities are fully enabled, at least in comparison with other, bigger markets, such as the United States, or other neighboring countries with a bigger population, like Brazil or Mexico.



Monetization mainly from the payment with products to promote or generate performative activities or make their presence at events monetizable.

For example, except for the sale of products in an endogenous marketplace, monetization in **Instagram** is almost totally indirect, by means of sponsoring agreements by third parties (brands), while in other countries the direct monetization is available through paid subscriptions and micro-donations. In the case of the less consolidated creators, that indirect monetization comes mainly from the payment with products to promote (also known as “gift-giving”) or simply as a means to advertise themselves and then generate performative activities or make their presence at events monetizable.

**YouTube** is perhaps the most developed case and with the greatest diversity of monetization sources and programs given its presence in the country for over 18 years. However, monetization comes mainly from advertisement income. Besides, creators may obtain revenue from paid subscriptions, micro-donations, merchandising sale, agreements with third parties and visualizations of premium members. Creators get 55% of the advertisement income. The amount of that income is determined according to the winning offer of the advertiser, which can vary depending on users and their interests, as well as the time of the year and the country where they are.



Creators may obtain revenue from paid subscriptions, micro-donations, merchandising sale, agreements with third parties and visualizations of premium members.



Monetization comes from micro-donations and paid subscriptions, as well as agreements with third parties, advertisements and referral products.

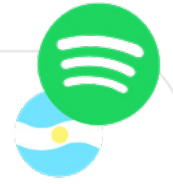
In **Twitch**, monetization comes from micro-donations and paid subscriptions, as well as agreements with third parties, advertisements and referral products. Besides, some of the most important creators obtain revenue by means of private contracts with the platform, which establish a base number of hours and days they have to stream per month. Creators get 55% of income through advertisement. Now, monetization is not lineal. Twitch has two programs: Partners and Affiliates. Both of them enable monetization and require a minimum number of subscribers, streaming hours and visualizations. They differ in the extent of those requirements, as the category of Partners is more exclusive than Affiliate, and in the fees Twitch charges creators for their revenue.

For **TikTok**, the only monetization scheme available in Argentina until 2022 was indirect: through agreements with third parties. However, micro-donations are allowed in other countries. As we mentioned, a Creators Fund has been recently implemented.



Only monetization through agreements with third parties.

In **Spotify**, monetization works differently from the rest of platforms. Creators obtain revenue based on royalties for recording and publication. To have access to this, it is necessary to include a record label or a copyrights collecting society, because Spotify does not interact with artists but with those societies, record labels or distributors. Smaller, decentralized artists can have access to intermediaries recommended by Spotify to post their songs and have a standard rights management. Conversely, in other countries, creators may obtain revenue based on paid subscriptions to their podcasts.<sup>3</sup> Even though creators do not get direct revenue from advertisement in the platform, Spotify uses that income as part of their royalty payments.



Revenue based on royalties for recording and publication through a record label or a copyrights collecting society.



Monetization opportunities are advertisement income in videos and agreements with third parties.

In the case of **Facebook**, another of the longest-standing platforms, monetization opportunities in Argentina are advertisement income in videos and agreements with third parties. In other countries, paid subscriptions are also available. Advertisement income varies according to the advertiser and the number of visualizations. However, as the use of this platform is usually more social or as a sales and advertisement platform, in general, creators do not resort to this platform as their main means of monetization, but they use it as another piece in their positioning strategy.

Finally, in Argentina it is not possible to monetize directly in **Twitter**, only by means of agreements with third parties. However, in other countries, paid subscriptions, micro-donations and advertisement income in videos are available.











Monetización solo indirecta vía acuerdos con terceros.

Tables 5 and 6 present a summary of the information described so far. Table 5 shows a simplified comparison between the monetization schemes available in Argentina by selected platforms. Table 6 adds (whenever evidence was found) more elements for analysis, such as monetization schemes beyond Argentina, creators funds available and special programs for creators, as well as information available about charges on advertisement income.

3. It is interesting to point out that this limiting factor in Argentina has an impact on creators' preferences, as was the case with @EIMetodoRebord, who started streaming exclusively through YouTube.



**Table 5 – Simplified comparison of the monetization schemes by platform in Argentina**

Monetization source								
Advertisement income	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Copyright	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Direct contracts	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Creators funds	✓✗ (*)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Micro-donations	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
Paid subscriptions	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
Marketplace	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
Agreements with third parties	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Own creation. Note: (\*) no longer available.

Table 6 – Detailed comparison of the monetization schemes by platform in Argentina

Platform	Monetization schemes	Programs for creators	Creators funds	% advertisement for creators
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indirect, through agreements with third parties</li> <li>Other schemes not available in Argentina: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid subscriptions</li> <li>• Micro-donations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not have</li> <li>It offers special tools and functionalities for creators.</li> </ul>	Reels Play Bonus (not available in Argentina)	Creators do not obtain advertisement income.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertisements</li> <li>• Paid subscriptions</li> <li>• Marketplace.</li> <li>• Micro-donations</li> <li>• Visualizations by premium members</li> <li>• Agreements with third parties</li> </ul>	Partners	Youtube shorts	<b>55%</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid subscriptions</li> <li>• Micro-donations</li> <li>• Advertisements</li> <li>• Agreements with third parties</li> <li>• Referral products</li> <li>• Private contracts with the platform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partners and Affiliates</li> <li>* Partners pay lower fees than affiliates.</li> </ul>	Does not have	<b>55%</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indirect, through agreements with third parties</li> <li>Other schemes not available in Argentina: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micro-donations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creator Next (Not available in Argentina yet)</li> </ul>	Creators Fund 1 billion USD (not available in Argentina)	Creators do not obtain advertisement income.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copyright royalties</li> <li>Other schemes not available in Argentina: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subscriptions to podcasts</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not have</li> <li>It offers artists, managers, record labels and distributors functionalities for creators</li> </ul>	Does not have	Advertisement income is part of royalty payments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreements with third parties</li> <li>• Advertisement income</li> <li>Other schemes not available in Argentina: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid subscriptions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Does not have	Bonus fund (not available in Argentina)	Payments vary depending on advertisers and number of visualizations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid subscriptions</li> <li>• Micro-donations</li> <li>• Referral program</li> </ul>	Does not have	Does not have	Does not have
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It does not have direct monetization for creators in Argentina.</li> <li>Other schemes not available in Argentina: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micro-donations</li> <li>• Advertisement in videos</li> <li>• Paid subscriptions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not have</li> <li>It offers special functionalities for creators, such as the tip button</li> </ul>	Does not have	Advertisement income is only obtained in videos (not available in Argentina), but the percentage for creators is not specified

Source: Own creation



## Monetization in “freemium” platforms

In some cases, for example, YouTube and Spotify, the possibilities for monetization are influenced by the “freemium” model the platform has. Users may choose to use them for free, with the cost of visualizing advertisements from time to time, or else pay a monthly subscription, so they can avoid advertisement interruptions when they watch content. With this model, visualizations of videos monetized through advertisement in YouTube do not show advertisement to users of the paid service and, therefore, their visualizations are counted in a different way when creators are assigned payment. YouTube creators get a percentage of the monthly payment of these users based on the visualization time destined to their videos.

## Monetization and appstores

A special case of platforms are the appstores of the predominant operative systems, Android and iOS, in cell-phones (see Table 7) and their corresponding associated stores: Google Play and Apple Store. They are not mentioned in the modeled value chain image because their rules, except for the case of podcasts, are conditioning for apps (they can be charged a percentage of the subscriptions to paid internal channels downloaded through that store), and they affect only indirectly the creators of some apps or the decentralized one (The Verge, [2021](#)). Table 7 summarizes some aspects of both cases which impact on the creators’ dynamics.

**Table 7 – Appstores and their role in the value chain for certain content**

Actor	App monetization income
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It takes 30% of purchases of digital goods and services in some apps. It takes 15% of the subscriptions after one year.</li> <li>• Podcasts: Cost of 19.99 for being there. It takes 30% and, after a year’s subscription, it takes 15%.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It takes 30% of the purchase of digital goods and services in some apps. It takes 15% of the subscriptions after one year.</li> </ul>

Source: Own creation

## 2. Terms and conditions, and “demonetization” filters

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Each platform has its own terms and conditions, which set the rules both for audiences and for creators. Among other key aspects for content creation, here is where thresholds to classify creators, to have access to monetization and even to agree on a production contract with a platform are established. These terms and conditions also set the moderation and management of intellectual property conditions, and what we can call (for the sake of simplicity) “demonetization filters” or control of permitted content.





In the last years, the content moderation mechanisms by platforms have increased, in their role of intermediaries between creators and users (Bustos, Palazzi, Rivero 2020). Each platform sets some parameters about “appropriate” content. This is so due to different reasons according to the platform, but, in general, they prevent users from finding content that is inappropriate or can hurt their sensitivity, and they look to prevent the distribution of hate messages that can be polarizing or lead to misinformation. Thus, even though what is appropriate content can vary from one platform to another -we can say, for example, that OnlyFans has more lenient restrictions than YouTube-, none of the platforms allows users to make publications with no restrictions at all. Besides, some platforms restrict the content that can be monetized even more strictly than the rest of the content that can be distributed in the platform, as is the case of YouTube. That is to say, there are videos that do not meet the conditions to obtain advertisement income but do meet the conditions to be found on the platform.

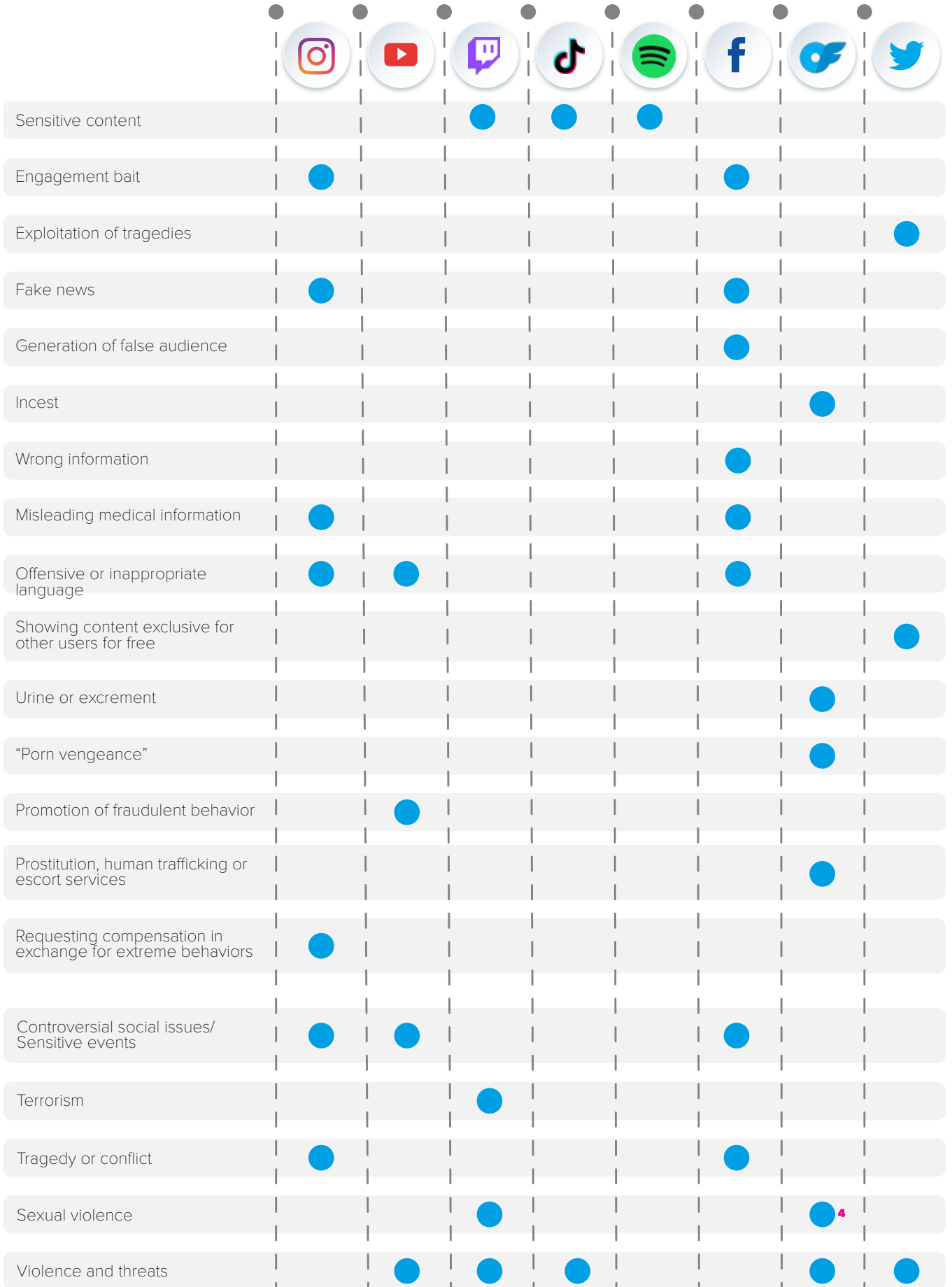
For creators who seek to obtain an important part of their revenue through direct monetization, it is very relevant to know these limitations when they create content. Likewise, as in some cases it is not easy to predict if the content will be in some of the prohibited categories or not, creators often end up learning by trial and error what content is monetizable, and to what extent they can show some elements.

On the other hand, for creators who diversify their strategy in different platforms, it is important to take into account the differences of permitted content. In fact, the same content may be associated to two prohibited items in different platforms (as the non-monetizable categories are not defined in an identical way between platforms, but they somewhat overlap), or the content may be permitted in one platform but not in another.

In Table 8 we break down the filters by which content may stop being monetizable or be eliminated from each platform.

**Table 8 – Inappropriate content according to platforms**

								
Harassment			●					
Sexual or suggestive activity	●	●				●		
Questionable activities	●					●		
Fraudulent activities						●		
Illegal activities			●	●	●	●		●
Dangerous or harmful activities		●		●	●			
Self-harm or suicide							●	
Bestiality							●	
Self-destructive behavior			●					
Misleading content			●		●			●
Outrageous or degrading content		●						
Explicit content	●			●		●		●
Content that is inappropriate for children or families		●						
Non-original content/ copyright infringement	●	●	●	●		●		●
Pejorative content or inciting hate or violence		●	●	●			●	
Content that shows or suggests the purchase of, or promotes the use of restricted or illegal products and services.								●
Content related to firearms		●					●	
Content related to drugs		●					●	
Content related to tobacco		●						



4- In the case of Only Fans, the specification of what can be considered in this category includes: rape, lack of consent, intoxication, sexual abuse, torture, sadomasochism, genital mutilation, necrophilia.

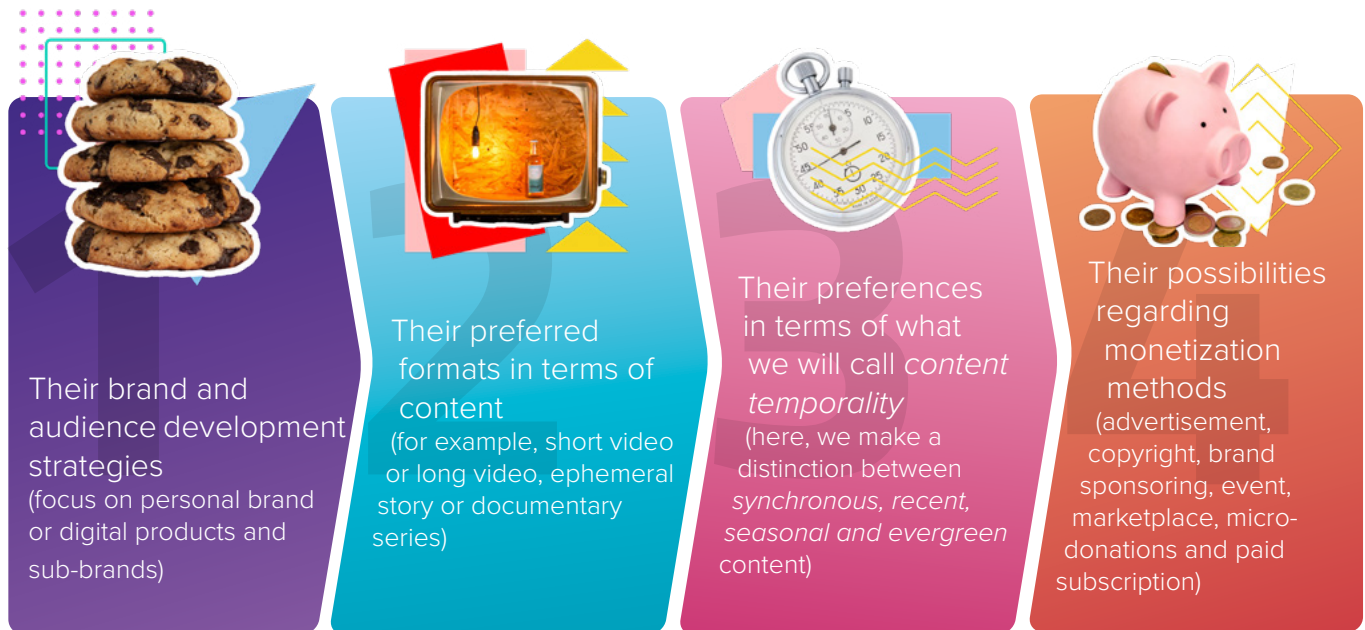


## 6. Content development modalities

### 1. Key factors to classify and model content development modalities

What is the relationship between platform governance and digital creators' preferences to create contents with certain formats and develop brands with certain strategic objectives, in particular, in Argentina?

We propose an exploratory-descriptive modeling of what we will call *content channel development modalities*, a (quite limited) range of stylized options in terms of strategies for the production and monetization of content channels in streaming platforms that arise when we systemically consider four key factors:



By “platform governance”, we propound an operationalization limited to some key aspects of their terms and conditions: the monetization methods (and only indirectly the inappropriate contents) and the authorized formats. Even though the order presented by a realistic outlook of platforms governance focuses on formats and monetization methods, the model proposed here focuses on creators. In that sense, the highest hierarchical factor in this scheme is that of brand and audience development strategies.

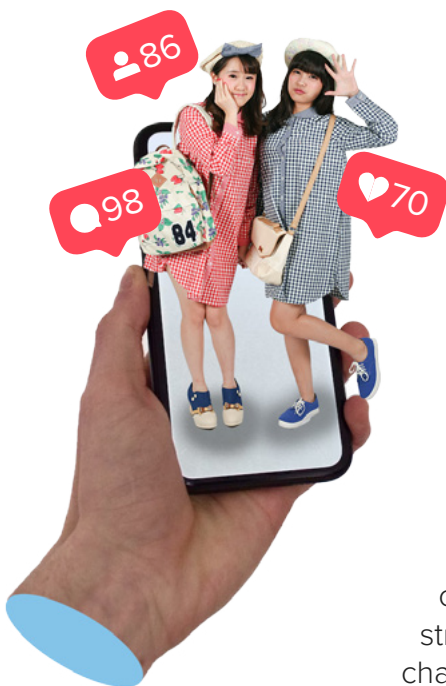
The next section has five parts, one for each factor, while the fifth one has an integrating purpose: the four factors are reviewed at the same time and a visual model that maps its interaction effects is put forward.



## 2. Brand and audience development strategies

The first key factor in the composition of these content development modalities are creators' **brand development strategies**.

Firstly, we distinguish two production modalities according to their ideal objective in terms of brand and audience development: focus on personality or focus on product.



Even though most creators initially focus on their personality, this study argues that two stylized strategies of contents development and digital business can be distinguished, one centered on the evolution of the personal brand and another one centered on the development of digital products; in each case, certain forms of monetization and certain distribution formats are more compatible institutionally. However, in both cases, the key is to build multiple channels with interactive audiences, and undergo a gradual and sustained process of professionalization of content creation. In particular, for the sources interviewed, it is about maximizing the knowledge of the rules of each platform (which they identify with their positioning algorithms and their terms and conditions to monetize and not to be demonetized).

In practice, creators are far from such binary practices. Their creations deploy overlapping, and sometimes contradictory, strategies (until they figure out some ways to optimize their channels), and they always offer a diverse and changing balance between the elements associated to their personal charisma and those more typical of a work with intellectual property. Often times, creators want to develop new IP and they put their faith in it, but, in the meantime, they keep an audience that is loyal to their personal figure. Moreover, the same creator turned multichannel agency may systematize that trend towards hybridization, seeking a diversification of digital products with a varying balance between charisma and product.

In the section devoted to value chain, we set out to describe creators according to their levels of strategic maturity and brand complexity. For example, creators of different verticals (#cooking and #truecrime) interviewed for this report pointed out that escalating and professionalizing their business model has led them to

go from a strategy centered on charisma and their own personality to trying to develop brand value and products with IP (intellectual property) value. They say that it offers greater business scalability, but it is also more sustainable as a productive model.

In this summary of production modalities, we propose to start off this same distinction, even if it is with a different sense. It is not about maturity stages with a diachronic outlook, but about alternative stylized strategies from a synchronous point of view. That is to say, two different strategic objectives which can be applied, in a given time, to an entrepreneurship based on content creation.

## The role of serialization

Although we identify two opposing stylized strategies, we believe there is a hybrid strategy that is compatible with both objectives: *serialization*.

We propose the term *serialization* to describe a hybrid dynamic that is compatible with both extreme strategies, while it allows for the acquisition of traffic and followers participating in impersonal conversations without so much brand value. This is the bulk of Internet contents, those that can have an element of charisma and some potential as IP, but mainly they are inscribed in a series of contents that propose some performative standardization of content. For example, kitten videos or those of the #lifestyle vertical of the kind “my boyfriend does my make-up” or “how to make the perfect curling routine”, or tutorials of recipe videos to make the best *Vitel Tonne* for Christmas (which, we will see, is combined with a *seasonal* temporal modality).

Then, serialization allows us to inscribe the most random content in a conversation that systematizes it and enables both a fast viralization and a derived reproduction in the mid- term. While there is no original format but some talent, ingenuity or charisma in the execution of a formula already serialized, it comes close to personal self-promotion, but if it can start a series in itself, it can become a sort of IP (for example “astrological signs ordering coffee” by @FedeCirulnik, which is translated in on-site stand-up events).

By “series” we mean the existence of a set of unique pieces (of contents, whatever their format, but the more they agree with the format, the more serialized they will be in general). Contents are part of the same connecting thread as each piece of the series refers to the same slogan or proposition, which, in medium or long videos, is usually in the same title, but it is defined mainly by the tags assigned to the content by creators.



A creator may develop their own series or participate in series created by other creators that have become a trend.

The contents of a series may be viewed in any order, in principle, even though they may talk to one another and, therefore, assume some memory from the audience.

When many creators use the same background song for some content, they integrate a series of contents around that song. It is likely that whoever gives a like to one of those contents, will later see the rest of contents tagged similarly. This makes it possible to update and viralize videos uploaded some time ago, and unnoticed until then.

This way, creators can basically create content that exploits their personality (their personal charisma when reacting to circumstantial events or reproduce serialized formulas), content inscribed and indexed in a series with some viral trend, or content intensive in innovation that develops value as products with high design and with IP value.

In terms of production, it is about boosting the quality of producers, sustaining and increasing the volume of production, and learning to maximize the positioning algorithms, and to fulfill and circumvent the demonetization filters. In terms of positioning, it aims to enhance prestige and expand the audience of channels.

### 3. Content formats

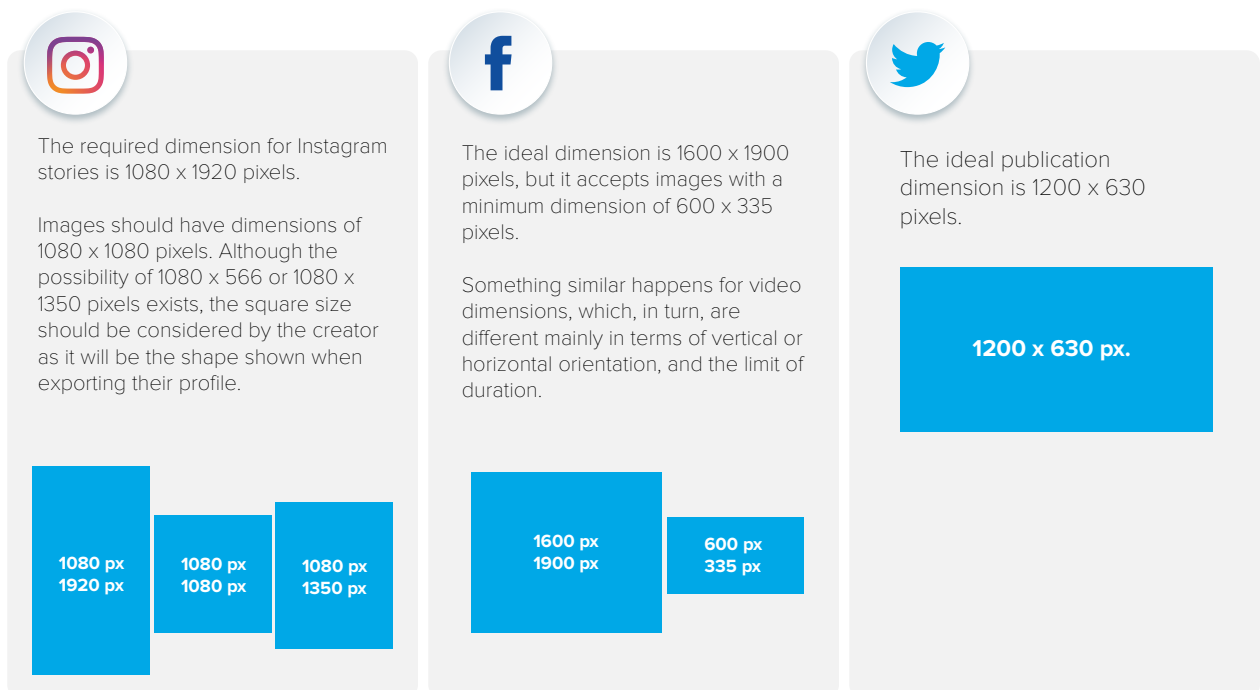
The second key factor are the technical **formats** defined, enabled and promoted by each platform, that is to say, the terms and conditions in which products can and should be exhibited and, therefore, the way they are designed.

For example, the size of a generic format like image posting changes according to the platform, as shown by Table 9.

Therefore, in order to use the same image in different platforms, creators should take into account that it should adapt to the ulterior cropping they will have to make, or else choose to make different pictures for each platform.

In the section about Platforms we pointed out what audiovisual or multimedia formats are enabled and promoted by the most prominent platforms.

**Table 9. Image posting formats in selected platforms**



Source: Own creation based on Hootsuite (2022)

## Platforms and formats

Leadership in distribution channels of horizontal videos of medium and long duration allows *YouTube* to maximize the time available to sell ads. This, in turn, is coordinated with a complex system of incentives aiming to retain outstanding creators who are aligned with that general strategy. Instead, dynamism in formats such as ephemeral stories and photograph posts allows Instagram to maximize its role as a platform or market of multiple sides where brands co-sponsor contents with influential creators, and where entrepreneurial creators commercialize goods and services. The advertisement received by audiences starts off the knowledge about their likes and profile, but they are not necessarily linked to a creation, and so they do not imply direct monetization for creators.

Meanwhile, TikTok offers variants of the *short vertical video*. The ways algorithms of several of these short video platforms (among which we also find Kwai, oriented towards an even less professional segment) can recognize the virtues and possibilities of acceptance and promotion of some contents (and they act accordingly, sealing the fate of a content) is really significant.



Now then, in the music industry it is especially evident that the notion of “short vertical video” has in itself a multi-format that includes stylized variations, such as lip-sync, choreography, highlight (in events), vlog or clipping (in an interview or testimonial). These variations, such as the “challenge”, have already become formulas of popular knowledge, as were the video clip or live concert in the 80’s and 90’s. Thus, what we can see as hyper-specialization in a temporal format allows quite enough variability, both between and inside verticals, and, especially, a great capacity for the serialization of content. This, both in production processes and in consumption and reproduction, offers learning algorithms of the platform a dizzying pace of feedback of users’ preferences thanks to the discrete but irresistible charm of scrolling down to signal that we want to see something different.

For any vertical or industry in the digital creators' ecosystem, that minimalist grammar is functional, and for that we find endless contents that repeat and reinvent reduced formats of shocking video recipes, stand-up routines, tourism routes, fashion shows productions and make-up tutorials. This way, short vertical videos, especially in times of the pandemic, allowed *TikTok* to disrupt the content ecosystem. Argentina was no exception, even without offering creators any method of direct monetization. For this reason, since the emergence of *TikTok*, the competition to master the short vertical video market has been a key trend of the ecosystem, as indicated by the creation de reels in Instagram and of Shorts in *YouTube*.

This is linked to another vital aspect of the diverse interface of each platform. Audiences looking for medium or long videos very likely look for contents aligned with their preferences according to titles, key words or notifications of their favorite creators. Instead, in the short video format that burst in with *TikTok*, it is the algorithm that sets the order of results before users demand it. Thus, the key metric is displaced from the number of followers of a channel to the amount of time spent watching a video.

But besides being a platform where short vertical videos are created and distributed, *TikTok* has become one of the main tools of music distribution. To begin with, that is because this platform has its origin in *Musically*, an app whose competitive advantage was its agreements with record labels. Another reason is the fact that co-creative and serialized practices of contents development have appeared among creators. So combined, the features of *TikTok* videos and the popular use lead to adding background songs, either to repeat or imitate dancing and to use some background audio fragments for videos where certain situations take place. These formats have become adjacent contents of intensive works of intellectual property, which can be positioned and add value. Therefore, when a song is launched, it is important to think what "hook" that song may have in *TikTok*, and even create the dance to imitate. Given the reach of these videos, making a song popular in *TikTok* may have an impact on the position of that song in the music industry rankings. This is a remarkable element of the erosion of boundaries between the content ecosystem and the music industry, and it has contributed to position the latter at the core of the former.



## Production modalities and formats

Each format somehow conditions its production modalities.

As has been said, in term of success indicators for short videos, for example, algorithms motivate the pursuit of immediate impact and, to that end, semi-structured formats like lip-sync, choreographies and challenges are resorted to. Short videos are better produced in long sessions that make it possible to create multiple contents that will later be uploaded in a programmed way, even though regular sessions that draw on the most viral contents are required.

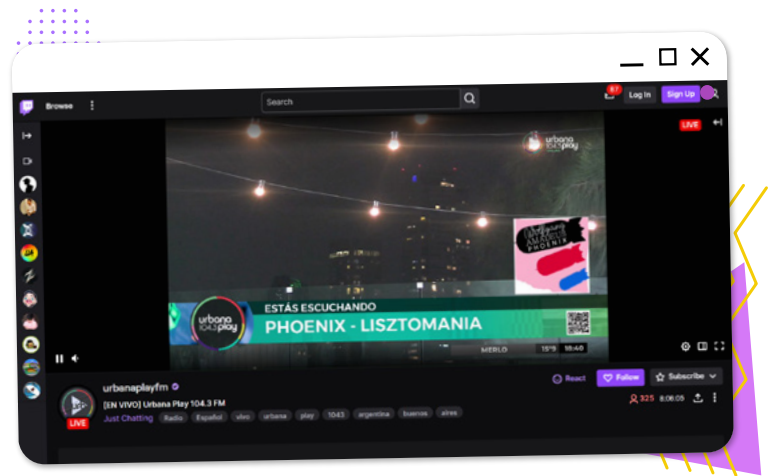
Production teams may be smaller. In general, they are one-person production units, but they usually have the assistance of relatives or friends, while they often resort to different forms of associativism with other creators. On many occasions we find a couple of creators (@rvbengarcia and @deliciousmartha, for example).

On the other hand, long videos require more production time between each product, so they promote the re-elaboration and serialization of materials, which leads to the attempt to find a potential IP or some distinctive product with brand value. They require building bigger production teams, but modular and non-exclusive (for example, scriptwriters may work for several creators).

Testimonials gathered from video creators show that they support small companies with three to five people, and they underscore the need to define roles that make it possible to serialize the production of this type of content: camera, script, edition and production (all of them roles that are usually shared with the main creator).



Anyway, production is just one part of the organization needed to become a professional creator, as many of them highlight the need to have data analytics, commercial management, a relationship with brands and even scheduling for the store to sale related products, and these roles do not depend so much on the preferred format as on the maturity of the entrepreneurship.



On the other hand, streaming formats require a level of permanent exposure to reach time quotas in a minimum line (even around eight hours per day).

Normally, we will say that the format motivates creators to focus on their personalities rather than on the creation of IPs, whose development remains a bit more focused on publishing companies and videogames firms. However, the need to maintain a productive pace that is physically very demanding, and then escalate the value proposal of the channel (or channels), may lead to at least two different dynamics:

▶ The co-creation between creators through collaboration, although there is no evidence that it will, in turn, translate into a dynamic that favors the co-management under regular production teams.

▶ The creation of IPs with radio brand value (such as @Luzutv).

In the next part, about content temporality, we will come back to the streaming format to underscore some noteworthy aspects.



## 4. Content temporality

In general, the temporal aspect of content creation is neglected. Yet the apparent immediacy associated to the disintermediation and dematerialization processes generated by the digital era (Baricco, 2019) includes nuisances and complexities worth looking into, especially the different production and reproduction speeds.

Thus, the third factor in this model is **content temporality**: specifically, the relationship between the production time and the reproduction time. The suggested distinction separates four ideal types of content, depending on the degree of temporal distance between both events: *synchronous*, *recent*, *seasonal* and *evergreen*.<sup>5</sup>

### Synchronous content

The content of *synchronous temporality* is content of live broadcasting by means of different streaming formats. We distinguish two sub-types: synchronous with a focus on the personal brand, although we can use works with intellectual property to react to them, and where we usually resort to associativism (e.g., let's chat, live gameplay, vlog stream); and synchronous with a focus on the digital product, where the focus of the live broadcast is on the development of intangible assets with franchising potential (e.g., music festival or e-sport competition). In the first case, the main monetization strategy are contracts with platforms, subscriptions/micro-donations, personal events, and personal marketplaces. In the second case, the most compatible monetization methods are advertisement income and streaming broadcast of events.

### Recent content

The *recent temporality* content is anchored in the present as a juncture, even without being synchronous, and is characterized by some immediacy in the production, which tries to create disruptive content which, rather than surviving the passing of time, will be attractive enough to become viral as soon as possible feeding on the latest trends.

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5. In part, the matrix emerged as stylization of the contribution of testimonials from the sources interviewed, as in the case of the category *evergreen*, where a leading creator of the vertical #truecrime was openly inscribed.

In terms of compatible formats, it is short content, in general vertical, with a generally fast production and perhaps a bit improvised, and which tries to exploit the most serialized aspects of some formula that has already been successful for another creator (and repeated by new creators with some personal changes). Some similar formats are challenges, lip-sync and choreographies.



It includes much ephemeral content (like stories), but not all the recent content is ephemeral. However, TikTok has introduced new dynamics in this segment, because the recent content that does not get to be viral when uploaded can very well be so later, for different circumstantial reasons. On several occasions, creators manage to become known by only one piece of content that gets to be viral, but they had already produced and shared different material that then becomes a boom in traffic.

In general, the recent content is not searched deliberately by users but is “found” through algorithm training according to users’ own preferences.

The main monetization strategy are sponsored contents, subscriptions/micro-donations, personal events and personal marketplaces.

## Seasonal content

The *seasonal temporality* content is not necessarily anchored to the present but does follow an annual calendar, activated during certain seasons, although it may be disabled the rest of time. It is one variant of the *evergreen temporality* content, but it triggers some critical mass at certain periods of time (some may even be repeated from time to time). It tries to be attractive despite the passing of time and be active again under some circumstances (seasons, festivities, championships, awards).

The main monetization strategy would be advertisement income and sales of goods. Some compatible formats are: some #unboxing, mainly #fashion (such as flagship fashion shows at season change), but also #technology (such as the launch of some products scheduled for specific dates, like Christmas, BlackFriday or

Children’s Day), newsletters, content about relevant sports tournaments (like FIFA World Cup 2023 or local leagues) or the #eSports vertical (such as videogame tournaments like LOL, in order on the annual calendar), and season specials (like Christmas recipes, tourism contents on vacations or historical documentary videos about commemoration days), among others.



## Evergreen content

In the case of *evergreen* content, its production is not necessarily anchored to the present, and it seeks to be attractive in spite of the passing of time. It is the most reflexive content, which can have better quality in terms of production.

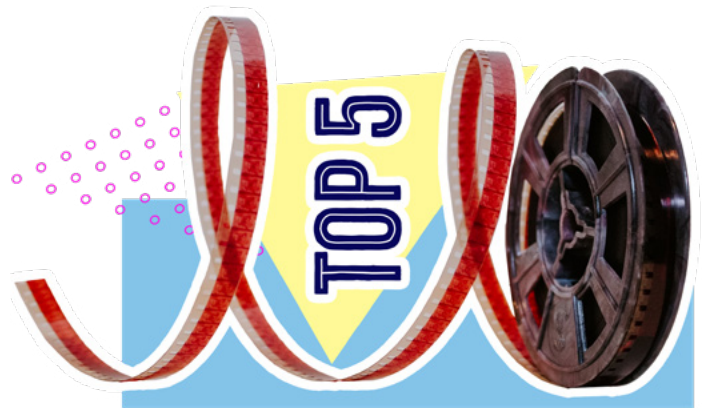
The title of this content is quite important because users usually look for some content and find the one that is the closest to their search, instead of being assisted by the visualization algorithms. In the recent content, as we have already said, that search is made by algorithms, not users, albeit based on automatic learning applied to the history of all the prior choices made by the user, and by all the users<sup>6</sup>.

The main monetization strategies would be the copyright and advertisement income, although supporting a growing channel may lead creators to get alternative revenue by means of alliances with brands or direct contracts with platforms.

The compatible formats are contents with longer duration or high added value based on some franchising potential in terms of intellectual property, from podcasts and video essays to music video clips.

6. One creator points out that one of her professional leaps took place in 2017, when she figured out the logic of algorithms associated to video tagging. With time and the evolution of the ecosystem, says a source of the accelerators environment, the use of key words has become less relevant than sustaining a regular production volume, according to certain positioning thresholds.

Anyway, not all evergreen contents have to create their own intellectual property value to be attractive. For example, tourism reviews, the preparation of some ranking (for example, in the movie and series industry), a historical documentary video or DIY tutorials, among others.



## 5. Monetization methods

The fourth factor is the **monetization methods**. Here we retrieve the distinction made throughout the report, whether it is direct or indirect monetization in the platform (through the platform).

If we talk about videos that are monetizable in a direct manner through advertisement, YouTube offers the most competitive environment. If we talk about ephemeral formats that allow an alliance with a brand from highly influential accounts, Instagram offers the best alternative. In TikTok there are fewer sponsored contents, but their alliances with record labels favor in particular the monetization of music artists and the positioning of entrepreneurs around the music ecosystem. If we talk about micro-donations or referred commercial associations, Twitch offers a format that is compatible with its maximization.

In order to use the monetization strategies available in the sector effectively, it is vital to have quite robust knowledge about what can be obtained from the contents specifically produced, what type of audiences they are aimed at, and what platforms make it possible to optimize a given type of content. Beside the different strategies followed by each one, remunerated creators are the ones who can create massive channels with interactive audiences, produce a sustained volumen of weekly material and maximize their knowledge about the algorithmic patterns of each platform, which implies learning both to be “viralized” and not to be “demonetized”. This idea entails being well aware of the terms and conditions of the platforms (which usually change), whether it is the thresholds form which they can have greater content circulation, or rules and practices of demonetization of content due to different filters.

The monthly amount received by each creator is defined by a number of variables that are platform-specific, and, in general, opaque for creators, who learn them by trial and error. The production volumen is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition to remain relevant for algorithms. The so-called “viralization” does not guarantee revenue, but it helps to get high audience engagement indicators, a pre-condition to monetize, as contents are privileged by algorithms to show in a region or market segment when the production pace is sustained.



## Possible monetization



### YouTube

Videos that are monetizable directly through advertisement.



### Instagram

Ephemeral formats that allow an alliance with a brand from highly influential accounts.



### TikTok

Less sponsored content, but its alliances with music labels favor monetization of music artists and entrepreneurs around the music ecosystem.



### Twitch

Micro-donations or referred commercial relationships.

A key question all creators ask sooner rather than later is how much material should be uploaded in a given period (in general, a week or a month) to keep the audience expansion flow stable. There are no standards, but by way of reference, it can be said that, in the case of medium to long videos, testimonials talk about four weekly videos of 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the vertical (for example, #cooking or #sports). Once the optimum volume and the right frequency to broadcast contents are identified, creators can reduce significantly the uncertainty about how much of it they will really monetize if they can deal with the demand of the production pace. This, in turn, allows them to gain more room for maneuver to plan the development of ideas with potential intellectual property.

In the production of short videos, the sources interviewed also agree that the key is to produce a stable but growing weekly volumen, with about five short videos per week as the stylized threshold to achieve better positioning. In these formats, TikTok e Instagram rule; in Argentina, they do not have direct monetization methods (except for the marketplace, in the case of Instagram) so, in these formats, remunerated creators are the ones who can deal with the accelerated production pace demand, while they know how to adapt to the greater uncertainty of how much of it they will really monetize at the end of each month.

On the other hand, the possibility that contents may be demonetized by different clauses regarding inappropriate content or restricted due to intellectual property, or that the terms and conditions may change without adding internal claim mechanisms, creates some conditions associated to a greater uncertainty and a bigger risk.

The risk of demonetization for infringement of terms and conditions differs depending on the long or intensive IP formats, although we cannot say that it is necessarily

smaller. This depends on the platform. In terms of intellectual property, risks in TikTok are lower than in YouTube, as the use of music not only is not a problem, but it is promoted. In terms of inappropriate content, however, the issue is not less sensitive than in other platforms, and, even when filters can take some days to remove content identified as infringer (which in short videos, with more viral interest, may be late), creators fear losing access to their accounts (that is to say, their channels). Yet this happens mainly on Instagram, where the value of each follower is higher than in video channels; on TikTok, the number of subscribers matters but not as much as the number of reproductions and the engagement, while in Youtube the key are the reproductions, but also increasingly more the paid followers, although feedback from audiences about the appropriate nature of contents is particularly relevant.

## 6. Integration of the four factors and their interaction effects

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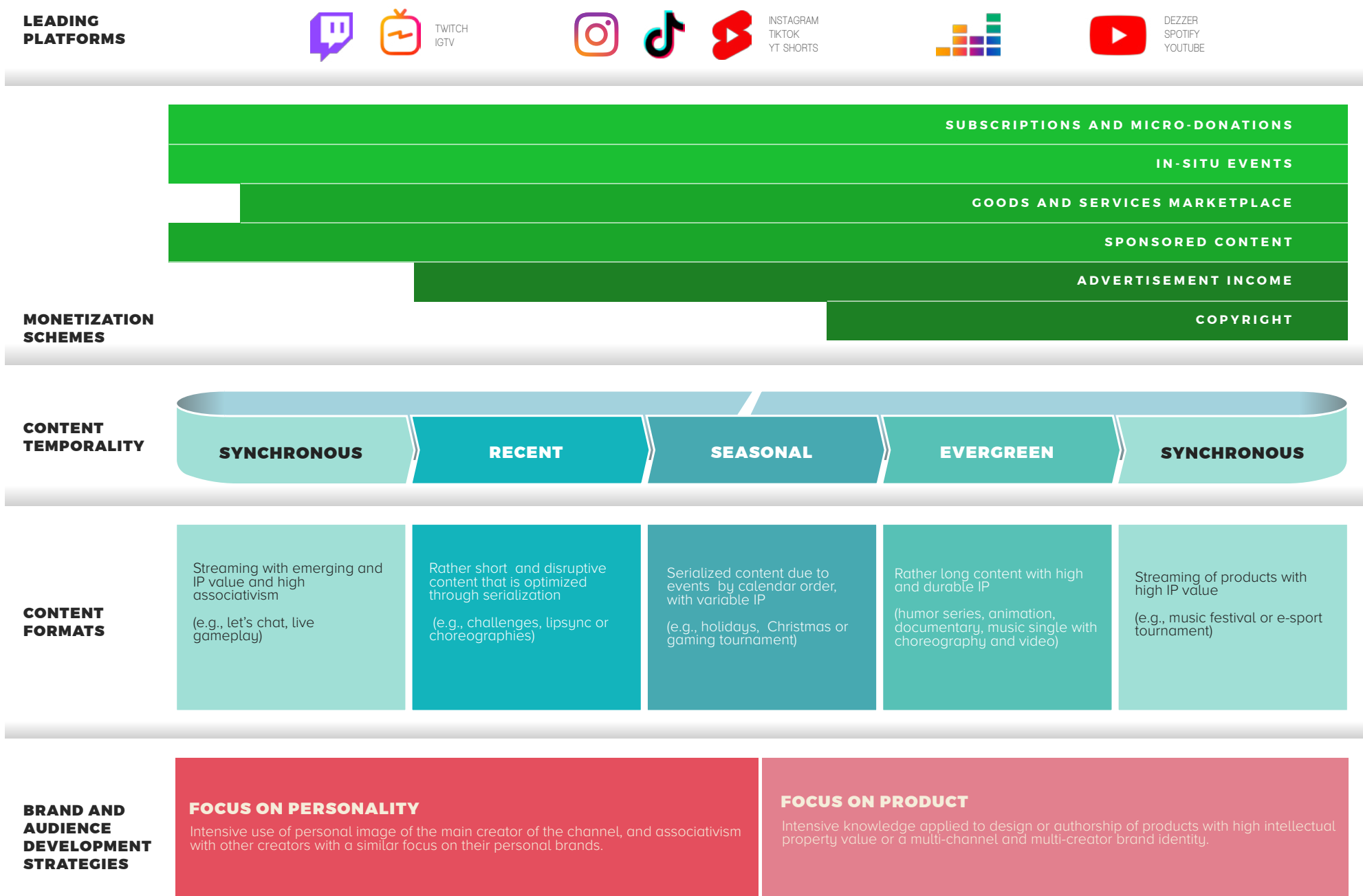
Even though the description of each factor introduced some references to links and interdependences, in this final section we will go over the four factors at the same time, and we will propose a visual model that maps their interaction effects.

Something interesting happens when the alignment between some factors is problematized, configuring paths of possibility more or less defined that offer some “agency” to creators in the face of the structural conditions set by platforms.

A basic assumption is that the two stylized ways to make up the value of the content (focusing on the creators’ personality or on the product as brand or as asset with intellectual property) help to put the other factors in order. This is absolutely meaningful as this report looks deeper into creators than into platforms, although we start off the recognition that platforms define the rules of the game.

Based on this idea, Graph 2 propounds a visual model that stylizes the interaction effects among factors as if they were stacked layers whose compatibility is expressed by means of a greater or lesser degree of alignment (from left to right) among the options available in each factor (or layer). It also maps the dominant platforms in each case.

Graph 2. Stylized model of content development modalities



Source: Own creation

As in a world map, we lose sight on the fact that extremes also meet. This image is better understood as a Moebius strip: whatever ends on one side starts on the other. A “music live session” format by Bizarrap is a *synchronous* content destined to be *evergreen*, as are some podcasts like @EIMetodoRebord. Other times, the IP may be less restricted to the channel (or channels) of a main creator, and develop value as a company with the complexity of a multi-channel network, such as @luzutv or @futurock. Here also, like escaping on the edges in the Pac-Man and appearing on the other side, we see evergreen contents coming out of synchronous strategies that can also focus on the “self-branding” of some charismatic creators.

The model is just a guide to better understand the shades, not an explanatory proposal or even a comprehensible descriptive guide. It is still an exploratory approach, and its development would require going deeper into the empirical analysis by means of a sample with some representativeness and a longitudinal analysis of creators’ profiles.

We find more hybridization in the monetization methods, as many of them are compatible with almost all the production strategies, but not all of them, or in the same way. IP intensive contents enable a copyright path rather limited to music creators, but the advertisement income, while they tend to prefer long videos as more durable, is found in almost all the chain. It is less common, but the IP development may lead to richer contents, such as films, TV series or theater plays. Actors such as La Granja de Zenón (a multichannel network) are better positioned to want to move forward in such schemes.

In terms of advertisement income, long contents are preferable for platforms such as YouTube because they have more time available to insert advertisement content. Even though there will

be possibilities to access the advertisement in other modalities, as in the *synchronous* one, it may be through direct advertisement rather than through platforms.

Alternatively, a strategy centered on the exploitation of image and personality, besides showing some affinity with the *synchronous* and *recent* temporalities, is likely to resort to indirect monetization methods such as sponsored contents or marketplaces, or through direct monetization methods such as micro-donations or events.

For these reasons, brand development modalities are related to preferred formats (and therefore, platforms). A strategy centered on IP development will probably be inclined to generate contents in formats that are attractive for platforms that better monetize that work with copyright: Spotify or TikTok for music, YouTube for video and podcast. Instead, a strategy centered on the maximization of the personal brand will probably be more inclined to generate contents in attractive formats (shorter and more ephemeral) for the platforms that create better marketplace conditions for the synergy with sponsoring brands, like Instagram, Twitch and TikTok.







## 7.Verticals

This section addresses some key verticals that have distinct characteristics, and looks into the dynamics specific to each market/ecosystem and the way these inherent characteristics affect the content production and monetization modalities.

It is organized into three sub-sections. The first one proposes a comparative look of two cases of dynamic verticals, similar but different: #gaming and #eSports. The second sub-section deals with the music industry, the vertical that has managed to be consolidated at the core of the content ecosystem, even above gaming. Finally, the third one explores some emerging trends in verticals such as #digitalart.

## 1. Growing markets: #gaming and #eSports

Two verticals related to videogames may be distinguished, both focusing on an important part of the content generated by creators: #gaming and #eSports. Regarding the competitive nature and the non-monetization of contents, gaming has a recreational purpose, and e-sports have a competitive purpose. Whoever takes part in gaming is called “*gamer*”, while those who pursue eSports competitively and professionally are considered to be “*pro-players*”.



Both verticals attract similar sponsors. The main parties interested in these audiences are companies related to IT and technology supplies, streaming platforms and companies related to cryptocurrency and digital banking. Moreover, eSports teams attract sports apparel brands which design their official uniforms.

Both have a significant share of joint creation of content. In the case of gamers who create content mainly synchronously, a particular form of co-creation is through Streaming Houses. They are houses where a group of content creators live, equipped with whatever each of them needs to stream from their own computer. The rationale of co-habitation is that in a big part of the content generated by these groups there will be great interaction among them, not just showing the creator who owns the account. This also helps them provide feedback on their accounts.

Likewise, eSports players also have spaces where they go to get ready for competitions. These are the Gaming Houses, and they differ from the former in that they do not aim at the joint creation of content but at the optimal preparation of players for future competitions. Moreover, unlike Streaming Houses, in general they are not real homes where the team lives, but places they only go to train. These spaces have the necessary technology and other spaces, such as gyms (A24, December 2nd, 2020). To a lesser extent, there are some content co-creation instances between different teams, not necessarily directly related to eSports.

The basic format of the #gaming vertical is a broadcast of the screen of a multi-player videogame the way its creator sees it, with a second smaller screen embedded in some corner where the creator, in a close-up, “reacts” while they play and interact with peers, in general, other creators.

The most common platforms for gaming are YouTube and Twitch. In both of them, creators make live broadcasts in which they play a great number of games, usually interspersed with conversation with their audience. These moments are called “Just chatting” or “IRL (In real life)”. These broadcasts usually last more than two hours on average and, depending on their creators, they are ephemeral or remain recorded in their channel to be watched asynchronously.

Additionally, many creators use part of these transmissions to generate other forms of content: they usually choose the best plays, funny moments or moments of interaction with the audience that were particularly interesting to make specific, shorter videos. These are published mainly on Youtube.

In general, gamers do not devote 100% of their content to this topic, but they intersperse it with other verticals.

Even though a content creator may be labeled a “gamer” when a big part of their content is intended for that topic, creators’ self-identification does not have such a clear-cut division. There are creators who, even though they do mainly gaming, do not define themselves with that label but “streamer”, giving greater importance to their identification with the format they use to generate content than to its topic.

Some of the creators who devote a big part of their content to gaming are Coscu, Spreen, Joaco López, Carolo Vazquez, Luchi Quinteros, Grafo, Momo, Boffe, La Jefa and Brunenger, among others. The role played by Carolo Vazquez and Luchi Quinteros in the incorporation of women to the gaming world is

interesting, as it is dominated mostly by men. Carolo Vazquez has a series of YouTube videos called “Pibas jugando al FIFA” (Girls playing FIFA) where he talks with female guests during plays of the game. On the other hand, Luchi Quinteros broadcasts plays and shares her experience studying the creation of videogames.

The content generated by professional players is different from the one created by *amateurs* mainly because *pro-players* are usually less active than amateur creators, and their participation in networks is more closely connected with some seasonality related with the tournaments they compete in. These players, besides broadcasting plays or competitions, usually make videos where, from their position as experts, they analyze plays or show their new sponsors.

The content related to eSports is not found only in the players’ professional accounts, but each team often has its own account in different social media for which they create content. This allows teams to have sponsors and advertisement income and, at the same time, this is an allure to



gain fans that will root for them in tournaments. The main type of content published by teams has to do with summaries of tournaments and introductions of new members or sponsors. Although there is great disparity in the amount of content generated by the different teams, the most active ones also include interviews and vlogs about the players' day-to-day activities.

On the other hand, eSports competitions, as is the case with other sports, have exclusive broadcasting rights, so they are not available in teams' accounts. To watch them, it is necessary to have access to the official broadcast or to summaries published later by the players and their teams. Some official broadcasts are made by far-reaching streamers, as was the case with the 2022 CS:GO World Cup, whose broadcast was conducted, not exclusively, by Ibai Llanos on his Twitch channel.

As is the case with gaming, the main eSports platforms are YouTube and Twitch, and both professional and amateur creators have presence on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and TikTok as positioning strategies.

ESports follow a typical rationale of off-line sports: teams are made up and train to compete in a tournament with the objective of being the champions. In terms of content temporality (see previous section), the eSports vertical has a more seasonal and synchronous alignment (at the time of the tournament) than gaming, where the synchronous and recent aspects are intermixed.

At present, Argentine teams can be sorted into two groups: those led by a person from the world of content creation (for example, the Coscu Army or 9z Team), and those whose

owner or leader is a figure from the world of sports (A24com, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020). The latter, in turn, are divided into the ones coming from traditional teams (for example, Boca Juniors, River Plate, Racing Club eSports, etc.) and those whose leader is an individual sports figure (such as KRÜ eSports, linked to former soccer player Sergio Agüero, Pampas, linked to former tennis player Guillermo Coria, or Ebro, linked to former soccer player Juan Sebastián Verón).

Teams have a great number of professionals who work with the aim of getting their players into competitions with the best preparation possible, as is the case in traditional sports. These professionals encompass areas such as psychology, nutrition and kinesiology, as well as agents, coaches and trainers, among others (A24com, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021). Moreover, many teams have specialists in digital services, such as video edition, web page design and graphic design, who focus on building audiences for the team.

There are different games with eSports competitions, and each player specializes in one game in particular. Some of the most popular games are League of Legends (LoL), Fortnite, CS:GO, Dota 2, Valueant and FIFA. Their world competitions are League of Legends World Championship (known as Worlds), Fortnite World Cup, Intel Extreme Masters, Valueant Champions and FIFAE World Cup, respectively.

In Argentina, according to a Tipps.gg ranking (2022), the main teams are: 9z Team, with CS:GO, LoL and Valueant players; EBRO, with CS:GO, LoL and Valueant players; Furious Gaming, with CS:Go and LoL players; Leviatán Esports, with CS:Go, LoL and Valueant players,

and Isurus Gaming, with CS:Go and LoL players. Besides, some Argentine players have been hired by foreign teams because of their performance, as is the case of Nicolás Villalba (currently in Guild) and Matías Bonanno (ex player of KRÜ, currently in Heretics).

## 2. Consolidated markets: music

According to data from IFPI Global Music Report [2022](#), prepared by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), the total streaming on a global level (including paid subscriptions and advertisement) currently accounts for 65% of all the global income from recorded music, and it keeps growing: in 2022 it invoiced 16.9 billion dollars, an increase of 24.3% compared to 2021. But the most relevant piece of information for this IFPI report is that, in Latin America, income from streaming accounts for 85.9% of music revenue, that is to say, 20% higher than the global average. We think this difference is related to the role played by new content creators.

Especially after the pandemic, in Argentina and around the world, the (almost) total digitalization of music stopped being a moral and financial debate. The virtual and remote access showed not only some growing “democratization” in terms of creation and distribution, but also, and especially, the conversion of the business and the emergence of new players around artists.

In this regard, Cabello et al (2021) point out that the new forms of digital consumption have revitalized an industry to its most competitive levels in memory. Ten years ago, the industry hit rock bottom and looked with suspicion at companies like Spotify, launched in Europe in 2008 and massified after getting to the United States in 2011 (in Argentina, it was in 2013).

Today, Spotify accounts for more than 20% of all the income of the music industry ([Spotify “Loud & Clear” 2022](#)).<sup>7</sup>

7. According to this report, Spotify estimates it supports about 200,000 creators. In 2022, there were 189,000 artists with at least one concert or event with ticket sales, which shows a professional activity outside streaming. According to those estimations, more than 25% of those professional artist wannabes generated more than US\$10,000 in payments only of Spotify last year (which suggests more than US\$40,000 of the sources of total registered income, and more if we include tours, merchandising and other business lines).

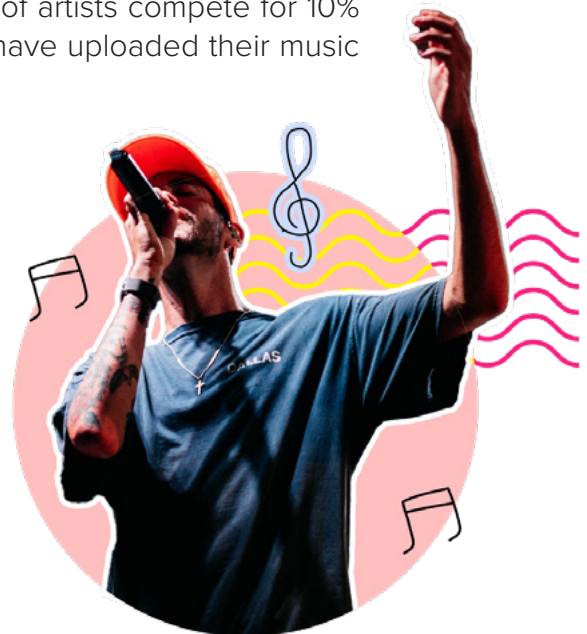
According to Spotify, 8 million artists uploaded their music to the platform, and 60,000 new songs are added to the platform every day. Both for stagnant or falling traditional sectors such as music, TV, art, or for new ones such as social media or gaming, platforms have allowed a bigger number of people to participate by consuming, sharing, giving their opinion, making economic contributions, creating and co-creating contents.

Like Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music, Deezer, Tidal, YouTube Music, Bandcamp, to name the most famous ones, define their algorithmic policies to access monetization.

In Argentina, the music ecosystem has evolved mixing some of the original pillars of the historical record industry and the new forms of monetization: the big international record labels that have historical branches in Argentina: Sony, Warner, Universal; the collective societies and agencies of composers, authors, performers and phonogram producers (SADAIC, AADI, CAPIF)\* and the ubiquitous managers. To these managers we add new labels and independent projects specialized in digital material (such as Ditto), representative agencies, distributors, show producers and local presence of the big audio and video broadcasting platforms, such as YouTube, Spotify, Amazon Music and, more recently, TikTok.

Also the “long tail” of creators is evident in this sector. In Spotify, 1% of artists account for 90% of reproductions. That is to say, 99% of artists compete for 10% of consumption. According to Spotify, 8 million artists have uploaded their music to the platform and 60,000 new songs are added to the platform every day, but only 99.3% generate less than 10,000 dollars annually (J.F Diaz 2022).

In terms of direct monetization, and besides creators' funds, Spotify is clear in that it does not pay artists directly but to rights holders, mainly collective societies, in a relationship that is 75-80% for recordings and 20-25% for publications. In its disclaimer, this platform is clear in that what artists receive depends on the agreements each of them has with their societies and the countries. This is not a minor issue for Latin American artists given the copyright problems in the region and the legal limitations it faces, in countries like Argentina, for the individual management of



8. For further information on the current regulations about management companies and the existing institutional limitations, see Cabello, Rivero, Viéens (2022), also edited by CeTyS-UdeSA.

rights, where there is currently a legal monopoly by SADAIC (Cabello et al, 2022).

For many, it is increasingly more difficult to separate the sound work (the audio, the songs, the “records” as an artistic, not physical, concept) and the visual work (its corresponding video), which leads to the inclusion of other agents to create each piece: script writers, directors, actors and audiovisual producers, among others. Thus, the path of new artists is usually to develop and conceptualize their work in virtuality and then reach the physical stage. From social media and platforms, musicians start to build their own showcase and career, which they later catapult (or not) thanks to the relationship with agencies, record labels (or brands), producers and other providers of digital services (like Music Ally) who act as facilitating links. Many of them look for the “cross- fertilization” of followers from collaborations. Platforms also get excited about this as they want to retain audiences.

Record labels, in turn, have repurposed their business and become companies that offer services to their artists. Warner, for example, offers three types of possible contracts: distribution, as facilitator between platforms and artists, who maintain the master rights (that is to say, the work); license rights, to monetize the master for a given period of time (between 8 and 14 years), with a distribution of profit percentage of 80-20; and exclusive rights (recording exclusive artist), through which they are offered total funding and the master becomes the company’s asset.

In addition to copyright management services, the show booking and the work production, we have intangible elements such as the relationship with the industry, its presence in awards ceremonies, the links with other artists (today, *featuring* or collaboration work as a

positioning strategy) or producers and different types of advisory. In some cases, distributors (for example, Ditto) also offer editorial services with 80-20 contracts for artists with greater trajectory and impact.

In any case, standing out and growing in this industry is not easy. Circulation conditions imposed by platforms can hurt the working methods and, finally, the artistic search. Moreover, the way to get to successfully have more rotation requires an intermediary between artists and the streaming: digital aggregators (paid or free) who upload music to all the music applications<sup>9</sup>.

Some platforms offer support programs: YouTube Music offers YouTube Partners, which artists can apply for to monetize with videos through an AdSense account; Spotify motivates listening and collaborates with the algorithmic positioning through curated playlists and initiatives like “Equal”; and distributors (like The Orchard, by Sony Music, or Ditto Music, for example) act as links between artists and platforms, ensuring, precisely, the distribution of works.

Another big artist hotbed of the current scene is the *freestyle* fights, which have established a dynamic that used to be spontaneous and from the street, and today it is a platform to broadcast potential music interpreters. The “Red Bull Batalla de Gallos (cockfight)” and FMS (with the producer Urban Roosters behind, and sponsoring of brands such as Axe and Fernet Branca) saw the birth of a big part of the local trap and new hip-hop scene (Wos, Trueno, Lit Killah, for example), who later signed contracts

9. elDiarioAR: “Industria de la Música y Streaming. Informe Especial: Música y algoritmos: muy pocos artistas se reparten mucho dinero y una mayoría de músicos, centavos”, May 28th, 2022 by Juan F. Díaz.

with different record labels, or, in some cases, managed to start their own companies. The producer Lauría Entertainment, with its label Dale Play Records, capitalized on the explosion of the urban scene, working with the most successful artists of the genre, like Duki, Wos, Nicki Nicole and Bizarrap.

The internationalization of artists implies a leap also in their capacity to monetize given the possibility to have access to clicks with more relative value outside the borders where the Argentine Peso is used. This context allowed the investment growth by record labels, producers and agencies in new local artists who today see more opportunities to take their success beyond the national borders.

As for success, even though its primary connotation is still linked to income and impact, it is currently measured in terms of reproductions in platforms and followers in social media as well. TikTok has become one of the main tools of distribution: its algorithm allows the massive broadcast without demographic limits and the generation of impact in other platforms, and even in traditional media. For example, by 2021 more than 175 songs that were a trend in TikTok ranked in the Billboard Hot 100. This is additional to the fact that, according to a poll conducted in the US by MCR Data Study, 75% of TikTok users say that they use the platform to discover new artists, and 63% say they reach music they had not listened to before by means of that platform (TikTok, [2022](#))

The sources of income of a music artist are (and must be, necessarily) multiple: live shows, advertisement and agreements with brands on their social media, sale of merchandising, subscriptions of followers on platforms such as

Only Fans<sup>10</sup>. Nowadays, music is, we may say, only one of the paths through which a musician may be promoted, but where growing from the digital field requires becoming a more complete entrepreneur or creator, and mastering algorithmic complexities.



Different public initiatives have been promoted from the Culture areas that have begun to understand and deal with the digital environment more often, both for formation and support, and to subsidize or measure that ecosystem. By way of example, the Buenos Aires City Government program “Impulso Cultural” includes BAMúsica, which grants subsidies to solo artists, bands and music clubs<sup>11</sup>.

10. OnlyFans is a subscription service that allows content creators to earn income from users subscribed to their profile. It allows them to receive funds directly from their fans with a monthly subscription, one-time payment or pay-per-view.

11. One of the measurement tools with a growing interest in digital aspects is the National Survey of Cultural Consumption and Digital Environment of the Ministry of Culture of Argentina, conducted by the System of Cultural Information of Argentina (SInCA), which depends on the Direction of Planning and Management Follow-up of the Unit of Advisors Cabinet. It [started in December 2022](#) in 50 urban centers in 24 provinces. However, that information is more focused on defining consumption profiles, rather than production.



Many independent artists, for example, resort to the support of fans through the sale of songs or records from platforms like Bandcamp. However, the reproduction of the phonogram in streaming platforms offers a variable retribution on a geographical level (plays in Argentina are worth less than in Mexico or the United States) and it is always below the dollar cent, which makes it impossible to deem it a source of livelihood for artists who do not cross some thresholds in terms of number of listeners (more than a million listeners per month is considered a minimum threshold).

### 3. Emerging markets: Digital art

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The web3 is seen by some voices as a great bet that may decentralize the copyright management by means of technologies like the blockchain or smart contracts (Cabello, Rivero, Vicens 2022). This fact would enable mechanisms of management and direct monetization to property, which can be particularly relevant for the art sector, for example. Beyond the content distributed through the platforms analyzed, and other specialized and less massive platforms, digital art per se as a type of market/content is growing as a vertical in itself based on the creation of artists that become “tokenized” through the use of NFT (non-fungible tokens) formats. The “tokenization” of art supports its rights and enables a more accurate management of its distribution and monetization to its creators (Cabello, Rivero, Vicens 2022).

This incipient format is attracting multiple interested sectors, from traditional figures of the Argentine art who start an accelerated process of digital transformation, such as the National Endowment for the Arts (FNA) or the National Museum of Fine Arts, and independent creators and physical artists who seek to join this new world, to small and big investors (National Endowment for the Arts, 2022).

In this vertical, creators are perceived as “artists” or “independent artists”. The NFTs allow them to produce an artificial scarcity that gives an alternative authenticity criterion to their digital works of art, and smart contracts where they define the property right percentage they give to the buyer (National Endowment for the Arts, 2022).

These new markets have given generative art an optimal environment for its development. This type of content consists in creation that is not complete until it

is acquired. At that moment, the code crafted by the creator receives as input the identification of the digital wallet used to acquire it and, based on that, the creation of the work is completed (National Endowment for the Arts, [2022](#)). This implies that each creation by the artist may take to a myriad of possible different results.

This new alternative presents a possibility of detachment between the creator and the content they create, incomplete until its acquisition. Therefore, the relationship with the content generated becomes more diffuse, given that neither the artist nor the buyer see the final result until the moment it is acquired.

Compared to what happens to artists in platforms like Spotify, these new technologies give independent artists, or with smaller reach, greater control over what happens to their creation. Not only do they avoid being forced to negotiate with platforms, but they also have greater control over their creation. For example, not having to give 100% of the asset allows creators to keep getting profit each time their creation goes from one buyer to the next. That is why this modality is attracting increasingly more digital visual artists and independent musicians.

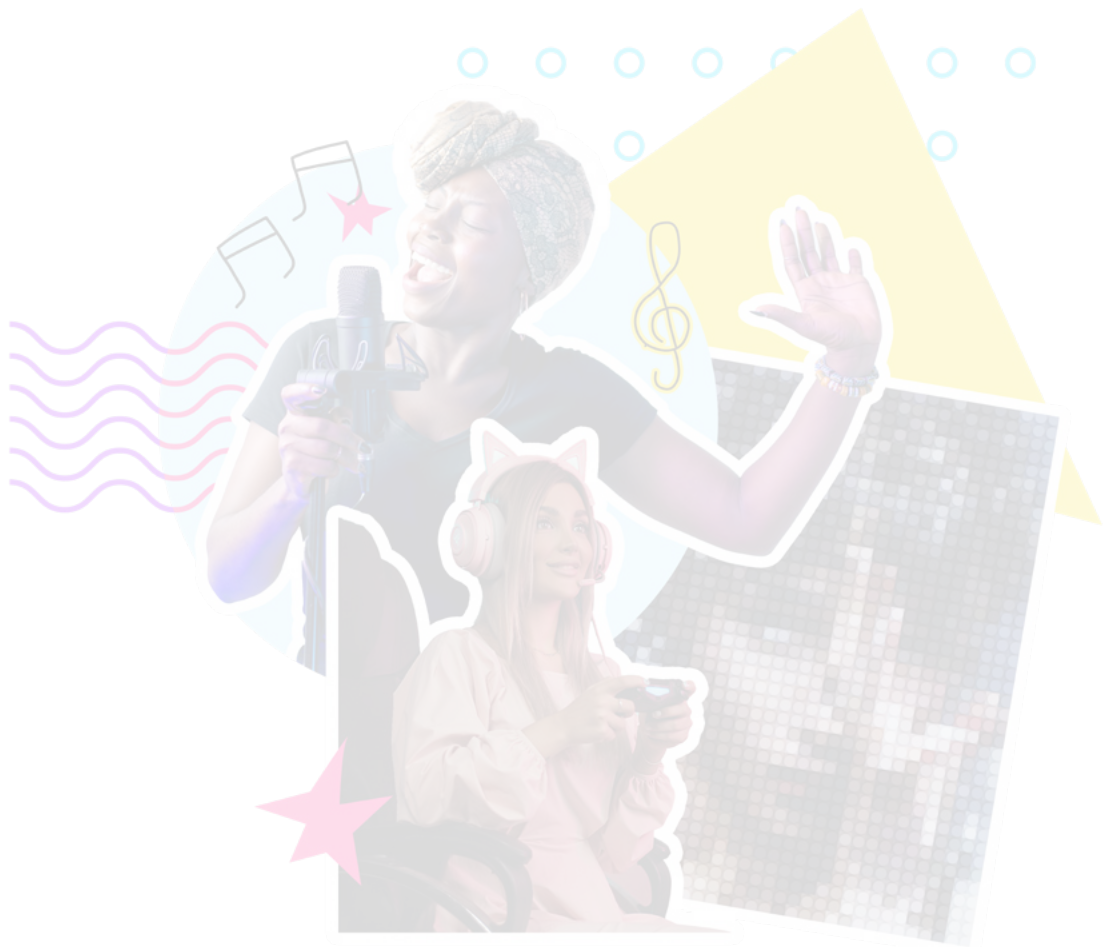
Likewise, the possibility to distribute a unique work as original, by means of the NFT, generates market dynamics similar to the ones in the traditional art world. Thus, digital art builds a kind of hybrid between art, content and investment or value reserve. This last element is because the market dynamics create opportunities for speculation over prices, as well as the possibility to acquire pieces to safeguard its value.

These new forms of content commercialization have become especially relevant with the advent of the metaverse and the web3, as many companies are commercializing unique content by means of blockchain certifications and NFTs to use in the metaverse. Moreover, the metaverse provides a favorable environment to exhibit this type of art, leading to the creation of digital art galleries in this new world.



At present, OpenSea is the main international marketplace to commercialize NFTs. In the mid-term, the possibilities to monetize these contents are not limited to income for the sale of a work of art, but it opens the door to multiple applications beyond this space. The tokenization of digital works of art enables a greater involvement in different communities which, through the personalized interaction with their followers, can offer access to content and communities controlled by the ownership of tokens. However, these monetization methods keep developing and it is not clear yet if they will have a widespread adoption.

It is necessary to follow these developments and new players closely in order to understand whether these dynamics are transitional or they signal a “new state of affairs” for new spaces of creation, broadcast and monetization.





## 8. Conclusions

This work is a first approach to a concept under development: “creative economy” or “economy of content creators”, through which creators, filmmakers, artists, streamers, influencers, online players, curators and many other independent actors connect with their audiences, engage them and get revenue through the internet environment. Nowadays, it is estimated that there are 50 million creators, and only 2 million of them can make a living out of it.

We seek to describe creators, understand their dynamics of interaction, modalities of production, drivers and barriers, demands and challenges in Argentina. This country is the third market in size in the region, with a relatively high Internet penetration (39,8 million people connected, 87,2% of the population), with 36 million social media users who spend, on average, 3 hours and 22 minutes per day on social media.

The plataformization of the digital political economy combines trends towards disintermediation, decentralization and concentration. Regarding the marginal costs of production, distribution and reproduction, platforms have made it possible to reduce some barriers of access to creation and have enabled new production and consumption models so artists and creators can connect with their audiences more easily. Creators share content in platforms sponsored by advertisement, associate with brands to make sponsored content and lean on aggregators, distributors and other service platforms to professionalize their creation. Their contents allow them to communicate with their audiences and engage them in a permanent conversation. Audiences, in turn, can help creators economically by committing with the content, paying it by means of micro-donations or subscriptions, or buying products or services of the brands they support or are associated with, or their personal brands or brands associated with their channels through their own marketplaces.

The content produced by creators (texts, podcasts, music, videos, digital books, games, live broadcasts and many of their own variants and novelties) is barely being typified and characterized at present. The components of the value chain are very dynamic and, sometimes, have blurry borders. Both in the roles and characteristics that typify actors and in content production modalities, we see trends that, when the time comes to describe them, show the novel and provisional element that distinguish this new livelihood for many digital creators.

Even more complex is to understand its operation in peripheral countries of the global South with a population that is relatively smaller compared to the big centers of production and consumption, whose advertisement market or the volume of audience is small or mid-sized. As we saw in the case of Argentina, creators in the developing world, and located in countries with a smaller relative size, probably do not have all the tools of monetization, development funds and incentives.

The data available are limited and, in most cases, estimated and projected based on polls. The state of the art in the world of academia is quite incipient as well, and it is usually more commercial in nature or, where there is more academic rigor, rather ethnographic. In part, we run the risk of generalizing particular experiences and trajectories to try to understand the complexity of how, today, digital creators can turn their activity into a livelihood, an industry and, ultimately, a sector that creates economic and social value for an economy.

Some common trends observed in this incipient creative economy on a general level may be:



### **Consistency, volumen and professionalism.**

For creators, there are no possibilities to be seen and amplified by big audiences without some consistent presence in social media. A continuous production according to the parameters of each platform is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for algorithms to expose creators to be seen by more users.



### **Professionalization creates direct and indirect value, besides employment.**

Creators who begin to be successful become entrepreneurship founders and create teams that assemble original conceptualizations and tools around their art. By growing in scale, the focus on personality is less sustainable, and true and sophisticated organizations are required, as well as other types of support from other actors (distributors, aggregators, teams, communities) to be more massive, become multi-channels and join gaming leagues or communities, to name some options.



## **Platforms are just a means to access and amplify their reach, but hardly sustainable as the only monetization method.**

There are relatively few exclusive creators in a platform. Most of them are present in several, with varying degrees of success, although they tend to specialize in one and replicate content in the others. After some level of knowledge by the public, many seek to take their social media followers to their own web pages with marketplaces, and they develop related products (books, merchandising, paid presence or events) on their own or in agreement with brands, which allows them to escalate their income schemes and volume. This, which comes natural for the “analogue” creators who reached social networks when they were already famous, starts to be also vital for the most successful “digital” creators, who were born and became famous thanks to social media.



## **Limited interoperability, learning by doing, volatility and vulnerability of the business.**

Creations and success mechanisms in one platform do not necessarily work in another. Most creators usually learn to understand the algorithmic operation of each one and the differences of terms and conditions, especially how demonetization filters work based on experience, trial and error. Changes in the terms and conditions may leave out of the market different creations or production modalities, and there is little to be done about it as long as freedom of expression is not infringed. The digital business is volatile and vulnerable. There are “coaches” and agents or guides, and even communities and other support platforms that give advice that are growing, but they are not massive yet.

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## **A few creators strongly attract audiences' attention and income, while the rest is part of the "long tail".**

Different studies of the most successful creators show that a big part of them, about 1-2% of the most successful ones, often concentrate 90% of the audience and monetization. The rest, 98%, compete for 10% of the audience and an even smaller percentage of revenue. Platforms have made it easier to access monetization, expanding the "base of the pyramid", but they have not changed the dynamics offered by the cultural industries in general, sports, and other professions where there are huge income asymmetries between the most successful people and the rest.

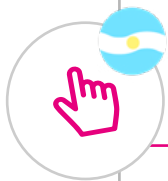


## **Apart from the rules set by platforms, creators have some room for maneuver and capacity for action to socially own their creation.**

We identify four factors that affect these paths for the development of channels and brands, creating a (quite limited) spectrum of stylized options in terms of strategies for the production and monetization of content channels in streaming platforms: a) their strategies for the development of brand and audience: focus on personal brand or on digital products and sub-brands; b) their preferred formats in terms of contents: for example, short video or long video, ephemeral story or documentary series; c) their preferences in terms of what we call content *temporality*, where we make a distinction between *synchronous, recent, seasonal and evergreen content*; and d) their possibilities in terms of monetization schemes: advertisement, copyright, brand sponsoring, event, marketplace, micro-donations and paid subscription, among others.



Some special characteristics of the Argentine market that we may highlight outside these general trends are:



### **The “click value” is relatively smaller (and it is depreciated).**

The Argentine market has adverse structural conditions compared to more massive markets in the Ibero-American region, such as the Mexican, Brazilian or Spanish ones. The limited size of the national advertisement market and the value of subscriptions to platforms in the local currency, constantly depreciated, may be discouraging when a creator tries to translate their reproductions, views and advertisement. This can create asymmetries and distortions for the development of the local market and ecosystem.



### **High level of cultural innovation and regional leadership that invites to cross borders.**

Formats, styles, personalities, music movements, producers and concepts emerge from the country, and they cross borders and set trends in the region. As a consequence of the situation described before, these leading actors with a potential for scale and massiveness will see, sooner than later, that this prominence leads to better relative remuneration, as it allows them to cross some reproduction and engagement thresholds from which not only do their audiences become regional and international, but they gain access to other values in terms of *click value*.



## Fewer platform monetization and investment options available.

The medium-sized audience market, its lower income available for subscriptions measured in international currency and the smaller advertisement market reduces incentives for platforms to completely deploy their entire offer in the country. As a consequence, the possibilities for incubation, access and promotion of new creators are affected. This lack of availability has also propelled related digital services, for example, micro-donations, to make up for this missing offer.



## Dependence, diversification and bargaining power.

Creators are fully aware of their dependence on the platforms in general and some platforms in particular. Now then, that dependence is not questioned so much by the most successful creators but accepted as the rule of the game and, in some way, socially re-owned, which leads them to specialize in the platforms where they obtain their main monetization scheme. That is to say, creators seem to respond through a strategy of *specialization* in the platforms that their biggest sources of income depend on (which have some socio-technical formats and some algorithmic policies), rather than pivoting strategies among platforms, and even less migrating, although they try to diversify the sources of monetization by adding sponsored contents, sponsored events and the commercialization of goods and services in their own marketplaces. That is to say, reducing their economic dependence, and not so much their infrastructural dependence in terms of channel development.





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