Other

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MONETIZATION OF A PERSONAL BRAND: STRATEGIES FOR EARNING INFLUENCERS IN DIFFERENT NICHES

Summary. *The article systematizes and analyzes the primary strategies for monetizing influencers' personal brands across various niches: sponsored content, affiliate marketing programs, subscription and crowdfunding models, the sale of digital products, and live-stream monetization. It identifies the main challenges and risks—privacy concerns, algorithmic volatility, platform dependency, and ethical dilemmas—and proposes methods for their mitigation. Special attention is devoted to emerging trends such as blockchain and cryptocurrency integration, the development of virtual currencies and non-fungible tokens (NFTs), the expanded use of live streaming, and the implementation of artificial intelligence for content personalization. A comparative analysis of existing research in the field serves as the methodological foundation for a comprehensive review of influencers' revenue-generation strategies across different niches. The scientific novelty lies in the construction of an integrated typology of monetization strategies and an adaptive model for income diversification that takes into account technological and regulatory challenges. The findings will be of interest to researchers in digital marketing and branding, as well as to practicing brand managers and strategists seeking to adapt theoretical monetization models to the evolving dynamics of the content industry.*

Key words: *personal brand monetization, influencer, monetization strategies, mixed methods, blockchain, NFT, artificial intelligence.*

Introduction. In the digital era, social media platforms have evolved from mere communication channels into comprehensive income ecosystems, in which personal brands constitute assets for their proprietors. The growing number of users and the increasing time spent online have created novel opportunities for monetizing the digital persona, ranging from sponsored integrations to the sale of proprietary products and services [1]. According to Haenlein et al., global expenditures on influencer marketing exceeded USD 22 billion in 2024, exhibiting a consistent double-digit year-on-year growth [5]. At the same time, intense competition and continual algorithmic changes compel influencers to develop adaptive and diversified strategies [2].

Consequently, the investigation of methods and factors that underpin successful personal-brand monetization has acquired particular significance for both practitioners and the academic community. Contemporary research on personal-brand monetization demonstrates a wealth of theoretical and methodological approaches. Pitafi Z. R. and Awan T. M. [1] treat influencer culture as an integral component of digital marketing, identifying audience authenticity and trust as key parameters. Kumbo L. I., Mero R. F., and Sikumbili R. M. [2] offer a systematization of "digital persona" monetization strategies, ranking them according to levels of engagement and subscriber purchasing power, and highlighting primary barriers and emerging trends such as lead magnets, paid memberships, and NFT models. Haenlein M. et al. [5] emphasize the platform-specific characteristics of Instagram, TikTok, and related channels, and provide recommendations for constructing an adaptive content strategy and establishing a unique digital differentiation in highly competitive environments. Meanwhile, Dwivedi Y. K. et al. [9] analyze the evolution of social-media marketing research, proposing prospective hypotheses regarding the influence of the metaverse, voice search, and intelligent agent-associates on future monetization mechanisms.

In niche cases within the sports sector and on streaming platforms, the focus shifts to the empirical measurement of economic impact. Christiansen A. [3] conducts an empirical analysis of amateur athletes' compensation relative to their personal brand by employing a mixed-methods approach: survey, content analysis, and regression modeling of financial indicators. Houssard A. et al. [4] examine the income distribution among Twitch streamers, uncovering systemic inequalities by age, gender, and region that reflect structural imbalances within the platform and limit monetization opportunities for less "traditional" categories of content creators.

The psychological and communication aspects of influencer effectiveness in advertising are explored by Chopra A., Avhad V., and Jaju S. [8], who use a quantitative survey of millennials to identify the primary antecedents of trust in influencers: perceived expertise, audience similarity, and emotional engagement. Building on this approach, Schouten A. P., Janssen L., and Verspaget M. [11] compare celebrities and influencers according to identification, credibility, and product–endorser fit, demonstrating that micro-community influencers often outperform celebrities in relevance and effectiveness within niche campaigns.

Technological and data-centric research underscores the role of algorithms, big data, and content moderation. Gillespie T. [6] highlights the challenge of scalable moderation and automated quality control via AI, which directly affects visibility and therefore influencers' revenues. Rosário A. T. and Dias J. C. [7] analyze the evolution of data-driven marketing, describing the capabilities and limitations of emerging technologies (machine learning, predictive analytics, and cognitive-model-based personalization) for optimizing monetization strategies. Zhang Y. et al. [10] demonstrate the application of task reformulation methods and a data-centric approach through the extraction of pharmaceutical brand mentions from Twitter, illustrating the expansion of analytical tools for monitoring mentions and identifying potential advertising opportunities.

Alsharairi N. A. and Li L. [12] present practical applications of social marketing strategies in the health and wellness segment, showing how targeting young students through healthy-eating and physical-activity campaigns can be enhanced via partnerships with micro-influencers, content series, and gamified motivational mechanics.

The analysis reveals that existing studies are rich in theoretical models and offer a broad spectrum of methodologies—from qualitative case studies to quantitative regression and machine-learning approaches. At the same time, contradictions emerge in the interpretation of authenticity: some authors [1, 5] consider it the foundation of long-term monetization, whereas other empirical works [8, 11] note that in certain niches, a clip-driven culture and hype-oriented positioning yield faster but short-lived revenues. Furthermore, technological studies emphasize the growing dependence on algorithms; however, detailed empirical evaluations of the impact of moderation and algorithmic changes on influencers' incomes remain fragmentary.

The following issues are insufficiently addressed in the literature:

- Cross-cultural differences in monetization strategies and influencer perception beyond Western contexts.
- Legal and regulatory aspects, including tax and intellectual property disputes.
- Long-term effects of monetization strategies on the sustainability of personal brands and partner brands.
- The role of new platforms (metaverse, VR communities) and their business models.
- Ethical risks and the feedback mechanisms between influencers and their audiences as content commercialization intensifies.

These gaps in the literature create opportunities for further research aimed at a comprehensive assessment of the economic, cultural, and technological determinants of personal-brand monetization.

The study's objective is to systematize and classify contemporary personal-brand monetization strategies across various niches and to identify the primary factors underlying their efficacy and sustainability.

The **scientific novelty** lies in the development of a comprehensive typology of monetization strategies and an adaptive revenue-diversification model that accounts for technological and regulatory challenges.

It is **hypothesized** that diversifying monetization strategies by combining sponsored integrations, subscription-based models, and proprietary digital products yields greater revenue stability and lower vulnerability to platform-algorithm changes than reliance on a single revenue source.

The **methodological** foundation for a broad examination of existing influencer monetization strategies across different niches consisted of a comparative analysis of studies in this field.

1. Personal Brand Monetization Strategies

In contemporary conditions, influencers employ a combination of various monetization approaches, each of which imposes its own requirements on audience scale, content format, and subscriber engagement level.

Sponsored content involves integrating a brand's product or service directly into the influencer's content (videos, posts, stories), with compensation provided according to different models: a fixed fee, cost per mille (CPM), or cost per engagement (CPE) [1, 2].

Affiliate programs constitute the next strategy, under which an influencer receives unique referral links or promotional codes and earns a commission on each purchase made via those links. This approach is prevalent in e-commerce and is well suited to niche markets [4].

Subscription-based and crowdfunding models entail establishing a monthly subscriber fee for access to exclusive content on platforms such as Patreon, OnlyFans, or private channels in Telegram or Discord [6, 7].

The sale of digital products as a monetization strategy involves producing and marketing proprietary informational products—online courses, e-books, and masterclasses—thereby enabling experts to monetize their expertise without intermediaries [8].

The live content and livestream monetization strategy is founded on revenue from virtual gifts, donations, and paid subscriptions during real-time broadcasts on Twitch, YouTube Live, and TikTok Live [3, 4].

Table 1 presents a comparative overview of the characteristics of these personal-brand monetization strategies.

Table 1

Comparative characteristics of major monetization strategies

Strategy	Description	Example platforms	Advantages	Limitations
Sponsored content	Integration of branded messages into core content	YouTube, Instagram, TikTok	High one-time payments; increased brand awareness	Requires large audience; risk of authenticity loss
Affiliate programs	Commission-based model using unique referral links	Personal blog; social media	Passive income; low entry barrier	Dependent on conversion efficiency
Subscription and crowdfunding models	Regular contributions from subscribers for exclusive content	Patreon; OnlyFans; Telegram channels	Stable revenue; close audience engagement	Requires high-quality exclusive content
Digital product sales	Offering online courses, e-books, webinars	Personal website; Udemy; Skillshare	Scalable; high margin	Requires subject-matter expertise and product marketing
Live streaming	Donations, virtual gifts, paid subscriptions during live broadcasts	Twitch; YouTube Live; TikTok Live	Instant feedback; high engagement	Income volatility; dependent on consistency and stream quality

Source: compiled by the author based on the analysis: [1; 3; 6; 7; 8]

Thus, each strategy exhibits a distinct combination of benefits and drawbacks, creating a need for their integration. High-profile influencers seek to diversify revenue streams by blending sponsored content with affiliate programs and digital product sales, while also developing subscription services for core audiences. Such a multi-strategy approach enhances revenue resilience and reduces risks associated with platform algorithm changes and fluctuations in market demand.

2. Possible challenges and risks of monetization

Influencers diversifying their monetization strategies face a range of systemic risks and constraints capable of undermining their revenue and reputation. This section examines four primary categories of challenges: privacy, algorithmic changes, platform dependency, and ethical and reputational risks.

The collection and analysis of user data underpin targeted advertising and content personalization, intensifying the tension between monetization efficiency and audience privacy rights. Helmond, Nieborg, and Van Der Vlist observe that social platforms are increasingly integrating behavioral-tracking tools, which exacerbates the risk of data breaches and unauthorized use of personal information [1]. According to studies, 37.5 % of experts firmly believe that privacy concerns undermine user trust and the effectiveness of branded integrations [9, 10]. The introduction of stringent regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) in the United States, has heightened requirements for transparent data collection and storage, increasing compliance costs and the risk of penalties for violations.

Platform algorithms are in constant flux, shifting priorities within feeds and recommendation systems. Sudden updates can drastically reduce organic reach: influencers accustomed to stable traffic have reported view counts plummeting by 30–50 % within one week of an algorithm change [10]. Frequent algorithmic adjustments compel content creators to continuously analyze performance metrics and adapt their formats [9]. This volatility complicates the planning of promotional campaigns and renders revenue streams unpredictable.

Dependence on specific platform ecosystems represents another critical vulnerability. Influencers rely on the rules and monetization features of platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, and any alterations to partnership terms or content-demonetization policies can lead to suspended payouts or account bans.

Ethical and reputational risks emerge from the inherent tension between content commercialization and audience expectations of authenticity. When sponsored integrations become excessive, they generate a "sell-at-any-cost" dynamic that erodes audience trust [11, 12].

Table 2 below presents the challenges and corresponding mitigation strategies in personal brand monetization.

Table 2

Key Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

Challenge	Description	Impact	Mitigation Strategies
Privacy and data protection	Aggressive targeting and collection of personal data raise user concerns	Erosion of trust; risk of fines (GDPR, CCPA)	Transparent privacy policies; minimization of personal data collection; compliance audits
Algorithmic volatility	Frequent updates to feeds and recommendations cause sudden drops in reach	Revenue instability; difficulty in campaign planning	Multi-platform presence; continuous metric analysis; adaptive content formats
Platform dependency	Changes in monetization rules or account suspension can eliminate revenue	Loss of up to 80 % of projected income; audience attrition	Establishment of alternative channels (website, newsletter); revenue diversification; digital-asset insurance
Ethical and reputational risks	Excessive advertising, opaque integrations, and algorithmic manipulation damage reputation	Decline in engagement; audience unsubscribes	Clear disclosure of advertising; selection of value-aligned partners; avoidance of dubious campaigns

Source: compiled by the author based on the analysis: [9]

Thus, sustainable monetization of a personal brand requires not only the implementation of diverse revenue strategies but also systematic risk management: ensuring robust data protection, promptly adapting to algorithmic changes, reducing dependency on a single platform, and maintaining high ethical standards in audience engagement. Only through a comprehensive approach can an influencer achieve long-term financial stability and preserve subscriber trust.

3. Future trends and development prospects

Influencer marketing continues to evolve; emerging technologies and shifting audience expectations open additional monetization channels and necessitate adaptation of strategies.

Blockchain technology provides decentralization and transparency in financial operations, attracting interest from content creators and platforms. The decentralization of social networks will enable influencers to exercise full control over rewards and data while bypassing intermediary fees. Smart contracts permit automatic distribution of payments upon attainment of predefined KPIs [1, 2]. Viewers also show growing interest in cryptocurrencies as a means of payment: an increasing number of users are prepared to pay for subscriptions or send donations in tokens, avoiding banking fees and currency restrictions.

The rise of virtual currencies and digital goods. Digital goods—ranging from stickers and emoji to virtual accessories for avatars—have become an independent source of revenue. Native platform currencies (coins, gems) stimulate engagement and are directly linked to audience micro-transactions. According to estimates, the virtual-goods market reached USD 5 billion in 2023 and continues to grow [1]. Influencers can release proprietary sticker packs, interface themes, or special badges, thereby forming a subculture around the brand.

Monetization of live content. The preference for live streaming remains strong; viewers value interactivity and the ability to influence the course of a broadcast. Houssard A. et al. [4] report that live streams generate up to 40 % of all donations on platforms such as Twitch and YouTube Live. The development of paid comments, virtual gifts, and integrated e-commerce enables monetization of every instance of viewer engagement in real time [4]. Successful case studies show that well-designed broadcast scenarios (Q&A sessions, master classes) can increase revenue by two to three times compared with pre-recorded content.

Non-fungible tokens (NFTs) give influencers the opportunity to issue unique digital artefacts—collectible video fragments, digital art, or digital certificates of participation. The emergence of NFT 2.0 represents the next step, in which tokenization of content is supported by smart contracts with royalty clauses for every subsequent sale [2]. This approach stimulates long-term value and collector engagement while creating a new digital-art market for influencers.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning fundamentally change methods of content creation and personalization. AI-based tools already enable automatic video editing, selection of optimal publication times, and generation of humorous scripts for stories [4, 5]. In the longer term, analysis of emotional response and trend forecasting via neural networks will help influencers tailor content precisely to the interests of each audience segment, increasing conversion and reducing the cost of testing formats.

For illustrative purposes, Table 3 summarizes monetization trends for personal brands and the influence exerted by each trend.

Table 3

Key future monetization trends and their influence

Trend	Description	Influence on influencers	Main challenges
Blockchain and cryptocurrencies	Decentralized settlements, smart contracts, direct payments in tokens.	Full control over revenue; reduced fees	Exchange-rate volatility; integration complexity within the user experience
Virtual currencies and digital goods	One-off and recurring micro-transactions for stickers, badges, and avatar accessories.	Additional passive income; increased engagement	Market saturation; audience migration to other ecosystems
Live streams and real-time content	Donations, virtual gifts, paid real-time interactions.	Scalable interactive revenue;	Competition for attention; necessity of regular broadcasts

		strengthened audience connection	
Non-fungible tokens (NFTs)	Issuance of unique digital artefacts with royalty conditions for each resale.	New revenue streams; long-term value of collections	Legal and environmental issues; complexity of NFT marketing
Artificial intelligence and machine learning	Content personalization, automatic creation and optimization of publications, audience analysis.	Increased production efficiency; cost reduction	Dependence on algorithms; ethical risks of automation

Source: compiled by the author based on the analysis: [1; 2; 4; 5]

Consequently, future prospects for monetizing a personal brand are closely linked to the integration of advanced technologies and the emergence of new digital markets. Influencers must master blockchain and NFTs, exploit the potential of virtual currencies, enhance the interactivity of live streams, and implement AI solutions for personalization. Successful implementation of these trends will require not only technical competence but also sound risk management with regard to cryptocurrency volatility, ethical dilemmas of automation, and the environmental implications of NFTs.

Conclusion. The article demonstrates that contemporary influencers endeavor to combine multiple revenue streams, ranging from large-scale sponsored integrations to niche affiliate programs, subscription models, and the sale of proprietary digital products. Each of the five identified categories offers distinct advantages and constraints, rendering a combined, multistrategy approach essential for sustainable income growth.

The principal barriers include privacy threats, abrupt changes in platform algorithms, excessive dependence on social-media conditions, and ethical risks associated with the over-commercialization of content. Practical recommendations encompass diversifying audience channels—such as establishing an independent website and newsletter—maintaining transparent engagement with users, and continuously monitoring the regulatory environment.

Future prospects for personal-brand monetization strategies comprise the adoption of blockchain and crypto-tokens, which grant influencers direct access to payments and smart contracts, while NFTs enable the issuance of unique digital artifacts with royalty provisions. Live streams enhanced by virtual gifts and e-commerce integrations, together with artificial-intelligence tools for content automation and personalization, are poised to propel the next phase in the evolution of influencer marketing.

The proposed typology of strategies and adaptive income-diversification model broaden the understanding of digital-persona monetization mechanisms and enable influencers and marketers to develop flexible and resilient business models. The study's findings provide a foundation for further empirical and applied research in digital marketing.

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