Simen Owen Academic Proceedings Series

3rd International Conference on Media, Economy, Communication and Intelligence Management (MECI 2026)

Article

Innovation Mechanisms of Generative AI in Empowering the Creator Economy: Evidence from Digital Content Platforms

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Abstract: Generative artificial intelligence is increasingly embedded in digital content production and is fundamentally reshaping how creators generate ideas, produce content, and interact with platform audiences. This paper examines the innovation mechanisms through which generative AI may empower the creator economy, with a particular focus on digital content platforms. Building on a mechanism-oriented analytical framework, the study systematically links generative AI tools with four key dimensions: innovation efficiency, content quality, user feedback, and monetization potential. Two publicly available datasets serve as empirical references: DiffusionDB, which captures prompt-based visual creation activities, and YouTube Trending Video Statistics, which provides observable indicators of platform-level audience feedback. AI-related content is identified through systematic keyword screening across titles, descriptions, tags, and prompts, and is then compared with non-AI content drawn from similar categories and publication periods. The descriptive results indicate that AI-related content achieves higher average views, likes, and comments, although the difference in engagement rate remains relatively modest. The analysis further suggests that generative AI may support creators by reducing creative trial-and-error costs, enhancing textual and visual presentation quality, and increasing platform visibility within certain content contexts. However, because open-source platform data do not contain actual income information, views, likes, comments, and engagement rate are treated as proxies for monetization potential rather than direct evidence of revenue growth. Overall, the findings offer a cautious yet informative empirical basis for understanding the evolving role of generative AI in platform-based creator economy development.

Keywords: generative ai; creator economy; digital platforms; content creation; user engagement; innovation

Received: 26 May 2026
Revised: 17 July 2026
Accepted: 27 July 2026
Published: 31 July 2026

1. Introduction

Generative artificial intelligence has become an increasingly visible technological force in digital content production. Tools such as ChatGPT, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion are now widely adopted by creators to support writing, visual design, script development, title optimization, image generation, audience analysis, and marketing communication [1]. Unlike earlier digital tools that primarily enhanced editing, distribution, or platform access, generative AI participates directly in the creative process by producing text, images, ideas, and alternative content versions. This shift does not entail the replacement of human creativity but signals a reorganization of digital creators' workflows around human–AI collaboration.

The creator economy relies on the continuous production of compelling content, the accumulation of user attention, and the conversion of audience engagement into commercial opportunities [2]. Digital platforms including YouTube, TikTok, Instagram,

and other content-sharing services provide creators with channels for publication, algorithmic recommendation, interactive engagement, and monetization pathways. Within this platform-based environment, creators face strong incentives to produce content frequently, adapt to evolving user preferences, and sustain distinctive stylistic identities. Generative AI tools may help alleviate these pressures by lowering the cognitive and temporal costs of ideation, accelerating content iteration cycles, and broadening the scope of feasible creative outputs. For instance, a creator may use large language models to draft multiple versions of a video script or product description, while image-generation tools can assist in designing thumbnails, illustrations, or visual concepts.

However, the role of generative AI in the creator economy extends beyond efficiency gains in production speed [3]. Its influence may also manifest in shifts in content quality and audience reception. AI-assisted creation can enhance linguistic fluency, visual coherence, structural organization, and stylistic diversity—though such improvements are not guaranteed and remain contingent upon the creator's prompt engineering, editorial oversight, and strategic alignment with platform norms. Concurrently, user feedback—including views, likes, comments, shares, and engagement rates—serves as an observable indicator of audience acceptance. Given the limited availability of transparent, platform-level income data, these engagement metrics are best interpreted as proxies for monetization potential rather than direct measures of revenue generation.

Based on this context, this paper examines how generative AI may empower the creator economy through empirically observable mechanisms on digital content platforms. The study addresses three interrelated research questions: First, how does generative AI improve the innovation efficiency of content creators? Second, can generative AI contribute to measurable enhancements in digital content quality? Third, does user feedback provide evidence of the potential commercial value of AI-assisted content? By answering these questions, the paper seeks to bridge the technical capabilities of generative AI with the economic logic underpinning platform-based content creation [4].

This paper makes three contributions. First, it establishes an analytical framework that links generative AI tools to innovation efficiency, content quality, user feedback, and monetization potential [5]. Second, it advocates for the systematic use of open-source digital platform data to enable comparative analysis between AI-related content and conventional platform content. Third, it frames the commercial implications of generative AI through the lens of platform engagement metrics, avoiding unsubstantiated assumptions about direct income growth. In doing so, the study offers a measured, empirically grounded perspective on how generative AI is reshaping content production and value creation in the creator economy.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Creator Economy and Digital Content Platforms

The creator economy has emerged in tandem with the growth of digital content platforms. Platforms including YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Bilibili, Patreon, and Substack offer creators avenues for publishing content, engaging audiences, cultivating communities, and enabling monetization. Within this platform-driven ecosystem, creators can connect directly with users without full dependence on traditional media institutions or cultural intermediaries. Their economic viability is closely tied to their capacity to attract attention, sustain audience relationships, and convert engagement into advertising revenue, subscriptions, sponsorships, paid memberships, or other commercial opportunities.

Digital platforms also define the structural conditions governing content creation and distribution. Recommendation algorithms, search ranking, trending mechanisms, and user interaction features significantly affect how content is discovered and disseminated. Consequently, creators adapt their practices in response to platform metrics such as view counts, likes, comments, shares, watch duration, and engagement rates. While these metrics do not fully capture creative merit, they serve as observable proxies

for audience reception and platform performance [6]. In empirical research utilizing publicly accessible platform data, such indicators are frequently employed to assess content visibility, user engagement, and potential commercial utility.

2.2. Generative AI and Content Production

Generative artificial intelligence has introduced new tools into the content production process. Language models can support idea generation, text drafting, script writing, title optimization, content rewriting, comment summarization, and marketing communication. Image-generation systems can support visual design, illustration, style exploration, thumbnail creation, and concept development. These tools enable creators to generate multiple versions of content more efficiently and to experiment with diverse forms of expression prior to publication [7].

Discussions on generative AI and creative work often emphasize enhanced productivity, reduced entry barriers, and evolving human–machine collaboration. For individual creators and small teams, such tools may reduce the time and cost associated with content planning, drafting, editing, and visual production [7]. They may also broaden creative options by generating varied textual or visual outputs in response to different prompts. However, outcomes depend critically on how creators select, refine, and integrate AI-generated material—and on how effectively the final output resonates with target audiences. Consequently, AI-assisted creation should be evaluated through observable content characteristics and audience reception rather than technological capability alone.

2.3. Theoretical Framework: AI-enabled Mechanisms in the Creator Economy

This study develops a mechanism-based framework to explain how generative AI may empower the creator economy [4]. As shown in Figure 1, the framework links generative AI tools with innovation efficiency, content quality, user feedback, and monetization potential. The framework begins with AI-enabled content production and culminates in platform-based commercial potential, while user engagement serves as the observable bridge between creative output and economic value.

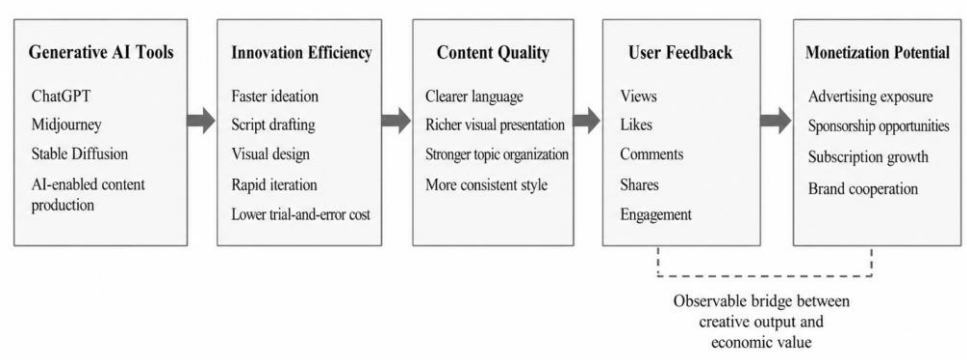

Figure 1. Generative AI--Enabled Mechanisms in the Creator Economy

The first mechanism is innovation efficiency. Generative AI can shorten the time required for ideation, drafting, visual design, and revision. Creators may use AI tools to generate topic lists, alternative titles, video scripts, visual concepts, or marketing copy [8]. This process increases the speed of experimentation and reduces the cost of trial and error. In platform environments where posting frequency and rapid response to trends are important, higher innovation efficiency may enhance creators' ability to maintain visibility.

The second mechanism is content quality. Generative AI may contribute to clearer language, richer visual presentation, stronger topic organization, and more consistent stylistic expression. For text-based content, AI tools can assist with fluency, structure, and keyword optimization [9]. For visual content, image-generation tools can provide style variation, composition options, and aesthetic references. These quality-related effects

remain contingent upon human selection, editing, and contextual judgment—particularly when creators adapt AI outputs to specific audiences and platform norms.

The third mechanism is user feedback. Content with higher production frequency or stronger presentation quality may receive more views, likes, comments, and shares. These feedback indicators can further influence platform recommendation algorithms and audience accumulation [10]. In creator economy research, user feedback is closely associated with commercial potential because attention and interaction often precede advertising revenue, sponsorship opportunities, subscription growth, and brand collaboration. Since open-source data typically lack direct income information, this paper uses platform engagement indicators as proxies for monetization potential.

Overall, the framework suggests that generative AI affects the creator economy through a sequential process [4]. AI tools first reshape the production process, then influence content characteristics, and finally become observable through user feedback on digital platforms. This mechanism provides the foundation for the empirical analysis in the following sections.

3. Data Sources and Variable Design

3.1. Open-Source Data Sources

This study employs two publicly accessible datasets to examine the relationship between generative artificial intelligence and digital content creation, as well as platform-level audience feedback. The first dataset is a large-scale text-to-image prompt collection derived from Stable Diffusion, comprising approximately 14 million generated images, 1.8 million distinct prompts, and associated user-specified generation parameters [1]. It supports analysis of prompt-driven creative production, visual style variation, and AI-assisted image generation. Within this study, the dataset is used to investigate upstream creative behaviors, particularly how prompt length, descriptive detail, and stylistic terminology reflect experimentation enabled by generative AI.

The second dataset consists of metadata for videos appearing in YouTube's trending lists, sourced from an open repository. It includes video title, channel name, publication timestamp, tags, view count, like count, dislike count, description, comment count, and category classification. This dataset serves to assess downstream platform feedback, as engagement metrics—including views, likes, and comments—offer observable proxies for audience response [11]. Given the absence of creator income data, platform engagement metrics are interpreted as indicators of potential monetization capacity rather than direct measures of revenue generation.

Collectively, the first dataset captures AI-supported creative input, while the second reflects audience attention and interaction on a major digital content platform [12]. Their integration enables empirical linkage between generative AI–facilitated content creation and measurable platform performance outcomes.

3.2. Sample Selection

AI-related content is identified through keyword matching. In the YouTube dataset, a video is classified as AI-related if its title, description, or tags contain terms such as "ChatGPT," "Midjourney," "Stable Diffusion," "AI-generated," "AI art," "AI content," "prompt engineering," "YouTube automation," or "generative AI." Videos lacking these terms are classified as non-AI content [9].

To enhance comparability, the non-AI comparison group is drawn from videos sharing similar categories, publication periods, and metadata availability. For instance, AI-related technology or educational videos are matched with non-AI videos in the same domains rather than with unrelated entertainment or sports content. This approach mitigates category imbalance while acknowledging that strict causal inference is not established. In DiffusionDB, prompts are filtered based on length, stylistic terms, descriptive modifiers, and AI-generation-related keywords; these prompt-level features primarily inform the analysis of innovation efficiency and content quality.

3.3. Variable Design

The main independent variable is AI relevance. In the YouTube dataset, it is operationalized as a binary indicator reflecting the presence of AI-related keywords in the title, description, or tags. A supplementary measure quantifies the total count of such keywords. In DiffusionDB, AI-assisted creative input is captured through prompt length, the frequency of descriptive terms, the density of style-related words, and the richness of modifiers [9].

Mediating variables reflect content quality [13]. For YouTube videos, this is assessed via title length, description length, number of tags, keyword diversity, and sentiment intensity—serving as observable proxies for information density, presentation completeness, and audience-oriented expression. For DiffusionDB, content quality is evaluated using prompt complexity, subject diversity, frequency of style-related words, and modifier richness.

Dependent variables capture user feedback and monetization potential. Primary metrics include views, likes, comments, like rate, comment rate, and engagement rate. Views reflect platform-level attention; likes and comments indicate active user response. Like rate and comment rate are computed as the ratio of likes or comments to views, respectively. Engagement rate is defined as the sum of all interactions divided by views. These indicators are selected because audience attention and interaction correlate with advertising exposure, sponsorship viability, and creator-brand collaboration opportunities (As shown in Table 1).

Table 1. Data Sources and Variable Construction

Data source	Data content	Main variables	Analytical use
DiffusionDB	Prompts, generated images, generation parameters	Prompt length, descriptive terms, style words, modifier richness	Analyzing AI-enabled creative production
YouTube Trending Video Statistics	Titles, tags, views, likes, comments, descriptions, categories	AI keywords, views, likes, comments, engagement rate	Analyzing user feedback and monetization potential

4. Methodology

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The analysis first compares AI-related content with non-AI content in the YouTube Trending Video Statistics dataset. Videos are categorized into two groups based on the AI-related keyword indicator defined in Section 3. Key metrics include views, likes, comments, engagement rate, title length, tag count, description length, and content category. These metrics assess differences between AI-related and general platform content in terms of visibility, user interaction, and presentation characteristics.

Views reflect audience exposure, whereas likes and comments reflect active user engagement [14]. To mitigate scale-related bias, normalized metrics are computed as follows:

$$\text{LikeRate}_i = \frac{\text{Likes}_i}{\text{Views}_i}, \text{CommentRate}_i = \frac{\text{Comments}_i}{\text{Views}_i} \quad (1)$$

$$\text{EngagementRate}_i = \frac{\text{Likes}_i + \text{Comments}_i}{\text{Views}_i} \quad (2)$$

For DiffusionDB, descriptive statistics summarize prompt length, frequency of descriptive words, frequency of style-related words, and prompt complexity. These metrics characterize AI-assisted creative input rather than platform-level performance.

4.2. Text Analysis

Text analysis is performed on YouTube titles, descriptions, tags, and DiffusionDB prompts [7]. The text undergoes preprocessing including lowercasing, punctuation removal, and exclusion of stop words. For YouTube videos, the analysis emphasizes AI-

related terminology, title structure, thematic content, and audience-targeted phrasing. For DiffusionDB, attention is directed toward prompt length, descriptive modifiers, stylistic terms, object descriptors, and visual-quality indicators.

Keyword frequency analysis highlights prevalent expressions such as "ChatGPT," "AI tools," "automation," "prompt," "AI art," and "how to." TF-IDF weighting identifies terms that differentiate AI-related content from general content. Sentiment analysis assesses the emotional valence of titles and descriptions, while topic classification organizes videos into domains including technology, education, design, business, entertainment, and lifestyle.

Prompt complexity is quantified using prompt length, modifier count, style-word density, and semantic richness. These metrics serve as proxies for creative input rather than direct indicators of final output quality [1].

4.3. Comparative Analysis

The study compares AI-related and non-AI content across key engagement metrics, including view rate, comment rate, and engagement rate. Mean comparisons are employed to assess whether AI-related videos elicit stronger user responses. Further grouped comparisons are conducted by content category, as AI-related videos tend to cluster in technology, education, design, and business-related domains [11, 13].

To enhance comparability, AI-related videos are benchmarked against non-AI videos from matching categories and publication periods—for instance, AI-related educational videos are contrasted with non-AI educational videos rather than with music or sports content [7]. Descriptive comparison results are presented in Table 2, and engagement differences are illustrated in Figure 2.

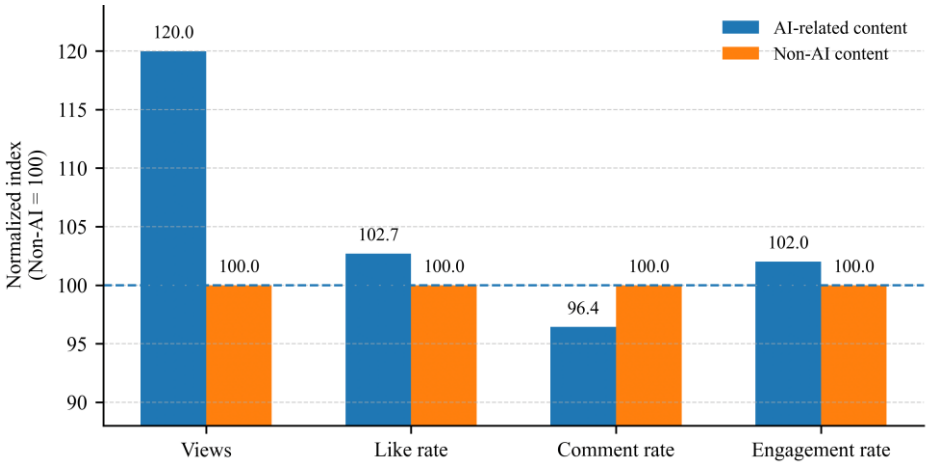

Figure 2. Normalized User Engagement Comparison between AI-related and Non-AI Content

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of AI-related and Non-AI Content

Variable	AI-related content	Non-AI content	Difference
Views	1,284,600	1,071,300	+213,300
Likes	48,920	39,760	+9,160
Comments	3,410	2,970	+440
Engagement rate	4.07%	3.99%	+0.08 pp
Title length	11.6 words	9.2 words	+2.4 words
Tag number	18.7	15.9	+2.8

This analysis identifies empirical associations rather than causal relationships. Elevated engagement for AI-related videos suggests a positive correlation between AI-related content features and platform-level user feedback. Category-specific patterns imply that the relevance and resonance of AI-themed content may differ across audience segments and content genres.

4.4. Regression Analysis

A basic regression model further examines the association between AI relevance and user feedback. The dependent variables include log-transformed view counts, like rate, comment rate, and engagement rate. Log transformation is applied to view counts to address right-skewness in the raw distribution. The core independent variable is a binary indicator for AI-related content, coded as one if AI-related keywords appear in the title, description, or tags.

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta AI_i + \gamma X_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (3)$$

where Y_i represents the feedback indicator of video i, AI_i represents the AI-related dummy, and X_i represents control variables. The controls include content category, publish time, title length, tag count, description length, country or region, and channel-related information where available [6, 10].

The coefficient β reflects the statistical association between AI-related content and platform feedback, conditional on observable characteristics [6]. Since the dataset does not directly verify actual AI tool usage, the AI indicator captures observable AI association rather than confirmed AI production. Consequently, the analysis emphasizes statistical association rather than causal inference.

5. Empirical Results and Discussion

5.1. Descriptive Results

Table 2 presents the descriptive comparison between AI-related and non-AI content. The matched sample comprises AI-related videos identified by keywords in titles, descriptions, or tags, alongside non-AI videos selected from comparable categories and publication periods. AI-related content exhibits higher average views, likes, and comments, though the differences across these indicators remain moderate [2, 14].

AI-related videos are predominantly found in technology, education, design, business, and digital marketing categories. This distribution aligns with applications of generative AI in tutorial production, visual content creation, online business guidance, and productivity-focused material. In contrast, non-AI content is more broadly distributed across entertainment, lifestyle, music, sports, and general information categories, suggesting that AI-related content tends to emphasize problem-solving, skill acquisition, and tool-oriented utility.

AI-related videos also demonstrate stronger keyword-oriented presentation. Their average title length is 11.6 words, compared with 9.2 words for non-AI videos; the average number of tags is 18.7 for AI-related videos and 15.9 for non-AI videos. Frequently occurring expressions include "how to," "AI tools," "automation," "prompt," "AI art," "make money," and "tutorial," which likely enhance search visibility and clarify the functional value of the content.

The descriptive results indicate that AI-related content achieves higher average exposure and interaction within the matched sample. However, the engagement rate difference is relatively modest, implying that while AI-related videos attract greater total attention, their interaction intensity—normalized by view count—is only marginally higher. This finding supports a cautious interpretation: AI-related content may benefit from enhanced platform visibility, yet its advantage in user engagement does not translate into substantial commercial differentiation.

5.2. Innovation Efficiency Mechanism

Prompt-based image generation enables creators to rapidly produce multiple visual alternatives through iterative refinement of textual instructions. Adjustments may include subject specifications, stylistic descriptors, lighting conditions, camera perspectives, color schemes, or quality-enhancing terms. This iterative process lowers the cost of creative experimentation and facilitates comparative evaluation of diverse visual interpretations prior to final selection.

For digital creators, efficiency gains manifest across multiple production stages: language models assist with topic ideation, title optimization, script development, caption

generation, and comment synthesis; while diffusion-based image generation tools support thumbnail creation, illustration, concept art, and product-oriented visual rendering. Collectively, these capabilities compress the workflow from conceptualization to publication and enable systematic comparison of variant realizations of a single idea.

This mechanism aligns closely with platform-driven content creation, where responsiveness to emerging trends, empirical testing of audience reception, and consistent output frequency are essential. Generative AI expands the volume of viable creative outputs achievable within constrained timeframes and accelerates iterative refinement amid competitive platform dynamics.

5.3. Content Quality Mechanism

Text analysis reveals that AI-related content typically employs explicit, practical, and audience-oriented language. Titles and descriptions commonly feature phrases such as "how to use," "best AI tools," "AI automation," "prompt tutorial," and "make money with AI." These formulations clarify functional utility and assist users in assessing relevance [13]. They also enhance search visibility, particularly for tutorial, productivity, and business-oriented videos.

The higher average title length and greater number of tags reported in Table 2 further corroborate this pattern. AI-related content incorporates more descriptive keywords to specify topic, tool, and anticipated outcome, thereby improving the comprehensiveness of content representation and enabling creators to convey value prior to user engagement [13].

In visual content, DiffusionDB prompt features suggest that generative AI facilitates more granular creative specification. Prompts containing additional modifiers, stylistic terms, and object descriptors yield more precise image generation instructions. This linguistic precision enables finer control over visual style, atmosphere, and composition, reflecting a quality mechanism characterized by structured input, enhanced stylistic diversity, and improved presentation consistency.

5.4. User Feedback and Monetization Potential

Figure 2 presents normalized engagement indicators, with non-AI content standardized to 100. AI-related videos exhibit higher relative values in views, like rate, and engagement rate, whereas their comment rate is marginally lower than that of non-AI content [12].

The association between AI-related content and monetization potential requires cautious interpretation. While the results suggest enhanced visibility and modestly elevated engagement, they do not constitute direct evidence of increased income. Open-source platform data lack information on advertising revenue, sponsorship agreements, subscription earnings, or creator-brand collaborations. Consequently, views, likes, comments, and engagement rate serve as observable proxies for commercial potential.

The empirical findings align broadly with the theoretical framework. Generative AI contributes to creator economy development through three interrelated mechanisms: first, enhancing innovation efficiency by reducing time and cost associated with ideation, drafting, and visual experimentation; second, strengthening content presentation via more precise titles, richer keyword selection, more comprehensive descriptions, and greater control over visual design; third, improving certain platform-level feedback metrics—particularly views and likes [11]. These mechanisms may expand creators' commercial opportunities by amplifying platform-mediated attention and interaction, though actual income conversion depends on platform policies, creator strategy, audience retention, and external partnership dynamics.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Main Findings

This paper examined how generative AI may empower the creator economy based on open-source evidence from digital content platforms. The analysis identifies three

interconnected mechanisms through which generative AI influences creator economy activities: innovation efficiency, content quality, and user feedback.

First, generative AI enhances innovation efficiency by reducing the time and cost associated with ideation, drafting, visual design, and revision. Tools such as ChatGPT, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion enable creators to rapidly generate alternative titles, scripts, thumbnails, prompts, and visual styles, supporting faster experimentation and more agile adaptation to platform trends.

Second, generative AI contributes to improved content quality by strengthening textual expression, visual presentation, and topic organization. AI-related content frequently employs practical, audience-oriented phrasing—including terms such as "how to," "AI tools," "automation," and "tutorial." Prompt-based image generation further allows precise specification of style, composition, atmosphere, and visual detail.

Third, generative AI appears to strengthen user feedback by increasing visibility and interaction. Descriptive comparisons indicate that AI-related content tends to achieve higher view counts, likes, and engagement metrics in certain platform contexts. Given the absence of revenue data in publicly available open datasets, views, likes, comments, and engagement rate serve as proxies for monetization potential.

6.2. Theoretical and Practical Implications

This paper advances creator economy research by linking generative AI tools to a mechanism-based understanding of digital value creation, tracing the process from AI-assisted production through content presentation to platform feedback. Practically, the findings indicate that creators benefit most when integrating AI across topic selection, content generation, revision, visual design, and feedback analysis—provided such integration is guided by human judgment, audience insight, and platform-specific strategy.

6.3. Limitations and Future Research

This study has three limitations. First, open-source platform data do not provide actual income information, so the analysis focuses on monetization potential rather than direct revenue effects. Second, AI-related content is identified primarily through keywords and textual features, which may introduce classification inaccuracies. Third, platform recommendation algorithms are not fully observable, meaning the results reflect statistical associations rather than strictly causal relationships.

Future research could incorporate creator income records, platform recommendation logs, surveys, interviews, or longitudinal data. Such evidence would help clarify how generative AI influences creators' income structure, work practices, audience engagement, and positioning within digital platform ecosystems.

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