

The Monetization Models of Live Streaming platforms

النماذج الربحية في منصات البث المباشر

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Article Abstract:

This study explores monetization strategies on live streaming platforms through which - the broadcaster/content creator or influencer- earns financial profits from non-traditional sources. These include paid subscriptions for access to exclusive content or special digital privileges, as well as audience support and engagement. Viewers and fans can support streamers by sending virtual gifts, donating, or participating in paid Super-Chat in exchange for streaming or content production. These platforms have thus introduced a new communication model characterized by interactivity, immediacy, and competitiveness.

Key words: Live streaming; Platform Economics; Monetization, Subscribe, Virtual Gifts.

ملخص المقال:

تبحث هذه الدراسة في نماذج تحقيق الدخل على منصات البث المباشر كأدوات جديدة تُضاف إلى الميزات التقنية لمواقع التواصل الاجتماعي، وفي الاستراتيجيات التي يحصل من خلالها -البث/صانع المحتوى أو المؤثر- على أرباح مالية من مصادر غير تقليدية كالاشتراكات المدفوعة من أجل الحصول على محتوى حصري أو بعض الامتيازات الرقمية، ومساهمات المتابعين/المعجبين في دعم وتشجيع البث Streamer من خلال ارسال هدايا افتراضية (Tiktok Live) أو التبرع من خلال العملات الافتراضية (Twitch) أو المشاركة في الدردشة المدفوعة (Youtube) مقابل البث أو إنتاج المحتوى. حيث فرضت هذه المنصات نمطا تواصليا جديدا يتميز بالتفاعلية والآنية والتنافسية.

كلمات مفتاحية: البث المباشر، اقتصاد المنصات، النموذج الربحي، الاشتراك، الهدايا الافتراضية.

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Introduction

Since the emergence of social networking sites in 1997, they have continuously evolved by updating their technical features in order to create an integrated interactive communication sphere with a social nature that suits users' needs. Over time, these developments have enabled their founders to establish monetization models that contribute to the sustainability of these network platforms.

The relationship between the technical and the socio-economic dimension is due to the technical problems experienced by the earliest social media platforms (1997–2002). Because of insufficient storage capacity and slow updates, many platforms failed to continue, especially after a large number of users joined. Therefore, social networking sites that emerged after the first generation of platforms gradually developed their technical infrastructure in a way that allowed a large number of users to join.

As the number of users increases, content production also increases, which in turn leads to the growth of informational capital. This growth affects the profitability of these platforms, as it is linked to increasing revenue sources through advertising spaces provided to advertisers, who, in turn, focus on targeting the appropriate audience.

It is impossible to ignore the profit dimension of social media, as it has always been and continues to be a key accompanying factor influencing the success and spread of any social networking site, alongside the technical dimension, which was also considered a decisive factor in the survival of some platforms. However, after the development of Web 1.0 technologies into Web 2.0 and the emergence of AJAX (*Asynchronous JavaScript and XML*), which enabled greater interaction between users and allowed web pages to load more quickly, many of the technical problems of social networking sites began to disappear.

At the same time, the financial and profit-related challenge became more prominent, as social media seek to generate revenue to ensure their sustainability. The initial approach involved using social media as advertising spaces. A new era of advertising through social networking sites began with Facebook in 2005, while the first advertisement on LinkedIn appeared in 2006 (Mediaradar, 2023).

Although there has been ongoing debate about Facebook's use of user data and its threat to privacy, its advertising system has proven highly beneficial for individuals seeking to grow their new businesses. It has also enabled the targeting of marketing messages to users based on algorithmic inferences about their consumer preferences. Among the biggest beneficiaries have been startups, which typically lack the purchasing power needed to compete with large companies in traditional media such as television and print media. Facebook has allowed these companies to focus their limited resources on targeting customers most likely to be interested in their products (Glibert, 2024).

Beyond using these platforms as advertising spaces, this approach has become almost inevitable, similar to the reliance of traditional media on advertising as a source of revenue. Social networking sites and free online platforms cannot continue without advertising, which is considered the primary source of income for these platforms. Nevertheless, this factor alone remains insufficient, as many social media have also moved toward adopting various technical features and tools that have proven successful in other social media applications.

Each social media is characterized by a specific identity: some focus more on visual content, others are based on text-based content production, while some platforms integrate multiple types of media. In addition, each platform has a certain image among its users, which its founders may not fully recognize until shortly after launch, when they begin to leverage user characteristics to develop their platforms. As a result, these platforms strive to add features that match the preferences of their user base.

In this context, for example, the "Story" feature did not suit users of X (formerly Twitter), and it was discontinued shortly after its use (2020–2021). This feature is considered one of the most popular tools that has spread in recent years across social media applications and has changed the nature of interaction

and content production on networking platforms. The feature of instant “story” posting on social media is not the only feature that has been shared among platform developers. In recent years, many other features have followed, making social media offers a similar interactive communication environment, such as filters, tags, hashtags, Reels, games, and, more recently, **live streaming**.

In this specialization, we can distinguish between two types of platforms. The first type focuses entirely on live streaming as a core feature of the platform, where users are divided into broadcasters/streamers and an audience of followers or fans. TikTok, Twitch, and Kick are some of the examples of this type. The second type consists of platforms that emphasize multiple main features, among which live streaming is considered a secondary feature, such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. In this type of platform, content creators can publish various forms of content (text, articles, images, animated visuals, short videos, advertisements, etc.), and it is not necessary for them to engage in live streaming.

The insistence of social media on continuously updating their technical tools is not driven solely by the need to provide an interactive social environment for their users to prevent them from leaving the platform, but also by their need to develop the economic (monetization) models of their platforms. Just as the “Story” feature, for example, has become associated with digital marketing and the daily promotion of products by digital influencers. The “live streaming” feature has also created innovative economic models in the form of virtual gifts, financial support, and similar mechanisms. Networking platforms have not hesitated to adopt the idea of creating monetization models through live streaming models that may be difficult for some people to understand. Profit is no longer limited to the platform itself but is also generated by the broadcaster, which strongly encourages them to continue.

Based on this perspective, the study addresses the following questions:

- What are live streaming platforms?
- What are the characteristics and types of live streaming platforms? And what is the difference between specialized and non-specialized live streaming platforms?
- What monetization strategies are adopted by live streaming platforms?

1. Definition of concepts:

The economics of live streaming are primarily linked to the economics of social network sites and digital media, which in turn are connected to the economics of traditional media. Therefore, we will define a set of concepts that originate from and surround this field.

1.1 Media Economy:

Albarran previously defined media economics as “*the study of how media industries use scarce resources to produce content that is distributed among consumers in a society to satisfy various wants and needs.*” But, to define the media economy, a broader and more inclusive definition is warranted. Therefore, *the media economy is defined as the study of how media firms and industries function across different levels of activity (e.g., global, national, household, and individual) in tandem with other forces (e.g., globalization, regulation, technology, and social aspects) through the use of theories, concepts, and principles drawn from macroeconomic and microeconomic perspectives* (Albarran, 2010, p. 03).

1.2 Social Media:

Social media has been defined as websites which allow profile creation and visibility of relationships between users; web-based applications which provide functionality for sharing, relationships, group, conversation and profiles. Social media has been referred to as “social media sites, or a set of information technologies which facilitate interactions and networking. However, there appears to be a broad agreement that Web2.0 technologies played a significant role in the development and adoption of social media (Wolf, Sims, & Yang, 2018, p. 04).

The concept of social media encompasses a huge range of communication. It can be defined as a set of relationships, behaviors, feelings, empiricism and the interaction between consumers, brands, in which there is a multidirectional communication, exchange of experience with advanced communication tools.

They are allowing the media to support and implement communication and cognitive needs of man, having a huge impact on the world and active co-creation of information distributed by the media and companies (Mroz-Gorgon & Peszko, 2016, p. 37).

1.3 Live Streaming:

Live streaming has emerged in recent years as a major new topic in media and communication studies, digital sociology, and digital humanities. It entails *the live broadcast of one's activities*, primarily but not exclusively *the play of videogames or engagements with other "geek" activities*. By "geek" in this case we refer to the label for cultures interested in topics such as "comics, gaming and science fiction", who connect through these interests and related endeavors like podcasting, designing costumes, attending conventions, and so forth (Johnson & Woodcock, 2019, p. 02).

Although the term "**live streaming**" broadly describes *the practice of broad-casting live video online*, live streaming itself takes many forms, across a variety of platforms. Often, live streaming broadcasters, or "streamers", stream footage of themselves by appearing on camera or using a camera to broadcast their activities from a first-person perspective. Depending on the streaming platform or event, different live streams may entail different levels of audience interactivity, offering opportunities for viewers to chat, express themselves through emotes, or leave tips. (Brewer, Bo, Cullen, & Persaud, 2023, pp. 6-7).

1.4 Monetization:

The platform enables streamers to generate income. This can take the form of direct payments from the viewer to the streamer, or indirect payments like subscriptions required to view the stream, advertising revenue or marketing and sales of merchandise. This is something that isn't available on the more ubiquitous social media like Facebook Live and Instagram Live. These are the features that make live streaming a curious combination of paid-for content creation and personal connection (Revealing Reality, p. 08).

2. A Brief History of Live Streaming Platforms:

The term "live streaming" or "live broadcast" is frequently used in many fields related to media and communication studies, especially those focusing on live broadcasting in traditional media such as radio and television. However, the aim in this section on the history of live streaming applications is to examine when live streaming began or was first transmitted through web-based applications.

Although live streaming applications are very recent given the highly complex technical features required to support this function, there were many early attempts to enable live streaming via the internet, though not with the same capabilities available today. Accordingly, we can distinguish two main phases in the history of live streaming, the first of which is:

2.1 The Early History of live streaming:

Live streaming originated in the early 1990s with the development of media players that enabled real-time audio and video consumption. The first significant live-streamed events included a music concert and a baseball game, illustrating its potential for global reach in entertainment and sports. A pivotal moment occurred in 1999 with President Bill Clinton's webcast from George Washington University. The launch of YouTube in 2005 transformed the landscape, allowing mass access to live events, followed by the introduction of YouTube Live in 2008. In 2011, Twitch emerged, showcasing live streaming's applicability to video games, further broadened by platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Today, live streaming serves diverse purposes, including communication and marketing, and has significantly evolved from its early days (Castr, 2024).

The second phase in the modern history of live streaming is represented by its emergence on social media and its association with their practices.

2.2 Live Streaming in The Modern Era:

Live streaming has evolved significantly, particularly with the advent of Content Delivery Networks (CDNs), which enhance streaming efficiency by allowing multiple networks to be utilized simultaneously. A major trend is multi-streaming, enabling broadcasts on various platforms such as Twitch, YouTube, and

Facebook, making events accessible to a wider audience. Latency issues have largely been addressed with ultra-low latency technology, improving viewer experience. Additionally, prerecording videos for a live presentation has gained popularity, facilitating better preparation. Monetization models now exist to support content creators through ads, subscriptions, and viewer donations. Overall, live streaming has become an essential element of modern internet culture (Castr, 2024).

3. Characteristics of Live Streaming

Live streaming on social media is characterized by a set of features that may not be found in pre-recorded content such as texts, images, and videos. Such content remains relatively fixed once published in the digital space, allowing users or followers to access it at any time in its original form.

In contrast, live streaming closely resembles live broadcasting in traditional media. Users usually schedule a specific time for their audience, and any missed content cannot be revisited except through recordings that are later collected and shared by followers or fans. For this reason, some researchers argue that live streaming on social media shares many characteristics with reality television programs. Accordingly, from an economic perspective, the characteristics of live streaming can be summarized as follows: (Peng, 2023, pp. 260-261)

3.1 High Interaction: High Interaction in live-streaming marketing allows customers to consult with anchors about product details and experience them through trials, differentiating it from traditional online shopping that relies solely on images and videos.

3.2 Users' Demand Being Satisfied: Demand is a key factor driving output growth, particularly in social communication via the internet. Users turn to platforms like Weibo and WeChat to interact, express, and showcase themselves, finding traditional media inadequate in fulfilling their communication needs. Network broadcasts offer rich, relatable content that is timely, enhancing user experience and satisfaction. This sociability not only meets social needs but also stimulates the desire for consumption among netizens.

3.3 Including a Wide Range of Participants: Live streaming marketing enables wide participation from diverse individuals without significant restrictions on various factors such as time and place. With basic connectivity, participants can become either anchors or consumers. The rise of "we-media" challenges traditional "elite media," allowing for a more equitable information dissemination process. Modern theories suggest audiences are active co-creators of content, moving away from elite-controlled media due to social and technological advancements, while facilitating the expression of the general populace's views.

From a sociological perspective, the researchers (Wohn & Freeman, 2019) argue that live streaming is characterized as a unique new interactive medium that combines real-time interaction with chat channels. Live streaming also functions as a "third community" and an interactive space that reshapes social engagement. It enables virtual "third places" that bring together entertainment, participation, and informal communication, creating a sense of authenticity and intimacy.

4. Types of Live Streaming Platforms:

When discussing live streaming platforms, two main types can be distinguished. The first consists of platforms that are primarily based on streaming, which means that the user's main activity is either broadcasting or watching live streams, such as Twitch and Kick. These dedicated live streaming platforms have experienced significant growth in recent years as a new mode of communication among users. For example, the number of performers who stream live on Twitch daily reaches around 500,000 people.

The second type includes other social media platforms that offer live streaming as a secondary feature alongside other primary features such as visual or textual content creation, including platforms like Instagram and Facebook.

Thus, live streaming platforms are more than just Twitch. Although live streaming is currently closely associated with Twitch.tv, it is also available on: (Brewer, Bo, Amanda, & Christopher, 2023)

- **Social networking and sharing sites:** YouTube, Facebook, and X (Twitter), as well as Instagram, where users can broadcast live video to viewers.
- **Global platforms:** such as AfreecaTV in South Korea and Chinese streaming services.
- **Community-based platforms:** such as Discord.
- **Platforms related to the economy of emotions and digital intimacy.**

The broadcaster on live streaming platforms or social media has the freedom to choose the topic of the stream, which is often based either on the broadcaster's personality and conversations, content creation, or areas of personal interest. In this context, a very popular field associated with live streaming is gaming, where live streaming platforms have increasingly shifted toward broadcasting video games in real time. This field has gained widespread popularity on the web, especially on the Twitch platform.

Other platforms such as YouTube and Facebook have also adopted dedicated spaces for gaming within live streaming, known as Gaming Live. Accordingly, there are many platforms that rely on live streaming, where the topic of the stream can be random, specialized in a specific subject, or focused on video games, as will be seen in the following platform examples.

4.1 Justin.Tv 2007 :

One of the most prominent video platforms is **Justin.tv**, which was launched in 2007 by **Justin Kan**, who broadcasted details of his personal life. This contributed to the platform's success and to the spread of the term "**life-casting**". Later, Kan launched **Twitch.tv**, which focused on **live video game streaming** and became one of the world's leading platforms in this field, ranking 77th globally according to Alexa.

In China, the years between 2014 and 2016 witnessed a significant growth in the emergence of live streaming applications and platforms, to the extent that 2016 became known as the "**year of live streaming**" in China. Some streams attracted millions of viewers, such as the live broadcast of Chinese swimmer *Fu Yuanhui* after the Rio Olympics (Zhu, Zhi , & Yafei , 2017).

The Justin.tv platform is considered the initial version of Twitch, as it was based on a different concept of live streaming known as *life-casting*. Life-casting refers to the real-time broadcasting of an individual's daily life, routines, and experiences through digital media, often using wearable technologies or live streaming applications. In contrast, modern live streaming platforms mainly focus on delivering content through a dedicated studio setup for the broadcaster. Only a small group of creators focus on lifestyle-based live streaming, such as Speed, the creator of the YouTube channel *IShowSpeed*, who is considered one of the most well-known influencers in the field of life-casting.

4.2 Twitch 2011 :

In 2011, a platform called Twitch began live streaming video games. This achieved tremendous success and demonstrated that live streaming was no longer limited to traditional broadcasting media such as music and sports, but could also be used for video games, a form of entertainment enjoyed by millions of people worldwide. Over the years, other social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram introduced live streaming features, which further increased its popularity and widespread use (Castr, 2024).

With the launch of Twitch, gamers gained a way to showcase their content to a live audience. In 2015, YouTube launched "YouTube Gaming" as a step to compete with Twitch. However, after Amazon and Alphabet (Google) acquired Twitch and YouTube respectively, the role of large corporations in transforming entertainment and gaming into an integrated neoliberal industry became more evident. At the same time, esports organizations such as Luminosity Gaming emerged, beginning to sign professional or rising players for team-based games such as League of Legends or Overwatch.

For example, the well-known player Tyler Blevins, known as Ninja, earns around \$500,000 per month from Twitch, in addition to other income from various social media platforms (Guarriello, 2019, p. 02).

4.3 Live Gaming on Youtube 2013 :

Although YouTube is an older platform, live streaming has become an increasingly important feature for its users, especially in the gaming field. YouTube Gaming displays nearly all live streams on its main interface without clear differentiation based on the number of viewers or subscribers. For example, a live channel with 150 viewers may appear alongside another channel with 15,000 viewers on the same page. This presentation approach allows users to discover new channels and gives smaller content creators the opportunity to reach a wider audience (Guarriello, 2019, p. 04).

4.4 TikTok Live 2019 :

TikTok is considered the most popular live streaming platform in the Arab world, as live streaming sessions (known as “gifts battles” or “rounds”) attract a large number of viewers. These rounds are sometimes organized randomly or intentionally between platform users (broadcasters/streamers), who compete with one another by relying on audience support to determine the winner.

To be eligible for a live match on TikTok, content creators must be over 18 years old and have at least 1,000 followers.⁹ During the five-minute match, competitors aim to gather the most match points. These points come as gifts from the audience. To send gifts, users purchase TikTok coins from the designated section of the app encircled in Fig. 1b. Each coin corresponds to 0.013€ and is equivalent to one match point. Gifts range from one coin to 44,999 coins. Contrary to TikTok videos, once the matches are finished, they are no longer visible on the creators’ profile. Content creators initiate matches spontaneously without any scheduling or oversight from TikTok. Users can only become aware of ongoing matches by enabling notifications for their favorite content creators¹⁰ or by stumbling upon the match randomly while browsing the platform. Unlike other entertainment platforms like YouTube, videos on TikTok do not have titles. Similarly, matches lack clear topics, causing users to refer to them by naming the content creators (Schlögel, 2024, p. 12).

4.5 Douyu.com 2014 :

Founded in 2014, Douyu.com is now one of the biggest online live-streaming websites in China, ranks 288th popular in the world and 42nd popular in China by Alexa rank. It has on average over 7 million UV and over 66 million PV a day. It is a comprehensive live-streaming website, the broadcasted content includes computer games, outdoor activities, people’s daily lives, singing and dancing, popular stars and commercial events. Among them computer games occupy a very big proportion. People who broadcast are called **streamers or broadcasters**, every streamer has a single web page in this website named **channel**, those who watch these channels are **viewers** (Zhu, Zhi , & Yafei , 2017, p. 275).

Douyu.com labels different channels according to their contents. There are five big categories defined by Douyu.com: (Zhu, Zhi , & Yafei , 2017, p. 279)

PC Games, Mobile Games, Entertainment & Activities (including singing, dancing, music, outdoor activities, comics and so on), Technology and Art & Sports (including educational videos, old movies, sports and so on).

5. Monetization Strategies on Live Streaming Platforms:

Live streaming platforms operate and sustain themselves by creating monetization (economic) models. Their sources of income differ from the traditional revenue sources of social media platforms, which are mainly based on advertising something that is not the focus of this study. Instead, live streaming platforms rely on a set of innovative revenue-generation models, which vary from one platform to another. These include several monetization mechanisms such as **subscriptions, virtual gifts, virtual currencies, challenges, competitions, games, and others.**

Strategy	Monetization strategies and features
Subscribing	Recurring payment to streamers, several levels of value, central to income for most streamers, diverse chat icons
Donating / Cheering	Individual monetary offerings to streamers, outside platform, and within platform, potentially unlimited, one-off, diverse chat icons
Advertising	Adverts for relevant products, tie-ins with other media items, personalized advertising, platform integration
Sponsorships	Connections with games companies, and with other companies, broadcasting of sponsored content, strategic choices of sponsors
Competitions / Targets	Goals for money, goals for viewer interaction, viewers trying to outdo each other, encouragement of competition and cooperation
Unpredictable rewards	Unpredictable outcomes for monetary support, animations or sounds which sometimes play
Channel games	Programming and coding, text-based games, money as a gameplay mechanic, creativity from streamers

Figure (01) represents the monetization strategies of the Twitch platform (Johnson & Woodcock, 2019, p. 04)

5.1 Subscribing :

The central monetization method for Twitch is subscribing, or "*subbing*", which requires streamers to be "*partnered*" or "*affiliated*." Viewers can subscribe to a streamer's channel for monthly payments of US\$4.99 (Tier 1), US\$9.99 (Tier 2), or US\$24.99 (Tier 3), receiving benefits such as custom emotes and badges (Johnson & Woodcock, 2019, pp. 3-4).

In the same context, a new monetization model has emerged that is now adopted by many social media platforms in the field of subscriptions. What was previously free simply following a channel or account has evolved into a paid subscription model used to access exclusive content, as offered by platforms such as YouTube and Instagram.

Researchers explain that users' tendency to subscribe in order to access specific content is driven by a desire to enhance their social status within the audience of a particular influencer or content creator, as well as to obtain badges that distinguish them from others. These subscriptions represent a source of income for both the broadcaster and the platform. Although the number of paid subscribers remains relatively small in this model (e.g., channel subscriptions or chat subscriptions), and the subscription fees are generally low, this revenue stream still contributes at least to supporting the content creator's livelihood.

Kevin Kelly's "*1,000 True Fans*" theory states that: To be a successful creator, one does not need millions; only thousands of true fans are necessary. A true fan is someone who is willing to buy everything you produce. This dedicated support allows creators like artists, musicians, and authors to earn a living, provided they are satisfied with a modest income rather than seeking vast wealth (Kelly, 2008).

In addition to paying for subscriptions to a specific channel or account, live streaming also offers chat-based subscriptions. This involves paying to pin a specific comment in the live chat during a stream, a practice known as "*The monetization of Interaction*". This feature is available on YouTube through Super Chat, which represents a form of attention-based economy. In this system, the channel owner gives special attention and priority to paid messages in the chat, where emotion and interaction are transformed into a commodity (Guarriello, 2019).

5.2 Donating and cheering :

Donating and cheering on Twitch provide streamers with methods to monetize their content. Originally, donations occurred outside the platform using PayPal, allowing non-partner and non-affiliate streamers to monetize their streams without partnership status. Donations, however, are taxable. Twitch later introduced "bits," an in-platform currency that viewers can buy and use to "cheer" on stream, directly rewarding streamers. This method simplifies the donation process, encouraging viewer engagement and potentially increasing streamer revenue. The platform benefits by capturing donations and altering its relationship with PayPal, enhancing monetization opportunities for itself and streamers alike (Johnson & Woodcock, 2019, p. 04).

Taylor refers to what are known as **"donation trains"**, a continuous sequence of donations that occur during a live stream which represent a form of collective support for the broadcaster. These donations can sometimes disrupt the flow of the session and may distract the broadcaster from the main content (Schlögel, 2024). In live streaming culture, it is common for the broadcaster to pause their discussion to thank a viewer who has supported or donated to them. This phenomenon is academically referred to as the attention economy.

5.3 Virtual Gifts :

The gift system on TikTok is considered one of the major sources of revenue. Viewers purchase virtual gifts from the platform and send them to the broadcaster during live streaming sessions. This gift system is quite similar to the donation and support system on Twitch; the differences lie mainly in terminology, which varies according to the platform's culture and its users. In addition, streamers can exchange gifts among themselves to support one another or to fulfill certain challenges and obligations that arise during gameplay sessions.

Dolfsma et al. note that gift exchange plays a vital role in the construction of social networks, gifts may be used to initiate, maintain or sever relationships with individuals or groups. Frequent gift or favor exchange leads to positive emotions and uncertainty reduction which in turn, generates cohesion and commitment to exchange relations (Dolfsma, Eijk, & Jolink, 2008, p. 318).

The Chinese platform *Douyu* allows users to purchase and send virtual gifts, with prices ranging from 0.1 to 500 yuan (RMB). When a viewer sends a gift, its information is automatically displayed in the chat window for all participants to see. If the gift is of high value (for example, 100 yuan or more), its icon is displayed directly on the main screen alongside the live stream. The icons become more elaborate and distinctive as the value of the gift increases (Zhu, Zhi , & Yafei , 2017).

5.4 Competitions and Targets :

The fourth monetization strategy for Twitch streamers involves competitions and donation targets. Streamers often display donation progress towards a target, incentivizing viewers with rewards such as animations or personal acknowledgments for different donation levels. Competitions come in several forms, including raffles for prizes or opportunities to play with streamers, and the **"Top Donor"** display enhances viewer engagement by encouraging donations through a competitive format (Johnson & Woodcock, 2019, pp. 6-7).

TikTok differs from Twitch in encouraging viewers to send gifts to streamers through competitive gameplay in two-player or four-player rounds between broadcasters. This creates competition among them to achieve victory within a short period of time. What motivates users to follow and support these rounds is the competitive aspect and the desire to gain a distinguished status among the broadcaster and their audience, as supporters' names appear in a ranking list based on the number of points they have contributed. In some Arab communities, a set of challenges has also emerged, where the loser of a round must carry out a task requested by the winner, which creates a competitive atmosphere that attracts and engages viewers.

5.5 Channel Games :

Channel games on Twitch represent a unique monetization strategy, enabling viewers to engage with streamers through playful competition and participation. An example is the **"Bit Boss"** extension, where donors compete to become the Boss by donating Bits, Twitch's virtual currency. This gamified approach



turns donations into interactive experiences, fostering connections between viewers and streamers. Such innovations, often created by fans rather than Twitch itself, showcase the platform's flexibility and the creativity of its users (Johnson & Woodcock, 2019, p. 8).

On TikTok, a set of challenges is also well known, where the broadcaster assigns viewers a collective task to accumulate a certain number of points through repeated and continuous tapping. This action is free of charge, but it serves as a key driver for the spread of any live stream upon its launch and increases the likelihood of the stream appearing to a broader audience of genuine fans, who may then send paid gifts

Conclusion:

The field of social networking platform economics is considered one of the most recent research areas and is closely connected to several other disciplines, including digital economics, digital sociology, and digital media. These fields contribute to the conceptual and theoretical foundation of monetization models within social media platforms, particularly live streaming platforms. The latter are regarded as among the most innovative and creative digital applications in terms of revenue generation, and they are currently among the most widely used and popular platforms.

Live streaming platforms have not abandoned traditional sources of revenue such as advertising and sponsorship. On the contrary, these sources continue to grow, as advertising is now closely integrated into much of the digital content circulating on social media. In some cases, it has become either highly visible or embedded within marketing content produced by creators in direct collaboration with advertisers, an activity that does not always generate direct financial returns for the platforms themselves.

However, this study highlights a new monetization model that is clearly evident in live streaming platforms, which have created new ways to generate nontraditional revenue through a set of strategies, including paid subscriptions, paid chat features, virtual gifts, and virtual currencies, etc. These sources are not exhaustive, as some live streaming platforms are moving toward creating additional revenue methods, such as introducing challenges, games, and competitions, and monetizing them.

Despite the fact that such practices may conflict with the ethical standards of some digital platforms, there is a growing trend among certain platforms to adopt them, including gambling-related features on platforms such as *Kick*. This issue is considered one of the most controversial topics in the current platform economy.

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