



ASHESI UNIVERSITY

MAKE THE LIKES COUNT: DEVELOPING BUSINESS MODELS FOR GHANAIAN
CONTENT CREATORS.

By

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Undergraduate dissertation submitted to the Department of Business Administration,
Ashesi University. Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of
Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration

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April 2021

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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I hereby declare that the presentation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by Ashesi University.

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Supervisor's Name: Dr. Gordon Adomdza

Date: April 27, 2021

Acknowledgements

I am more than grateful to God for the strength and grace to see this paper to the very end, because it truly was not an easy thing to do. I am especially proud of myself because I did it. There were times when I thought I was going to give up, but I pepped myself up really quick and got it done. Special thanks to my family, particularly my parents, for constantly checking on me to make sure I was okay and always rooting for me and celebrating the small wins.

To all my friends who constantly cheered me on and reminded me of the end goal, we did it! Thank you to Nina Pels, Antoinette Okyere and Eben Gwumah for all the encouraging messages and treats when I was having a hard time getting through this final year. And to Frances, I hope I made you proud. Thank you, Dr Adomdza, for agreeing to be my supervisor at the very last minute. Thank you for all the last-minute meetings and all the advice. I appreciate it. And to all the participants who helped me put this paper together, I am more than grateful.

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship has taken on a new dimension with creatives finding innovative ways of using digital content to create and meet needs of businesses and consumers. The digital content creation industry is fairly new yet rapidly growing all over the world. From sponsored collaborations to earning money on niche-specific content, digital content creators have established various means of earning sustainable income from the content they share. With the emergence of social media influencers and popular content creators, there has been an increasing interest in joining the lucky few. However, there is no established procedure to becoming a successful and high-earning content creator, especially not in Ghana.

The objectives of this study are to understand the current state of the digital content creation industry in Ghana, including challenges faced by industry players and identify the fundamentals of a business model for Ghanaian content creators. In order to achieve this, ten content creators in Accra across five niches were interviewed to understand what practicing and eventually monetizing their content is like. The interview also sought to identify challenges they faced in their career and how they thought a business model would contribute to being more successful. The study concluded on a canvas that serves as a rubric for developing business models for Ghanaian content creators since a one-size-fits-all model could not be developed in the duration of the study.

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List of abbreviations

SMI – Social media influencer

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

While it could be argued that social media is a relatively new phenomenon, it is undoubtedly one of the fastest evolving digital spaces that has become a huge and important part of our world today. Businesses all over the world have realized the importance of keeping abreast with the developing trends of their society and have found ways of doing that by integrating social media into their operations. However, in recent times, people all around the world have realized the possibility of creating an entire career from the use of social media. From social media strategists to digital marketing consultants, people have found a way to earn a living through social media. A more recent development in social media is full time digital content creators who dedicate their time and efforts to creating content for various social media platforms and for specific niches, ranging from technology, through travel to lifestyle.

Background

Although the first social networking sites were launched in the late 90s, social media only became a relevant and essential part of our society circa 2004. In 2019, about 3.5 billion of the world's population was online (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019), meaning they were on at least one social media platform and consumed content from these sites or created and uploaded content to these platforms. This paved the way for the domination of user generated content and resulted in the deviation from traditional media forms such as newspaper, television, and radio among certain demographics.

UGC refers to any form of information or digital content created by the users of the various digital platforms. These digital platforms include, but are not restricted to, YouTube, Instagram and blogs. The content can take the form of audio, image, video, or text (Naab & Sehl, 2017). In the early days of social media, UGC was voluntarily shared without the expectation of any direct compensation. However, the digital content space today has taken a turn with most of the users of these platforms hoping to monetize the content they share on their platforms.

It is important to note that there has not been an agreed term used to describe people who create digital content for the various social media platforms. Some of these terms are social media influencer (SMI), digital content creator and micro-celebrity. However, for the purpose of this research, content creators will represent all creators who create digital content for various social media platforms with the aim of monetizing their content. SMI is usually reserved for successful content creators who have been able to monetize their content and depend entirely on their income from content creation (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey and Freberg, 2010).

Social media has become especially more relevant in 2020 due to the outbreak of the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). With measures such as social distancing and lockdowns put in place to control the spread of the virus, internet users turned to social media to keep themselves entertained and connected with friends and family they could not see. Social media also played a huge role in disseminating information about the virus at a faster rate to more people. TikTok, a video sharing app, recorded an all-time high in downloads in the first quarter of 2020, at the start of the pandemic (Langford, 2020). This meant new creators and consumers joined the app and provided an

opportunity for users to monetize the content they shared on the platform. Particularly in the early days of the pandemic, TikTok content creators earned up to \$150,000 and currently earn about \$100,000 on average for a successful brand collaboration (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2020).

Research Problem

Content creation is becoming a very lucrative job for many people all around the world, however, it is not as popular a job in Ghana that pays as well as other content creators in other countries. The world is heavily dependent on social media now and Ghana leaves a gold mine untapped if the opportunities that content creation possesses are not discovered and utilized to their full potential. The paper aims at understanding the challenges in Ghana's digital content industry - ranging from challenges in setting up as a creator to challenges faced in monetizing and scaling in Ghana. It also aims at bridging the gap between content creators and steady growth in their career by exploring the possibility of business models providing industry players a more definite structure for scaling.

Research Objectives

1. Understand the creative processes of Ghanaian content creators
2. Understand challenges Ghanaian content creators face in scaling and monetizing their content
3. Identify the fundamentals of a business model for Ghanaian content creators

Research Questions

1. What is the creative process Ghanaian content creators go through to produce their work?
2. What challenges do they face in practicing their craft?
3. What steps do they follow scaling their career?
4. How beneficial would a business model be to Ghanaian content creators?
5. What would a business model for Ghanaian content creators look like?

Relevance of Study

Seeing the monetary potential that content creation possesses, it is essential that Ghanaians explore how best they can exploit the benefits of a monetizing digital content. In 2020, Fox News reported that some social media influencers make up to \$250,000 on a sponsored post (Conklin, 2020). With content creators such as Dimma Umeh, Lydia Dinga and Nella Rose earning up to five million US dollars from content creation, exploring a framework that could potentially provide Ghanaian content creators with this opportunity would be beneficial to the industry and the economy at large. The Ghanaian content creation industry is relatively new with very few full-time content creators earning as close to what content creators in other parts of the world earn. This study is especially relevant because it could potentially result in a more definite framework that Ghanaian content creators can follow in scaling their career.

Methodology

The study was a mixed method research which incorporated surveys and semi-structured interviews. The responses of the survey - popular content genres among Ghanaian consumers- partly informed the choice of participants for the study.

Participants of the study were chosen on a convenience basis according to the popular genres indicated by the survey responses. The study involved ten content creators located in Accra. Due to COVID-19 social distancing protocols, the interviews were conducted via video calls using Zoom and Google Meets. Secondary data was also used in the course of the study to create a comparison between the digital content industry in Ghana and other parts of the world.

Outline of Thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction

The chapter gives background information on the research topic and paints the general picture of what the thesis is about. It highlights the research problem the thesis aims at investigating and the significance of the research. This chapter states the objectives and research questions that would aid in investigating the research topic. It also highlights the methodology that would be employed in conducting research for the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The second chapter discusses already existing knowledge on the research topic and the extent to which there is available literature relevant to the topic. It forms the basis for developing other theories, clearly establishing what is already known about the topic and the gaps in the existing literature that the thesis attempts to fill.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research process that was carried out in the research. It states selection criteria for the sample of the study. It makes mention of the type of research conducted the sources of data used in the research and the steps involved in obtaining the data. The limitations encountered in the process of this study are also highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings and Data Analysis

Chapter 4 lists the findings from the data gathered over the course of the research and provides an analysis of these findings. It reports the results of the data gathering process and theories developed from the analysis of these findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendation

The final chapter makes conclusions from the data gathered and how well they provided answers to the research questions. It includes how well this thesis has filled the gap that existing literature on the topic has not filled. It also states any recommendations made to contribute towards the discovery of the most efficient business model for content creators in Ghana.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of existing literature

This chapter assesses existing literature on digital content creation and entrepreneurship and how they inform the development of a business model for Ghanaian digital content creators. To accurately contribute to the development of this business model, the literature review will focus primarily on the concept of creative entrepreneurship and digital content creation. The review will also include how digital content can be monetized as well as how business models can aid in monetization. It is also necessary to investigate possible factors that have contributed to the success of content creators who have been able to monetize in the industry, be they intrinsic or extrinsic. While there is existing literature on various aspects of social media in Ghana, such as digital marketing or the use of social media among tertiary students, there is none particularly addressing what the digital content creation industry is like in Ghana, and the many facets of this budding industry. This paves way for the relevance of this paper – to contribute to the development of a business model for Ghanaian content creators.

Understanding creative entrepreneurship

The relationship between digital content creators and the business of monetizing their content is well represented by the concept of creative entrepreneurship. Creative entrepreneurship is the creation and exploitation of intellectual property in creative industries such as advertising, publishing and digital media (DCMS, 2001). The creative industries, in recent years, have grown to form a very integral part of society. Since the 1990s, these industries have been recognized as one of the fastest growing industry sectors and are now regarded as central to the success of some of the most developed or

advanced countries (Henry, 2007). In the 21st century, creative entrepreneurship has taken new forms with the internet playing a huge role in its evolution. The advent of the internet and eventually social media has birthed the concept of digital content creation and even that, in itself, has evolved. While it differs from the traditional forms of creative entrepreneurship, such as film, music and art, the underlying concept of creating and exploiting intellectual property remains the core of digital content creation. What started off as a means of simply connecting with people around the world and sharing information with them has blossomed into a lucrative industry that has committed players earning a sustainable income from it (Kanwar & Taprial, 2017).

Creative entrepreneurship today has transcended beyond traditional art, music and film to include digital artists, e-book writers and social media influencers, all thanks to the Internet. Digital content creators are best categorized under creative content producer entrepreneurs according to Bojur and Avalsicai's classifications of creative entrepreneurs (2014). The other classifications of creative entrepreneurs according to Bojur and Avalsicai are creative service providers entrepreneurs, creative experience providers entrepreneurs and creative originals producers entrepreneurs (Bojur and Avalsicai, 2014). Some examples of creative content producers entrepreneurs listed were film production companies, books and magazine publishers and music labels. While digital content creators were not listed under this type of creative entrepreneurship, the main characteristics of said type describe digital content creators - producers of intellectual products who are highly influenced by digitization for creation and user interaction.

Content creator or social media influencer?

A lot of internet users have resorted to calling every content creator a social media influencer (SMI) (Gomez, 2019). The novelty of the digital content industry has left users and scholars undecided on what exactly the industry players are called. Examining what they do and how they earn their influencer or creator status in the industry may, perhaps, aid in establishing a more consensual name for the various players in the digital content space.

YouTube, one of the leading platforms worldwide (Tankovska, 2021) uses ‘digital content creator’ in referring to people who upload and monetize YouTube content via the YouTube partnership program. Gomez (2019) suggests that this is an indicator of the industry term that should be used for all users who produce and post content, regardless of their ability to monetize or capture attention. Social media influencers, on the other hand, are content creators who have built social capital for themselves and are able to influence the behaviours and habits of their community of followers (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey and Freberg, 2010). It can then be concluded that all social media influencers can be referred to as [digital] content creators but not all content creators have the social capital to be referred to as social media influencers. For the purpose of this study, ‘content creators’ will refer to all digital content creators and social media influencers

Digital content takes the form of audio, videos, images, graphics or texts and are distributed over a myriad of platforms. Instagram, Facebook and YouTube are the leading media sharing sites (Tankovska, 2021) and are skewed towards visual content. Streaming platforms such as Apple Podcasts and Spotify serve as hosting platforms for audio digital

content such as podcasts and web-hosting sites such as Wordpress.com are better suited for blogs and websites.

Becoming a successful content creator

Fairchild (2007) uses the term attention economy to describe the state of the digital world today. In a media and information saturated world, attention has become the most valuable currency (Fairchild, 2007). This is especially true for content creators because the level of success in the industry is highly dependent on the amount of attention, they are able to draw with their content. In today's digital world, social capital, which precedes economic capital, determines the value of potential brand endorsements and further monetization opportunities for creators (Zulli, 2018). What is not set in stone is the particular process by which content creators can build this social capital for themselves. There are however some habits and practices that Gomez (2019) attributes success in this field to.

The illusion that everyone can become a successful social media influencer has resulted in an infiltration of the content creation space and as such, determined content creators need to have a unique selling point (USP) that distinguishes them from the mass of quick fame-seekers. Content consumption in today's world has come down to quickly glancing at large amounts of content in very short periods of time without being fixated on one thing for too long (Zulli, 2018). This requires content creators to either create a distinctive self-brand with captivating content or, as Khamis, Ang, & Welling (2017) put it, die. Self-brand here refers to marketing by an individual to create a unique public identity that represents their values, beliefs or offering. Content creators must also have a defined strategy based on audience segmentation and interests as well as a consistent

visual identity (Hou, 2018). Finally, they should be able to engage with their community of followers (Khamis et al., 2017). The core message is to create a unique impression with users within a very short period of time in order to gain some form of sustainable public recognition.

Converting social capital to economic value.

Creative industries have been known to make significant contributions to the economic growth of economies in the Western world. In 2007, the creative industries in the UK were valued at £56.5 billion, accounting for 8% of the British economy (NESTA, 2006). Digital content creation was very new then and so it is expected that contributions of creative industries to Western world economies would have increased significantly. In Africa, the same cannot be said as Schultz & Van Gelder (2008) point out how underutilized creative industries in Africa are. The Ghanaian music industry was speculated to generate \$53 million from the world music market if the right conditions in Ghana existed to support its growth (Schultz & Van Gelder, 2008). Governments around the world have realized the potential of creative industries to boost their economies and have made efforts to create policies that support the industry (Bujor & Avasilcai, 2014). The digital content industry in Ghana would see a significant level of growth if the legal system institutes policies that facilitate the protection and appropriate compensation of Ghanaian creatives.

Social media as a platform for content creation has become particularly popular because it has evolved into a source of income for a good number of content creators. Bloggers in the United States of America make an average annual salary of \$38,440 with some earning as high as \$80,000 (ZipRecruiter, 2020). Bloomberg reports that some of

the highest-ranking podcasts in the world make more than \$1 million a year in revenue (Smith, 2019). The ten highest YouTubers between June 2018 and June 2019 brought in a total of \$162 million (Berg, 2019.). In an article published in 2018 (Webhostingvoice, 2018), Ghanaian blogs like Pulse and Ghana News make about \$20,000 dollars a month but this is far from the average income bloggers in Ghana earn on a monthly basis. The average income made by Ghanaian bloggers, according to the article, ranged from \$100 to \$10,000. The disparity in figures makes it evident that Ghanaian content creators are not earning as much as content creators in other parts of the world. It must also be pointed that it is challenging to paint an accurate picture of the income levels of Ghanaian content creators because of the lack of adequate and reliable documentation.

Content creation is growing into a more lucrative job around the world as time goes on, primarily for the fact a growing number of people, especially between the ages of 18 and 34, would rather be entrepreneurs or self-employed than work a regular nine to five job (Duffy, 2017). The job culture has evolved tremendously, and more people aspire to be more in control of their work life, which is typically not the case for full time employees. Given the evolution of social media and its ability to pay dedicated users, more people see it as a good opportunity to earn a living without having to do the traditional nine-to-five job. More people are growing interested in how to monetize social media content. An even larger number of them are looking for something along the lines of a formula that would help them make money like other successful content creators, and as soon as possible, if they find a way to.

It is easier to point out the avenues by which content creators are able to monetize their content as against crafting out a guide to monetizing, given the available literature.

YouTube has a partnership program that allows its creators to start making money from their videos when they have 1,000 subscribers and 4,000 hours of watch time within a span of one year (YouTube Creator Academy, 2018). TikTok also has a monetization program called TikTok Creator Marketplace that provides consistent content creators the chance to get paid for their posts on the platform (TikTok Help Center, 2021). Platforms such as Instagram and Twitter do not directly offer content creators monetization opportunities. Content creators on such platforms usually make their money from product placements, inserted ads by platform providers, and product reviews (Kopf, 2020). Other less direct ways content creators make money are running courses based on the niche of their audience, hosting events or paid appearances. However, these are only options for content creators who have typically gained influencer status. While platforms like YouTube spell out the requirements to monetize content created on the platform, there is still no tried and tested way of meeting those requirements within a certain time.

The business side of things

The goal for most content creators is to monetize their content and eventually be able to depend entirely on the income their digital content creation career generates. Successful content creators need to adopt business practices in their career to create a social media presence that can be commercialized (Hou, 2018). Being able to monetize digital content appears more accessible to people now but the democratization of success is a myth (Turner, 2013). It is not enough to simply create a YouTube or Instagram account and anticipate success. Content creators must adopt business strategies and work ethics that complement the creator's ability and special skills. The interest of the audience

needs to be sustained overtime to make a content creator capable of generating income from their content (Gomez, 2019).

What is not readily available to any new content creator is a defined process or structure made up of best practices that they can follow from the first day of their career until they eventually monetize their content for the first time. A lot of content creators in Ghana fall under Virginie's (2020) category of amateurs and aspire to grow into opportunists. Virginie defines amateurs as creators with a fortress career profile who do not depend on social media for their collaborations. What they eventually intend on being is opportunists, content creators whose main activity is on social media and usually secure their incomes by establishing long-term partnerships with brands (Virginie, 2020).

A good place to start from is to have a business model that clearly outlines all the necessary elements of the creative enterprise that is digital content creation. Linder and Cantrell (2000) define a business model as a company's core logic for creating and capturing value. Osterwalder, Pigneur and Tucci (2005) define a business model as a company's description of the value it offers its several customer segments as well as the architecture of the company and the network of partners that help create, market and deliver said value in order to generate profitable and sustainable revenue streams. They are powerful tools for analyzing, implementing and communicating strategic choices (Shafer, Smith and Linder, 2005). Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010) developed a business model canvas (BMC) that included nine building blocks to aid businesses map out the various components of their business and make an informed decision in settling on an appropriate business model for their business. The building blocks of the business model canvas are key partners, key activities, key resources, value propositions, customer

relationships, channels, customer segments, cost structure and revenue streams. These building blocks were based on four areas of business operation - infrastructure management, product, customer interface and financial aspects (Carter and Carter, 2020). The main objective of this theory is to aid customers move beyond a product-centric thinking towards a business model thinking. The availability of something similar tailored to Ghanaian content creators could help map out the necessary areas that contribute towards monetizing digital content.

A variety of business models have developed over time and in one way or another have one of the BMC building blocks at the core of the model. Some examples of business models include the advertising model where companies are set up in a way that they are paid for attracting users and the freemium business model which offers the basic versions of product offerings to customers for free with the anticipation that they will be persuaded to pay for the premium version of that offering (McGrath, 2010). An advertising business model focuses primarily on revenue streams whereas a freemium model is more centered around the value proposition customers gain from the business.

Business models offer structure to business ventures and allow them to critically analyze and take decisions that contribute to the growth of the enterprise. While it is not guaranteed, the probability of long-term success increases with the rigor and formality with which an organization tests its strategic options through a business model (Shafer et al., 2005). Business models are especially important for businesses in experimental or novel fields as they evaluate and control the implications of the strategic moves made by a business (Shafer et al., 2005), something the Ghanaian digital content industry could benefit from.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This research aimed at understanding the experiences of Ghanaian content creators in order to identify the fundamentals of a business model specific to their needs. This study aimed at discovering firsthand information on what the creative and monetization process was like for a select number of content creators while highlighting the challenges they faced in the process. The essence of such information was to enable a better visualization of what a relevant and appropriate business model would like for Ghanaian content creators. The data for the research included a literature review, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The research was treated as a mixed method exploratory research.

Approach

This research will be approached from an inductive research approach because it involves developing a hypothesis the research aims at testing and then developing a research strategy to test this hypothesis. Developing a research strategy will involve studying already existing literature to identify what is already known about this topic and better conclude on the existing gaps that this paper can fill. This will also provide substantial information on which relationships between the variables can be drawn and help verify the hypothesis. This approach is very appropriate for this research because the paper aims at exploring the benefits of a business model for content creators and then proceeds to find information that will help conclude on these benefits, if any.

An exploratory study is a valuable means of finding out ‘what is happening; to seek new insights: to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light’ (Robson 2002). This approach is appropriate for this research because there has not been specific research conducted on the digital content industry in Ghana and how many people are resorting to it as a source of income. While research has been conducted about social media in Ghana, ranging from influencer marketing to its effects on the youth in Ghana, most of the existing research does not highlight how people in Ghana are earning a living by intentionally creating digital content for social media. The absence of this fundamental research makes it difficult to assess how successful already existing content creators are from monetizing their content. In effect, it is unclear whether developing a business model for content creators in Ghana will help them in being more successful.

Sample Design

Sample Strategy

Snowball sampling will be used in obtaining the sample for this study. This sampling method does not involve any systematic process of arriving at the sample for the research and is simply based on referrals from existing subjects. This sampling method is appropriate for this research because the content creation industry in Ghana is still growing with not many creators monetizing their content. It will be easier to contact content creators in popular niches in the industry through referrals from other creators. Content creators in the same niche will most likely know each other or a few others.

Sample Selection

The sample for this study will be 10 Ghanaian content creators in Ghana, primarily in Accra, who have been able to monetize the content they create through their blogs, YouTube videos, podcasts and Instagram and Facebook posts. Based on an analytics exercise conducted on Instagram, and with the aid of insights from some content creators, most of their audience is split between Accra and Kumasi. That is why the geographical focus for the subjects of the research is Accra and Kumasi. These content creators will be chosen from the 5 most popular niches in Ghana. These niches will be determined by surveys that will be sent out to identify the niches that most people usually consume content from. These surveys will be sent out to people between the ages of 18 – 35 via e-mail and WhatsApp groups to ensure a controlled population fills out these surveys. The target age group for these surveys is 18 – 30 because they form a majority of social media users globally (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019).

Data collection

Data will be collected through one-on-one interviews. The first form of data that will be collected in this research will be quantitative data on the most popular niches of digital content in Ghana on various social media platforms through the surveys. These surveys will provide some more insights on consumer's perceptions of various forms of content in Ghana which would inform the development of the business model, if necessary. Qualitative data will be gathered through one-on-one interviews via Zoom with the selected content creators in the sample. The purpose of these interviews will be to better understand how different or similar the work process is for these content

creators. The goal is to understand how business models work in the content creation space and identify how best a business model will help these content creators be more successful in their content creation career. The research also explores if standardizing certain steps in their career would be beneficial to other upcoming content creators. It will be useful to hear their personal thoughts on the existence of business models and how it would be beneficial to them.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interviews was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain firsthand knowledge from the content creators on their experience as content creators in Ghana. Analyzing the data using this approach helped understand their experiences better and identify themes that run through their individual experiences. These themes helped inform the problems that a business model would aim to solve or lessen. The quantitative data obtained from the surveys were represented in graphs to show the percentages of responses that were for particular preferences.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Discussion

This chapter reports and analyzes the findings from the study conducted to develop a clear understanding of the Ghanaian digital content industry and the fundamentals for developing a business model for Ghanaian content creators. The study included a survey and semi-structured interviews with ten Ghanaian content creators. The results of the survey formed the basis on which the participants of the interviews were chosen. The purpose of the survey was to identify the most popular genre, content form and distribution platform among digital content consumers in Ghana. The interviewees were then selected using a convenience sampling technique based on the genre, distribution platform and form of content they created. For the purposes of maintaining anonymity, each participant will be referred to as ‘creator’ with their corresponding number in the order of interviews conducted.

The study aimed at understanding the digital content industry from the point of view of the creators themselves by delving into their career as content creators and the challenges they faced in scaling and monetizing. The study was intended to discover the similarities in content creation processes and business practices among Ghanaian content creators. The ultimate goal of the study was to identify an appropriate structure for business models in this industry. In order to develop the foundations of a business model for Ghanaian content creators, the study also explored whether or not Ghanaian content creators perceived content creation as a business venture. The findings of the study were analyzed using a thematic analysis method with the hopes of answering the research questions and meeting the objectives of the research.

Demographic of participants

The survey to identify the most popular genre of content and content forms among Ghanaian digital content consumers was distributed to consumers between the ages of 18 and 34. The surveys were distributed via WhatsApp group messages and Twitter. This allowed for a variety of responses across the various ages. The participants of the semi-structured interviews were content creators primarily based in Accra between the ages of 20 and 30. Six participants had been in the industry for up to 5 years, three had been in the industry for more than five years and the last participant had been in the industry for six months. The most experienced content creator had been in the industry for nine years at the time of the interview.

Findings***Popular genres and content forms in Ghana***

A survey was distributed to digital content consumers between the ages of 18 and 30 to identify the most popular content forms, genres and distribution platforms in the country. This survey was distributed within groups with known demographics via WhatsApp groups and Twitter to ensure diversity among responses. These included known age ranges and areas of residence. The structure of the survey aimed at concluding in the format ‘Most Ghanaian consumers like X [content form] about Y [genre] on Z [distribution platform]’. The survey contained three primary questions and gathered 101 responses.

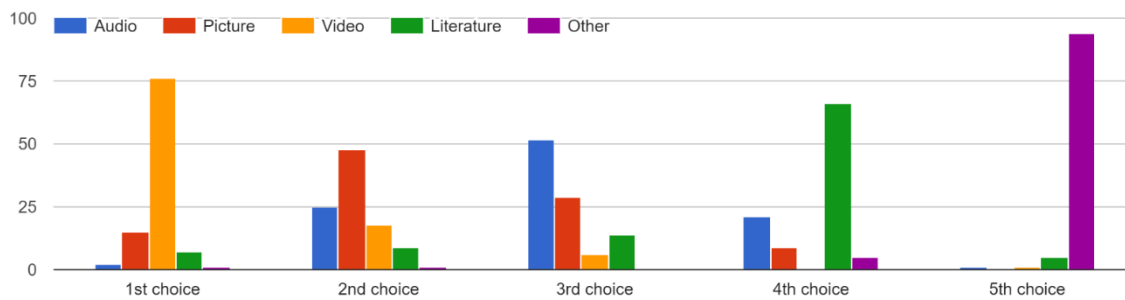


Figure 1. Most preferred content forms

The first question asked what users' preferred form of digital content was. 75% of respondents chose video as their preferred form of content and picture was the second favourite form of content, being chosen by 45% of respondents as their second choice. Audio was the third favourite form of content and text was the least favourite. The second question asked users to choose their genres of content in order of preference. 50% of respondents chose music and entertainment as their favourite genre, fashion and lifestyle was the second favourite with 35% of respondents choosing it and health and fitness was the third favourite genre. Sports was the next popular and finance and business was the least favourite among the options. However, respondents indicated other genres they consumed content from, and these included religious content, self-help content and technology-related content. The last question asked respondents to choose their favourite platforms for consuming content and in order of preference, they were YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, audio streaming platforms such as Spotify and Apple Podcasts and then blogs or websites. These are relatively consistent with the forms in which respondents preferred their content to take. In summary, a majority of Ghanaian digital content consumers like videos about music and entertainment and prefer to consume content from YouTube.

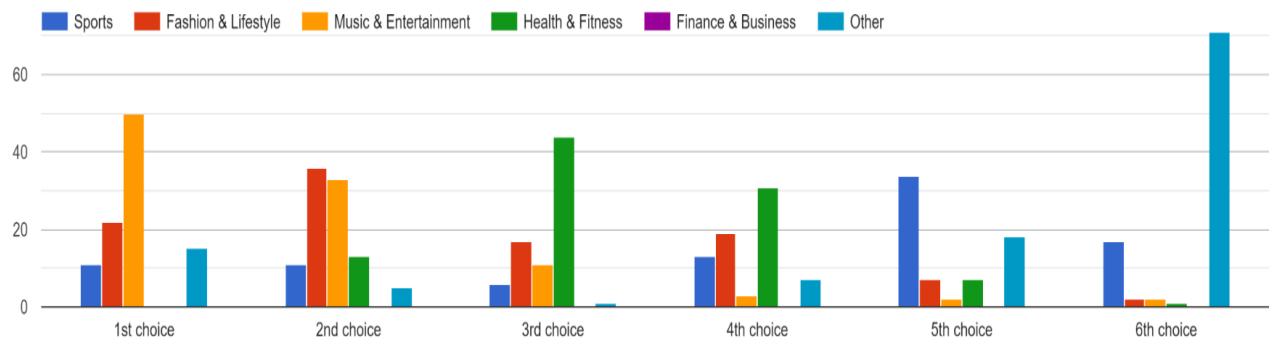


Figure 2. Most preferred content genres

Kicking off your career

Before delving into the experiences the study sample had had in the process of their content creation career, it was essential to first understand certain fundamental decisions such as why they ventured into such an industry, the kind of content to create and the platforms to distribute on. Participants were asked what inspired the decision to start creating content and 3 out of 10 participants started based on personal interests. Another 3 of the 10 participants entered the industry to fill an information gap. They felt there was an absence of information in the football, financial literacy and budget food and travel niches suited to the local context. On the other hand, Creator 10, who had been in the industry for 9 years, was not aware she was creating content at the time she started. It was simply a passion project that started gaining traction which she later started taking more seriously. For creator 9, he acquired the skill for creating content and then eventually identified the need for businesses to communicate with customers in very few words. He saw digital content creation as a good opportunity to use his skill to meet this need. The other two reasons for starting a content creation career were a passion to teach others and the desire to extend insightful conversations to an audience.

The type of content and platform for distribution can be likened to the field of work and location of office of a regular nine-to-five worker. This makes it very necessary for this study to explore what informed their choices as content creators when it came to these areas of their career. The most popular content form among the participants was video and while it was expected that YouTube would be the leading distribution platform among the participants, Instagram came out as the most popular platform. Pictures were the second popular form of content among the participants and audio took third place. In turn, YouTube and audio streaming platforms were the second and third popular platforms respectively. The audio streaming platforms referred to in this study were Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and Deezer. Text was the least popular form of content among the participants and could possibly explain why Twitter and websites were the least popular platforms among the participants. Creator 9's choice of content form was informed by his strengths. Being aware of his lack of writing skills meant he was not going to create content for a platform that was primarily text based, like Twitter or a blog. Creator 3's choice of audio content was based on the ease of editing and manipulating the raw content. He believed that audio content required very little editing.

A primary reason that influenced the creators' choices of distribution platforms was how well the platforms supported the forms of content that they created. YouTube and Instagram are better suited for visual content such as video and pictures while Twitter is better suited for short form text. More specific reasons for the creators' choices in distribution platforms included an already existing monetization system in reference to YouTube, the location of the intended audience of the content to be put out and the ease of using the interface. Creator 6 chose to build a content creation career on Instagram

because it allowed for the sharing of multiple pictures at the same time. Creator 5 on the other hand chose Twitter because of the ease with which you could easily share links as compared to Instagram that required a minimum number of followers. While creator 8 did not start distributing content on TikTok, she mentioned that she was interested in exploring it as an option because it was easier to reach a large audience compared to other platforms and provided more organic reach. For creators 1 and 3, who were both a part of a podcast network, they did not have much of a say in the platforms they distributed their podcasts on because the podcast network already had specific streaming platforms it distributed its podcasts on. However, creator 3 had a premium Soundcloud account and so included it in his distribution platforms. It is important to note that most content creators distributed content across more than one platform. Creator 10 liked YouTube for its ability to easily track engagement and receive insights on the performance of its content.

Table 1

Rationale behind distribution platform choices

Creator 1	Podcast network's choice
Creator 2	Majority of target audience is found there
Creator 3	Already owned SoundCloud account
Creator 4	Better suited for content form
Creator 5	Ease of sharing links
Creator 6	Allows sharing of multiple pictures at a time
Creator 7	Better suited for content form

Creator 8 Easy to maneuver

Creator 9 Better suited for content form

Creator 10 Easy to track engagement and receive insights

Behind the scenes

Since the purpose of this study is to identify a structure that content creators follow in creating and monetizing their content, content creators were asked about the process they follow in creating and distributing their content. 4 out of 10 creators did not have a defined system or schedule they followed in either creating or distributing. For creators 3 and 4, the pattern of creation and distribution was highly dependent on availability and convenience. Creator 2 attributed it to the volatility of social media. In his words, ‘social media is constantly changing’ and so it is difficult to develop a set system that accommodates for all the constant changes. Creator 10 did not have a system because she simply had a hard time sticking to a routine. What had come to work for her, she had discovered, was simply setting a goal and working until she met it.

For those that had some sort of structure in place, it involved a relatively simple and flexible process that had taken a lot of experimenting to settle on. It usually involved planning the structure and composition of the content to be put out, setting time to create and edit, having a regular day for distribution and planning the order of distribution. The system also included setting time aside to engage with followers and reviewing past content in order to improve. Creator 4 implemented the quality check system prior to distribution by sharing his content with a few people and collecting feedback before putting it out for general consumption. Another form of system that was implemented by

creators 6 and 9 was batch creation. This involved setting time aside to create a lot of content and releasing them over a period for time. Creator 9 also had an idea bank where he constantly deposited ideas for content and then set time aside to develop them completely for distribution.

Growing the community

A very important part of every content creator's career is the community building stage. At this point in their career, they are growing a larger audience and collaborating with fellow creators to work on projects or paid opportunities together. 9 out of 10 interviewees in this study responded in the affirmative when asked if they had been able to build an engaging community and the last participant, creator 3, answered that he was in the process of building an engaging community. The content creators characterized engagement as comments and sharing of content by their followers or audience. With regards to how long it took for these content creators to build an engaging community, most of them were able to do it within the first year, in as short as two weeks to three months. However, for some of the creators who had been in the industry for over 5 years, it had taken them up to four years to have an engaging community that actively interacted with their content. Based on the interviews, the two main ways to build an engaging community was to put out engaging content and intentionally build personal relationships with followers. Engaging content was described as content that left room for the audience to contribute to it and not simply scroll past it. Building personal relationships with followers meant replying to comments on their posts and messages from them.

Another integral part of growing a community was collaborations with other content creators, typically within the same niche. 7 out of 10 content creators had

collaborated with at least one other content creator in the course of the career. With the exception of creator 8, every other content creator who had collaborated with a fellow creator found it beneficial. While creator 8 thought that collaborations could dilute the identity of a content creator, the others thought that it was a good way to be exposed to a larger or different audience. However, this did not always translate to increased engagement or monetization. Some content creators also saw it as a good way to bounce ideas off fellow creatives since they were more likely to understand their challenges and relate with them better. Collaborations also helped establish networks with other creators who in turn extended opportunities to them and created a support system for one another, something creator 5 thought was not very common in Ghana.

From comments to cedis

On the topic of monetization, only creator 1 and 2 started their career with the goal of monetizing. Out of the remaining eight who did not intend on monetizing in the beginning, only creator 3 and 7 had stuck with that decision over the course of their career. Creator 2 had changed his mind about monetization and was more focused on building an audience. Creator 4 started creating content with the motivation of helping people in the financial literacy niche but increased knowledge on the monetizing opportunities made him transition to wanting to monetize his content. For creator 5, creating content started off as a passion project which interfered with her job at the time, so she decided to quit her former job and monetize her content. For those who were not keen on monetizing at the time of the interview, they acknowledged that content creation had the potential of generating a lot of income for them, but it was either not a priority for

them at the moment or they were more focused on using the platform to build a community and create an impact.

Some monetizing opportunities available to the interviewees sponsored content or paid reviews. These involved brands paying content creators to either put out content solely dedicated to promoting their product or service or using their platform to briefly advertise for the brand in the form of a review. This could take the form of an entire Instagram post promoting the brand or a segment of a podcast episode advertising what the brand offered. This was considered a very common way of monetizing among the interviewees. Another way of monetizing was brand partnerships and endorsements which typically involved the content creator acting as a brand ambassador but typically for a contracted period. They would get paid to make it publicly known that they were associated with the brand in order for their followers to patronize from that brand or they would regularly post content about that brand in order to show some loyalty to the brand. Other monetizing opportunities included hosting events or making appearances, exhibitions, coaching sessions, merchandise, Google AdSense on YouTube and blogs and affiliate linking. However, creators 4 felt that a lot of Ghanaian content creators were not taking full advantage of the monetization opportunities. She suggested that more content creators could offer their content creation skills such as video editing and social media management as services to small businesses and brands. Creator 6 also felt that Ghanaian content creators could be more adventurous by pitching to foreign brands in order to work with them and help them explore a new customer base. When asked how they discover these monetization opportunities, a lot of the interviewees answered that they had simply observed what others were doing in and out of their niche and attempted

making money in those same ways. However, some of them came to learn about these opportunities through their interactions with people, reading and offers from brands. Creator 9 identified monetization opportunities based on enquiries from his followers. He developed an avenue for monetizing by attempting to provide them with the answers and solutions they enquired about. For most of the interviewees, it took them well over a year to earn any form of income for the content they created and even then, it was not a sustainable source of income. Out of all the interviewees, creator 5 was the only full-time content creator who earned a sustainable income from her content. Income earned for all interviewees ranged from GHS30 to the cedi equivalent of \$3,000.

Table 2

Steps taken towards monetization

Creator 1	Being more consistent with putting out content
Creator 4	Strategic advertising of content to grow audience
Creator 5	Studying mechanics of distribution platforms
Creator 6	Pitching to brands
Creator 8	Using Instagram stories as a marketing strategy
Creator 9	Paying attention to audience's needs
Creator 10	Being consistent with putting out content

The interviewees were also asked about the steps they had or were making in order to monetize their content. A majority of the interviewees responded with being intentional and strategic in terms of the decisions they made, the content they put out and the way they advertised or marketed themselves. There was also mention of being

consistent in creating and putting out content, approaching brands and pitching to them and studying the mechanics of each distribution platform. They also took advantage of certain resources that helped them grow into being a content creator brands would want to work with. Every content creator mentioned how they benchmarked themselves against similar creators to help evaluate themselves and their performance. There was also a lot of talking to other people or working in teams in order to learn from others. They took advantage of all the free content available on YouTube and Google and made a conscious effort to learn from their personal experiences so far.

When the going gets tough

A primary goal of the study was to understand the challenges content creators faced in the course of a career and how a defined structure could help mitigate the effects of such challenges. The main areas in which the interviewees had challenges were settling on a defined work procedure, building a community, monetization and systemic or social issues that impeded their growth as content creators.

Being a content creator requires a lot of creativity and that means a lot of things are subject to the creator. However, a majority of the interviewees felt the need to have a well defined procedure they followed in order to create and put out content for their platforms. A common challenge among the interviewees was that they had to do a lot of experimenting in order to identify which characteristics of a possible system worked well for them. This meant looking at what other people were doing and trying to see if that worked for them as well or doing things off the whim and seeing which practice would stick and be beneficial. For creator 7, not following a system in producing podcast episodes meant team members volunteered on a convenience basis and that was not very

sustainable or beneficial to the group. What helped them work their way around it was transparent communication about the various team members' commitments and availability and developing a structure around that. Trying to find a defined structure for creating content took a very long time for most creators and so it slowed the pace at which they had hoped to scale their career.

The next area the interviewees faced challenges in was community building and engagement. For creator 1, he felt that the novelty of podcasts in Ghana made it difficult to appeal to a large audience and so it was necessary to keep listeners engaged throughout the podcast episodes. It was also difficult to adapt content to local context in the sports niche because a lot of the trending activities in sports were international activities. This meant that they had to compete with foreign content creators in the sports niche because the Ghanaian audience was more likely to consume foreign content. Creator 3 did not have a system in place to track engagement and so it was difficult to tell if engagement was increasing or not. This was not as a result of an absence of an existing system but as a result of him not instituting any system to track engagement. There was also the challenge of converting following into engagement. Creator 8 mentioned how her rate of engagement did not always reflect her following. She might have gained 1,000 new followers within a period but that would not result in 1,000 more comments or post shares and that made it difficult to increase engagement even though there were people to engage with. Other constraints included inadequate time to engage, inadequate funding to produce engaging content, poor mental health and the audience getting over familiar and insensitive. Creator 10 narrated an experience where a follower started making demands of what kind of content to put out shortly after she began. Creator 9 pointed out how the

external pressure to succeed could also make growing a community difficult because when your audience was not growing at a rate you would have liked it to, people began to put pressure on you.

The primary challenges that the interviewees had faced in trying to monetize content was determining how much was a good amount to charge for their services and getting people to appreciate the value of their work as content creators. Creator 5 pointed out how there was an information gap on charging as a Ghanaian content creator and so there were times when she had underpriced her services as a content creator. There was also the challenge of getting people to pay the amount they believed they deserved as content creators because their efforts were often undermined and looked at as a hobby. In other situations, they were not treating content creators equally and so they believed one content creator was worth more than the other when in actual fact, they had the same skill set and engagement rate. For those who distributed content on YouTube, they had a hard time meeting the required watch hours in order to monetize their content, primarily because it was difficult consistently putting out videos that counted towards the watch hours.

The last section of challenges were considered to be beyond the control of the content creators. They were looked at as more systemic or social factors that had very little to do with the content creators themselves and more to do with the environment they found themselves in and the culture that existed in their environment. Creator 6 felt pointed out that Ghanaians were only now opening up to the idea of influencer marketing and so they tend to underpay content creators when they contracted their services or did not see the value of investing in influencer marketing at all. He also felt there was some

sort of classism in the Ghanaian society that made people think only people of a certain calibre were more cut out to be content creators and social media influencers. Creator 2 felt a major flaw in Ghanaian society was a lack of urgency and so it reflected in the way some Ghanaian content creators operated. In his words, ‘there’s no time so the more time you waste, the slower you [rate of] growth. A few interviewees also felt that their geographic location made it difficult for them to access some things that would enhance their experience as content creators. Some of these things include limited payment options for international jobs and equipment acquisition because most of them were not available in this region of the world. For creator 4 who was in the finance niche, he believed Ghanaians were naturally more inclined to consume lighthearted or conventional content such as comedy skits or trending tops as against more serious content or new ideas such as personal finance. Lastly, the interviewees felt that there was a lack of support for local and or small-scale content creators. There was a general tendency for consumers to consume more foreign content or content made by more established Ghanaian content creators. This meant only supporting Ghanaian content creators after they had been able to scale and become more popular in the industry.

The business of content creation

The primary basis for whether a content creator wanted to monetize their content was based on their perception of content creation as a job and how they described their relationship with it. 6 out of 10 interviewees considered themselves as entrepreneurs or business owners in relation to content creation. They also described their relationship with content creation as a professional one with a few more also considering it a hobby because they still very much enjoyed it like something they did in their spare time. For

most interviewees, this meant that they treated content creation as they would any other job. They were critical about the decisions they made because they could result in a loss, cost or wastage of resources. Creator 6, however, did not look at content creation as a job but rather saw himself as an advocate for people who are unable to have a platform where they could speak about football.

The study aimed at understanding how Ghanaian content creators perceived business models in order to understand where to approach the development of a business model from. The interviewees were asked to define a business model and every interviewee had a hard time confidently defining what they thought it was, they used words like 'structure', 'system', 'building blocks' and 'foundation'. In general, they saw business models as something that enabled business owners to plan how business operations were going to work together to result in profitability. Some of the benefits of a business model, according to the interviewees, were that it helped stay according to plan, identify value and how to provide customers with it and answer 'how, when, why and what to do?'. None of them were aware of a business model specifically for content creators and acknowledged that there was an absence of one, especially in Ghana. This meant that Ghanaian content creators were very experimental with the way they went about their career and could result in not offering value to any audience in particular.

Participants of the study believed that a business model would provide structure and enable content creators to have a clearer idea of what to do when kicking off their career. Creator 8 felt that a business model would help identify loopholes in a content creator's operations and help streamline content to a specific niche. Creator 5 believed that a business model will acknowledge existing weaknesses beyond a content creator's

control and make provisions for it. Creator 2 believed that although a business model would provide some structure, it was not the be-all and end-all to the Ghanaian content creation industry. The quality of content being put out would have to complement the presence of a structure.

The participants were also asked to give recommendations of an ideal business model and creator 7 thought an ideal business model should be based on a clear and thorough analysis of the landscape and understanding what drives content creators. Every participant mentioned that it would be ideal to have a clear plan on how to work towards monetization as a content creator. While this did not particularly pertain to a business model, Creator 10 was interested in seeing pay gaps between different groups of content creators, for example, men and women, micro and nano influencers. Creator 5 hoped that a business model would help content creators craft defined rules of engagement in order to facilitate smooth interactions with clients. Finally, interviewees hoped a business model would help establish measurable parameters for tracking growth in their career.

Table 3

Recommendations and considerations for a business model

Creator 1	Should aid in niche identification
Creator 2	Should help identify value proposition
Creator 3	Guides you on how to recover initial costs
Creator 4	Provides guidance on financial structure

Creator 5	Help creators establish rules of engagement
Creator 6	Help identify monetizing opportunities
Creator 7	Thorough analysis of the landscape
Creator 8	A clear plan that helps map out career
Creator 9	Study the field, craft and processes of creators
Creator 10	Graphs that show pay gaps among influencers

Career modifications

In the course of the interview, some interviewees pointed out how they had had to make some modifications to their career in order to either monetize or increase their chances of monetizing. For others, it was simply a necessity that had to be done in order to grow and be better at what they did. The primary areas that required modifications for most content creators was working in a team or with other people, diversifying the sources they drew inspiration from, being more critical of their activity on social media and lowering the level of emotional attachment they had to their career. For content creators who produced podcasts, they learnt to give more structure to their shows by creating segments, something they learnt from other podcasts that were not produced in Ghana. They also saw the need to have a theme song because it helped create an identity among their listeners. There was a general indication that content creation was a constant learning process that required frequent evaluation and modification in order to continue to stay relevant to the targeted audience.

A successful content creation career

A good way to develop a business model is to identify what constitutes success and evaluate how well the business model can help achieve that. The interviewees were asked to define what a successful content creation career looked like, and the two most popular answers were earning a sustainable income and building a large following which eventually translated into possessing influence within the niche they operated in. While this did not apply to him, creator 1 thought that being the first of your kind in your niche was a good representation of success, alluding to vox-pop podcast, *Sincerely Accra*. He also thought being a source of new in your niche was an indicator of success. Creator 2 answered that being able to expand his brand into other markets would make him feel successful. He currently operates in the vegan niche but would like to explore opening a restaurant which would attract customers based on his brand as a content creator. Creator 7 referred to brand associations as his definition of success. He wanted to be the first thing that popped up in people's minds when they thought of Ghana-made content concerning football, outside of radio and television shows.

Lastly, the interviewees were asked to list habits or practices they thought would help them or any other content creator attain their desired level of success. The idea was to identify the necessary habits that needed to accompany a good business model and high-quality content in order to ensure a higher chance of succeeding in the Ghanaian digital content creation industry. An answer that run through almost every answer was consistency. Consistency here referred to regularly putting out content relevant to your niche and constantly engaging with followers, fellow creators and role models in your niche. Creator 4 pointed out that it was very important to niche down as early as possible

in your career as a content creator. Some content creators have a hard time identifying a particular market they would like to serve and resorted to experimenting with different niches. In order not to get written off as undecided, it was important to identify a niche as soon as possible. Creator 4 suggested to constantly track what worked. She gave an example of going viral from a particular post, it was more beneficial to identify what about the post resulted in virality and replicating that as against putting out the same kind of post. It could result in monotony and eventually create disinterest among the intended audience.

Analysis of findings

The findings of the study will be analyzed in an attempt to answer the research questions and meet the research objectives. Using Carter and Carter's Creative Business Model Canvas (CBMC), this section will analyse aspects of a Ghanaian content creator's career and conclude on the fundamental building blocks for a business model (2020). The aim of the analysis is to see how well the findings inform the development of a business model and reduce the challenges they face in advancing their career. The Creative Business Model Canvas was based on Osterwalder and Pigneur's Business Model Canvas (2010). The CBMC aimed at developing a business model that enabled Australian artists identify their value proposition to their customers and develop a strategy that enables them capture value in all forms.

Building off the BMC and CBMC

The study set out to identify a business model that could be used by Ghanaian content creators to provide structure to their activities and enable them to monetize. The

study explored the existing system of creating for these creators, how they grew their community and how they monetized their content. It further explored challenges they experienced in the course of their career and some perceptions they had concerning business models and how they applied to content creators. The literature review revealed that while there was an existing template available to entrepreneurs in strategizing how to capture value, there were also a variety of business models that enabled them implement business activities in ways that would help them achieve their goals and become profitable. This informs the basis of the analysis of the study's findings. Given that content creators have different experiences, it will be challenging to establish a one size fits all model that helps every content creator, regardless of niche or platform, scale the way they would like to in their career. A better alternative is to suggest a business model canvas that helps Ghanaian content creators map out the building blocks on which their content creation career is built on.

Following the template of the BMC and CBMC, a suggested business model canvas for Ghanaian content creators will be explored, highlighting the components of this canvas and how they address some of the findings in this study. It is important to note that this canvas is not all-embracing of every finding in this study but aims at addressing the key areas under which the findings fall. This suggested business model canvas would be referred to as the Digital Enterprise Model Canvas. 'Digital enterprise' refers to the digital content industry made up of content creators who wish to develop a career and build an enterprise from it. The building blocks of the Digital Enterprise Model Canvas are self-brand, niche, target audience, value proposition, mode of

distribution, key activities, key resources, collaborators, cost structure and revenue streams.

The Digital Enterprise Model Canvas

Self-brand: At the core of content creation is the content creator. This makes it very important for each content creator to properly identify who they are as content creators and what makes them stand out compared to other content creators in their niche. Some interviewees referenced conversations they had had with other content creators. Their conversations revealed that they had started content creation clueless of what exactly they wanted to do. They simply experimented until they found something that worked for them. Starting off by identifying what constitutes your self-brand as a content creator is a good place to start from.

Niche: This building block enables content creators to identify which area of interest their content will be about. Listing various areas of personal interests could help zone in on a particular niche that they are best at or most interested in. This helps streamline content that is appropriate for the needs. This also prevents experimenting for the content creator and helps them make an impression on their audience early. This was based off creator 1's recommendation of a business model.

Value Proposition: In order to monetize content, it is important to identify how the content being put out is relevant to the audience and the characteristics of the content that would make people want to pay to see more of that kind of content. Some common value propositions are entertainment, education and motivation. Based on creator 2's recommendation for a business model, this block was developed to help creators identify what they could offer their audience. Identifying a way in which your target audience

benefits from constantly engaging with your content ensures that your content is remains relevant to them.

Target audience: In order to establish the value content creators are offering, they must establish the audience they intend to serve. In order to develop a business model that facilitates operations as a content creator, it would be beneficial to identify who the persona of the intended content is. Some areas to consider would be possible interests of the target audience and where you can find them? For example, for creator 8, she was aware that a majority of her demographic was on Facebook, but she did not start creating content for that platform early because she was unaware and now found Facebook difficult to use.

Mode of distribution: This element of the canvas helps decide on the content form and distribution platforms to use as a content creator. It helps evaluate how the content is supposed to reach the target audience and which platforms are better suited for the creator's choice of content form. Based on interviewee responses, the study gathered that choice of mode of distribution is integral to the success of their career. Choosing a platform that does not favor the choice of content form might be detrimental or slow down growth.

Key Activities: A few of the interviewees had a hard time settling on a process that accommodated all their activities as a content creator. This part of the canvas aims at helping content creators carve out core activities that form their creative process and establish some form of routine. It also helps content creators establish a review system that allows content creators to revise systems they have put in place.

Key resources: Part of the findings were certain resources content creators had taken advantage of to improve in their craft. This building block helps content creators state all the necessary resources they would need at the time of starting their career. This helps strategize how to have access to all the necessary resources and work around hitches such as inaccessibility due to geographical location. Interviewees also indicated how they had made modifications to their career over time. Identifying key resources at different stages of the career could help inform make more beneficial modifications.

Collaborators: An essential part of content creation is community but this block refers to the community of content creators. As creator 5 indicated, there seems to be an absence of a community for content creators. It is important to identify other players in the niche you work in and map out ways to collaborate and leverage off their existence. Establishing a network of fellow creators could provide additional insights to other parts of your content creation career that you might have overlooked.

Cost structure: In an attempt to monetize content being put out, content creators should keep track of their cost incurring activities so as not to make a loss or mismanage their income. Creator 3 suggested that an ideal business model should help structure the career in a way that helps to, at least, recover initial costs. Identifying core activities that incur recurring costs could help avoid situations where there are no funds to pay for that activity. It could also help identify which costs are unnecessary and can be done away with.

Revenue Streams: Lastly, listing and identifying all the possible ways of monetizing can inform the model in which content creators implement strategies and capture value. Based on creator 4's suggestion, an ideal business model should provide a

financial structure to follow. This takes away the uncertainty of how to monetize and could lay the foundation for determining how much to charge possible clients in the future.

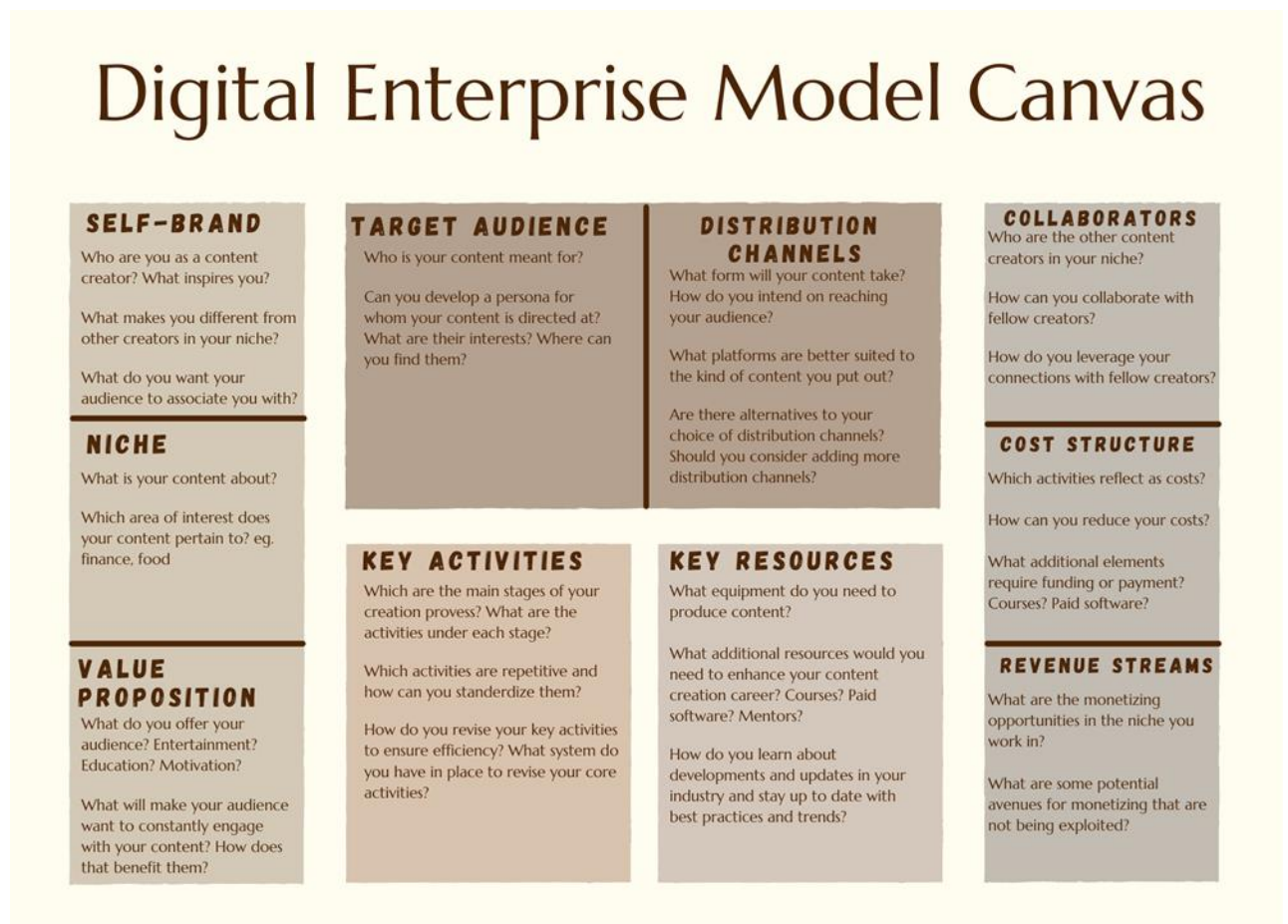


Figure 3. Digital Enterprise Model Canvas

Following the Digital Enterprise Model Canvas could help content creators kick off their career feeling less clueless because they are able to identify the components of various aspects of the career. This also helps content creators appear more organized and confident of their value which in turn makes it easier for agencies and brands to appreciate their value. This is a very iterative model that allows for constant revision and

updates. It must be noted that the purpose of this canvas is to help content creators develop a model that allows them to capture the value they intend on offering their target audience and remain relevant in the industry.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The final chapter summarizes the study by highlighting the purpose of the study, insights from the literature review, the methodology of the study and how the research objectives were met. This chapter also makes recommendations for interested content creators and suggestions in the event further research is conducted on this topic. The purpose of this study was to provide some structure to the Ghanaian digital content industry by identifying the foundations of a possible business model for Ghanaian content creators. The study hoped to meet this objective by exploring the experiences of Ghanaian content creators and the challenges they faced in the course of their career. The insights of this study informed the basis on which a business model for Ghanaian content creators could be developed. The literature review revealed that there was not enough documentation of the growth of the Ghanaian digital content industry as compared to the western world. The literature review also introduced the concept of creative entrepreneurship and highlighted how content creation formed a part of the creative industry.

The semi-structured interviews conducted indicated that Ghanaian content creators acknowledged the absence of a structure that made it easier to navigate the

digital content industry, especially since they compete with foreign content creators. The study also revealed that there was no common procedure all content creators go through in advancing their career. As such, developing a business model that would be adopted by Ghanaian content creators regardless of niche or distribution platform may not be as beneficial as intended to be. Instead, developing a canvas from which various business models could be developed for content creators was a better alternative. Based on the various areas the findings of the study fell under, the Digital Enterprise Model Canvas was developed to help content creators identify the different components of their career that inform certain important decisions. The Digital Enterprise Model Canvas is aimed at helping Ghanaian content creators clearly define their target audience, value proposition and monetization avenues. The idea is that after having clearly mapping out the various components important to the content creator, they can develop a business model that allows them implement strategies that keep these various components at the core.

Recommendations

Content creators

Just like Carter and Carter's CBMC (2020), the Digital Enterprise Model canvas requires some fundamental business knowledge in order to effectively apply it to a content creation career. The various components of the canvas may appear straightforward and easy to apply but may not result in effective application. A business perspective of what the various blocks mean could help content creators consider other ways in which that component applies to their career as compared to someone who interprets all components of the canvas in lay man's logic. It is also important to remember that no two content creators will have the exact same experiences in the course

of their career. As such, while this canvas aims at giving some structure to the process of content creation, it is not guaranteed that results will be similar for all who choose to apply it. As Abreu, Faggian, Comunian and McCann (2012) put it, time does not always imply career advancement or better economic growth. This canvas should be treated simply as a template for developing a business model and not as a tried and tested formula for scaling their content creation career.

Suggestions for further research

Further research should consider exploring actual business models tailored to content creators specifically. As this study revealed that developing a business model was not beneficial without establishing the building blocks of a model, further research could identify a variety of models that work for content creators based on the Digital Enterprise Model Canvas. The business models could be modified versions of already existing business models or developed from scratch based on findings of that research. Further research could also reveal other elements of a business model that could be added to the Digital Enterprise Canvas.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

Research Participant Consent Form

Content Creation as business venture: Structuring the Ghanaian Digital Content Creation Industry

I, [participant name], voluntarily agree to participate in this research study which focuses on the Ghanaian digital content industry and the viability of a business model for Ghanaian content creators. The purpose of this research is to explore the current state of the Ghanaian digital content creation industry and how beneficial a business model would be to Ghanaian content creators.

My participation in this research is entirely voluntary and I can cease to be a part of this research at any time I deem fit. There shall be no consequences if I withdraw from this research at a later time. In the process of the interview, I am at liberty to refuse to answer any question I deem inappropriate. I understand that my participation in this research study does not involve any form of compensation or direct benefit.

I understand the purpose of this study and the nature of my participation in it. I agree to take part in the research in the form of a semi-structured interview and am aware that the interview will be audio recorded. I understand that participation in this research entails recounting my experience as a Ghanaian content creator and the challenges I have faced in the process.

I am participating in this research anonymously. As such, any information that could lead to the identification of my person or other persons talked about in the interview will not be included in the report of the results of the research. Any information I provide in this research will be treated with confidentiality.

In the event of further questions, I will contact Seli Dzogbenuku

[\[seli.dzogbenuku@ashedi.edu.gh/ 0561912337\]](mailto:seli.dzogbenuku@ashedi.edu.gh) or the research supervisor Dr. Gordon

Adomdza [gadomdza@ashesi.edu.gh]

This study and consent form has been reviewed by Ashesi IRB for Human Subjects Research. For more information contact the committee through

irb@ashesi.edu.gh.

Signature of Research Participant

X

Research Participant

X

Date

Signature of Researcher

X

Researcher

X

Date

Appendix B: Interview Questions

The purpose of these interviews is to understand the current state of the Ghanaian digital content creation industry through the eyes of Ghanaian content creators. The interviews aim at better understanding the processes content creators go through in creating content and the challenges they face in the process. The goal of the interview is to identify whether a standard business model can be developed and will be beneficial to Ghanaian content creators.

1. How long have you been creating content for?
2. What inspired the decision to start creating content?
3. How would you describe your relationship with content creation? Professional, hobby, part-time job? How do you think this affects the way you approach content creation?
4. What form does your content take? Which platforms do you distribute your content on? What informed these decisions?
5. Have you done any collaborations with other content creators in your niche? If yes, how was that beneficial to your growth as a content creator?
6. Did you start content creation with the goal of monetizing your content? How has that changed over time? What informed this decision?
7. If you intend to monetize or are monetizing your content, what steps are you taking/did you take towards achieving that?
8. How much income have you been able to make from your content, indicating the highest and the lowest?

9. How long did it take you to do that? What are some of the challenges you face in monetizing or trying to monetize your content?
10. If you have not been able to, what would you attribute it to?
11. Have you been able to build an engaging community? If yes, how long did it take you to identify your community? Did you follow any process to achieve that? What are some of the challenges you are facing in the process?
12. If no, what do you think is the reason for this? What challenges are you facing in the process?
13. What do you think are some essential practices that increase content creators' chances of success? And what does success look like to you?
14. Do you follow any procedure in creating and distributing your content? What are some of the challenges you faced in developing a system that worked for you?
15. Are you aware of certain practices that are common among you and other creators in your niche?
16. Did you have any knowledge on entrepreneurship or running a business prior to starting content creation? How has that changed over time?
17. What's your understanding of a business model and its importance to business owners? Do you consider yourself a business owner/entrepreneur?
18. How does this perception affect the decisions you make as a content creator?
19. What are the monetizing opportunities for your craft? How did you learn about them? Have you identified other avenues for monetizing in your industry?
20. Do you feel there is an absence of a structured business model or strategy for content creators?

21. How do you think the absence of a defined structure affects content creators?
22. How do you think a business model could capitalize on that absence?
23. Can you identify factors beyond your control that make it difficult to grow as a content creator in Ghana? How well do you see some of these barriers being eliminated with the use of a more structured business model?
24. What business practices do you incorporate into your content creation career?
25. What resources have you taken advantage of in order to improve your craft? How accessible are these resources to creators in your niche?
26. What modifications have you had to make during your career and how have they helped you in your career? What did not work for you?
27. Any recommendations for developing a business model for your niche?

Appendix C: Survey on digital content preferences among Ghanaian users

Thank you for participating in this survey. The aim is to identify the major niches

Ghanaian users prefer to consume digital content from. This survey is confidential and

does not require any personal information from you. Your honest responses will be

highly appreciated. Kindly fill and submit this form by (date).

1. What form do you prefer your digital content takes? Kindly choose in order of preference.

- a. audio
- b. picture
- c. video
- d. literature
- e. other. Please specify.

2. What platforms do you typically consume your content from?

- a. YouTube
- b. Twitter
- c. Instagram
- d. Facebook
- e. Audio streaming platforms
- f. Blogs/websites

3. What genre of content do you usually consume? Kindly choose in order of preference.

- a. Sports
- b. Fashion and Lifestyle

c. Music and Entertainment

d. Health and Fitness

e. Finance

f. Other. Please specify.

Your responses are very much appreciated. Thank you for participating in this survey