

From Paycheque to Platform



‘An investigation into how the Creator Economy is challenging traditional pathways of employment’

39187272

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Introduction

Work has long been associated with stability, routine and a clearly defined pathway shaped by; education, employment, progression, security and retirement. Yet in the digital era, these assumptions are increasingly disrupted. For much of the twentieth century, these institutions have provided a relatively predictable framework through which individuals could achieve financial security, social mobility and personal fulfilment. Rapid technological advancement and the expansion of digital platforms are increasingly disrupting these established employment structures. As Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation and social media continue to reshape labour markets, new forms of work are emerging that challenge conventional understandings of employment and success.

One of the most significant examples of this transformation is the rise of the Creator Economy. Through platforms such as TikTok, YouTube and Instagram, individuals are now able to monetise creativity, personal branding and audience engagement, generating income outside of traditional organisational structures. Consequently, employment is becoming increasingly individualised, entrepreneurial and platform dependent. This shift is particularly significant among younger generations, many of whom have grown up as digital natives where content creators are visible examples of financial success.

Therefore, I hypothesised that the rapid growth of the Creator Economy is challenging/ has the potential to challenge traditional pathways to employment by redefining how individuals access work, generate income and perceive career success. While the Creator Economy presents new opportunities for entrepreneurship, and self-directed employment, it also introduces concerns surrounding instability, inequality and platform dependency.

Investigating these tensions is essential in understanding how employment structures are evolving within contemporary society, and how future generations may navigate an increasingly digital labour market.

My interest in this topic emerged from both personal experience and wider social observation. As a Year 12 student actively considering various future career pathways, I became increasingly aware of the growing number of individuals generating substantial incomes through digital platforms. Simultaneously, I observed changing attitudes towards employment within my micro, meso and macro worlds. The most significant of which being my peers and family members, whereby many of them view content creation, entrepreneurship and online business as legitimate alternatives to traditional careers. These

observations prompted me to question whether established pathways to employment were continuing to hold the same cultural significance for younger generations, or whether a new understanding of work was beginning to emerge.

This topic contributes to a deeper understanding of Society and Culture by analysing the relationship between individuals, institutions and emerging technologies within a rapidly changing social environment. It investigates how processes of continuity and change are reshaping employment structures, how new forms of power are emerging through digital platforms, and how cultural values surrounding work, success and financial security are evolving across Generation X (1965-1980), Generation Y (1981-1996), and Generation Z (1997 – 2012). In this way, the emergence of the Creator Economy can be viewed as an example of evolutionary change, driven by technological innovation, as well as transformative change through its growing influence in producing rapid alterations in wealth generation, and employment. Thus, the research develops my social and cultural literacy by encouraging a critical understanding of the ways technological innovation influences human behaviour, social interactions and economic participation. Furthermore, my research has highlighted how global technological developments can influence everyday experiences within micro, macro and meso systems. Thus, developing an understanding of these processes is increasingly important as platform-based work becomes more visible, accessible and influential within contemporary society.

To investigate these changes, a combination of primary and secondary research methods was employed. Primary research included a generation focused questionnaire, an expert interview with Susmitha Ghatty, Head of Business Marketing at TikTok Australia and New Zealand, and a personal reflection. These methods provided key insights into both public perception and industry perspectives regarding the Creator Economy. My expert interview in particular was extremely useful in providing an insight into the Creator Economy's impact on employment, as Ms Ghatty affirmed my prior knowledge on the prevalence and potential of the Creator Economy, while also exposing me to new aspects of it that I had not previously encountered. In addition, secondary research, including academic journals like the 'International Journal of Research in Marketing', industry reports and scholarly publications, enabled individual experiences to be situated withing broader patterns of social and cultural change. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies strengthened the validity of the research by allowing multiple perspectives to be compared and analysed.

Ultimately, this Personal Interest Project seeks to determine whether the Creator Economy represents a genuine transformation of employment or simply an adaptation of existing labour structures. By investigating the opportunities, challenges and inequalities that accompany this emerging form of work, this research explores what the future of employment may look like in an increasingly digital society, and whether the Creator Economy is truly redefining the pathway to economic success for future generations.

Log

As a teenager in their final year of high school, career pathways, employment, and future income are topics that are constantly discussed across my micro, meso and macro worlds. As someone with high expectations for their future, I became increasingly interested in understanding the different pathways individuals take to achieve financial success while maintaining balance between work and personal wellbeing. This curiosity led me to explore content creation and more specifically, the Creator Economy.

Growing up in the digital age exposed me to a wide range of online platforms and creators. Through platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, I observed individuals receiving brand sponsorships, traveling internationally, pursuing their passions and generating substantial incomes through their online presence. What fascinated me most was that many of these creators appeared to achieve financial success without following traditional employment pathways. This challenged my assumption about work and success, prompting me to investigate how the Creator Economy was reshaping contemporary understandings of employment.

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic, I engaged extensively with secondary research from academic journals, industry reports and educational institutions. Sources from organisations such as the Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities (ACEEU), Forbes, The Conversation and peer-reviewed journals provided valuable insights into digital entrepreneurship, platform-based work and changing perceptions of employment.

To complement this, I conducted a questionnaire, expert interview and a personal reflection. My questionnaire generated over 60 responses across Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z, providing both qualitative and quantitative data that revealed changing perceptions of employment and career aspirations. My expert interview was conducted with

Susmitha Ghatty, Head of Business Marketing at TikTok, her insights provided valuable professional insight into platform economies, digital entrepreneurship and the evolving relationship between creators and businesses. Finally, my personal reflection allowed me to critically analyse my own experiences, values and beliefs about work while living within a digitally connected society and how they connected with the research conducted, enabling me to implement that insight into my PIP.

Despite my success in both primary and secondary research, one of greatest challenges was maintaining a clear sociocultural focus, rather than approaching the topic through a Business Studies lens. As my research progressed, I continually had to refine my analysis to prioritise social and cultural concepts, ensuring that broader societal transformations remained central to my investigation. Another challenge involved narrowing the scope of such a rapidly evolving topic while maintaining sufficient depth and balance, prompting me to refine my chapter structure around specific social and cultural themes, ensuring the investigation remained specific.

Completing this PIP journey has significantly strengthened my research, analytical and critical thinking skills while enhancing my social and cultural literacy. Engaging with diverse perspectives challenged many of my own assumptions about work and enabled me to better understand how technological change is reshaping employment, identity and opportunity across different generations.

Chapter 1 – The Rise of Digital Work

The rise of the ‘Creator Economy’ is intrinsically linked to the processes of digitalisation¹ and modernisation², which have significantly reshaped the global labour market over the past decade. Richard Florida³ identifies this transformation as part of a broader shift towards a ‘Creator economy’ whereby technological innovation has enabled individuals to convert

¹ The process of changing something as a document to a digital form (= a form that can be stored and read by computers) or the use of technology to do something. Cambridge Dictionary, ‘Digitalize’ (@CambridgeWordsMay 2024 <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/digitalization>> accessed 30 June 2026.

² The act of making something more modern. Cambridge Dictionary, ‘Cambridge English Dictionary: Meanings & Definitions’ (Cambridge.org2025) <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/>> accessed 30 June 2026.

³ Founder of the ‘Creative Class Group, University Professor at The University of Toronto, Geust Professor at Harvard University and MIT, and Bestselling author of ‘*The Rise of the Creative Class* and ‘*The New Urban Crisis*.’

creativity, knowledge and digital participation into economic value, fundamentally altering traditional pathways of work and entrepreneurship.⁴ The origins of the Creator Economy can be traced back to the early 2000s with proliferation of user-generated content platforms and media websites. Blogging⁵ platforms such as Blogger (1999)⁶ and WordPress (2003)⁷ provided early opportunities for individuals to share ideas with global audiences. However, it was the launch of Facebook (2004)⁸ and YouTube (2005) that marked pivotal moments in the transition from passive media consumption to participatory digital culture.⁹ Such transformation fundamentally altered the way many young individuals encounter ideas surrounding work, entrepreneurship and financial success.¹⁰ This transition reflects the continuity and change of the digital space, as technologies are rapidly reshaping societal understandings of work, allowing younger generations to increasingly perceive creativity and online participation as legitimate forms of employment.

Subsequent technological developments further accelerated this transformation. Monetisation tools such as Kickstarter (2009)¹¹ and Patreon (2013)¹² enabled creators to directly generate

⁴ R Florida, T Gulden and C Mellander, “The Rise of the Creator Economy” (2022) 1 Creative Class 459 <https://creativeclass.com/reports/The_Rise_of_the_Creator_Economy.pdf> accessed November 6, 2025.

⁵ A regular record of your thoughts, opinions, or experiences that you put on the internet for other people to read. Cambridge Dictionary, “BLOG | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary” (2020) <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/blog>> accessed July 20, 2026.

⁶ An American online content management system that enabled users to publish blogs and websites to their own web-hosting server. Wikipedia Contributors, ‘Blogger (Service)’ (*Wikipedia* 2 November 2019) <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blogger_\(service\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blogger_(service))> accessed 30 June 2026.

⁷ A free and open-source content management system that supports publishing web content including traditional websites, mailing lists, internet forums, media galleries, membership sites, learning management systems and online stores. Wikipedia Contributors, ‘WordPress’ (*Wikipedia* 31 May 2019) <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WordPress>> accessed 30 June 2026.

⁸ An American online social media platform and social network service, founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes. Part of the company Meta Platforms. Mark Hall, ‘Facebook’ (*Britannica* 30 March 2024) <<https://www.britannica.com/money/Facebook>> accessed 30 June 2026.

⁹ Alexander Edeling and Simone Wies, “Embracing Entrepreneurship in the Creator Economy: The Rise of Creatpreneurs” (2024) 41 International Journal of Research in Marketing <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167811624000570#ab005>> accessed November 5, 2025.

¹⁰ Personal reflection, 14th June 2026

¹¹ An American Crowdfunding Platform that allows creative types and entrepreneurs to raise capital through crowds of people to reach a specific funding goal for a project. Jack Berning, ‘Kickstarter’ (*CrowdcruX.com* 2024) <<https://www.crowdcruX.com/all-about-kickstarter/>> accessed 30 June 2026.

¹² An American Monetisation platform that allows users to run a subscription service as well as sell individual digital products. Through Patreon Creators earn revenue from subscribers who pay to watch exclusive content and have access to exclusive rewards and perks. ‘Patreon’ (*Wikipedia* 27 November 2020) <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patreon>> accessed 30 June 2026.

revenue from their audiences, while visually oriented platforms including Instagram (2010) and TikTok (2016) significantly lowered the barriers to entry for content creation.¹³ These platforms allowed individuals to accumulate followers at relatively low cost, facilitating the emergence of a decentralised labour market in which creativity and digital engagement could be converted into economic value. Thus, new institutions have had an increasing impact on employment values and beliefs.

The Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities (ACEEU) highlights that the global influencer marketing industry has expanded dramatically, increasing eightfold in recent years and demonstrating the growing economic significance of creators.¹⁴ This transformation is also beginning to reshape traditional education pathways, with Emad Kazi¹⁵ arguing that creators are increasingly providing mentorship, specialised knowledge and professional learning opportunities outside formal educational institutions, further challenging conventional routes into employment.¹⁶ Such expansion reflects a broader societal shift in which digital participation is increasingly recognised as a legitimate form of labour, signalling the emergence of alternative employment pathways. This growing legitimacy is reinforced by TikTok's Head of Business Marketing for Australia and New Zealand, Susmitha Ghatty¹⁷, who explained in an expert interview how the Creator Economy now functions through “3 components... brands, consumers and the creator” highlighting how creators have become embedded within wider economic and social structures.¹⁸ Ms Ghatty further stated that both brands and consumers increasingly “see value in hearing from authentic third-party voices,” illustrating the growing cultural, economic, and social power creators now possess within contemporary society.¹⁹ This idea is supported by primary data whereby generational attitudes toward employment prove to be shifting. While the majority

¹³ Renana Peres and others, ‘The Creator Economy: An Introduction and a Call for Scholarly Research’ (2024) 41 International Journal of Research in Marketing <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0167811624000594>> accessed 15 January 2026.

¹⁴ Salil Sahadevan, ‘ACEEU | Spotlight Article’ (AceeU.org2020) <<https://www.aceeu.org/news/spotlightarticle/id/36>> accessed 27 October 2025.

¹⁵ Former Forbes Council member and VP of Product & Lifecycle at Kajabi, a wholistic platform that assists entrepreneurs in growing their businesses.

¹⁶ Emad Kazi, “Council Post: How The Creator Economy Is Disrupting Higher Education” *Forbes* (August 12, 2024) <<https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinesscouncil/2022/02/04/how-the-creator-economy-is-disrupting-higher-education/>>.

¹⁷ Primary Research - Interview - Susmitha Ghatty Head of Global Business marketing for TikTok AUNZ. Looks after Business-to-business marketing for TikTok. Conducted 28 May 2026

¹⁸ Primary Research - Interview - Conducted 28 May 2026

¹⁹ Primary Research - Interview - Conducted 28 May 2026

of both Generation Z (63%) and Generation X (71.4%) respondents still choose to prioritise a “stable traditional job”²⁰, a notable proportion of younger respondents (37%) indicated a preference for combining traditional employment with creator-based income streams, compared with only 14.3% in Generation X²¹. This cross generational shift suggests that rather than fully replacing conventional work, the Creator Economy is changing how careers are being understood²², as younger generations are more open to hybrid career pathways, whereby creator-based income complements traditional employment.

The Creator Economy as Digital Entrepreneurship

A defining characteristic of the Creator Economy is its entrepreneurial nature. Rather than functioning within hierarchical organisational structures, creators operate as independent economic agents who leverage their skills, identities and digital platforms to generate income. Alexander Edeling²³ and Simone Wies²⁴ conceptualise these individuals as “creatorpreneurs,” emphasising their role in economic growth and innovation²⁵. Recognising creators as having an entrepreneurial identity legitimises content creation into a class of work, highlighting the blurring boundaries between employment, self-expression and business enterprise.

Success within the Creator Economy is often contingent upon the development of a personal brand²⁶. Through strategic self-presentation and audience engagement, creators capture value from sponsorships, merchandise, and diversified business ventures. This diversification is increasingly necessary, with Bernhard Rieder, Erik Borra, Òscar Coromina, Ariadna Matamoros-Fernández, demonstrating that many creators rely on multiple external revenue streams rather than platform monetisation alone, reinforcing the entrepreneurial nature of

²⁰ Primary Research - Questionnaire - Published April 2026

²¹ Primary Research - Questionnaire - Published April 2026

²² Personal Reflection, 14th June 2026

²³ Associate Professor of Marketing, KU Leuven.

²⁴ Professor of Marketing, Goethe University Frankfurt

²⁵ Alexander Edeling and Simone Wies, “Embracing Entrepreneurship in the Creator Economy: The Rise of Creatrepreneurs” (2024) 41 International Journal of Research in Marketing <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167811624000570#ab005>> accessed November 5, 2025.

²⁶ International, strategic practice of defining and expressing your value Catherine Cote, ‘Personal Branding: What It Is and Why It Matters’ (*Harvard Business School Online* 21 March 2024) <<https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/personal-branding-at-work>> accessed 30 June 2026.

digital labour.²⁷ High-Profile creators, such as Mr Beast ('Mr Beast Burger') and Kylie Jenner ('Kylie cosmetics') demonstrate how digital influence can be expanded into broader entrepreneurial ventures and diversified revenue streams.²⁸ This highlights how the Creator Economy is challenging traditional employment structures, as entrepreneurial identity and digital visibility are increasingly valued alongside traditional forms of labour.

The Creator Economy's prevalence has prompted large-scale industry events such as the Forbes Creator Upfronts²⁹ developed in partnership with Walmart. This event brought together major brands, marketers and high-profile creators, positioning content creators as key stakeholders within the contemporary economic landscape as they are positioned "at the forefront of brand engagement, influencing everything from product launches to audience messaging to navigating controversy."³⁰ Such engagement with brands showcases the active integration of content creators into the formal marketing and business structures, as brands seek direct collaboration to better "Reach their consumers" through personalised content. Ms Ghatti reinforced this, explaining that brands increasingly seek creators to "influence your audience"³¹ and that commodification within the Creator Economy has "really boomed in the last maybe 5 to 10 years". Demonstrating how creators are no longer positioned outside formal employment systems but are instead becoming integrated into institutional economic structures through brand partnerships, sponsorships and platform-based labour, a change that is likely to continue evolving.

Historically, individuals sought employment within established institutions; however, within the Creator Economy, institutions are increasingly seeking out individuals who have already built their own audiences and personal brands. This inversion demonstrates how the Creator Economy is an example of evolutionary and transformative change in society as institutions

²⁷ Bernhard Rieder et al. "Making a Living in the Creator Economy: A Large-Scale Study of Linking on YouTube" (2023) 9 Social media and society
<<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/20563051231180628>> accessed November 3, 2025.

²⁸ Emad Kazi, 'Council Post: How the Creator Economy Is Disrupting Higher Education' *Forbes* (12 August 2024) <<https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinesscouncil/2022/02/04/how-the-creator-economy-is-disrupting-higher-education/>>.

²⁹ Exclusive two-day Marketing Summit where top marketers and creators are invited to convene and discuss the Creator Economy. Forbes Live, 'Forbes Creator Upfronts in Partnership with Walmart Creator' *Forbes* (7 November 2024) <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeslivetteam/2024/11/07/forbes-creator-upfronts-in-partnership-with-walmart-creator/>> accessed 15 April 2026.

³⁰ ForbesLive, 'Forbes Creator Upfronts in Partnership with Walmart Creator' *Forbes* (7 November 2024) <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeslivetteam/2024/11/07/forbes-creator-upfronts-in-partnership-with-walmart-creator/>> accessed 15 April 2026.

³¹ Primary Research - Interview - Conducted 28 May 2026

have slowly modernised over time, yet self-directed, platform-based work has rapidly redefined work. To Further this, Mrs Ghattly observed that universities, such as Flinders University in Adelaide south Australia³² are now beginning to offer courses centred around content creation, explaining that this “was not really a concept previously”³³ Such a generational shift reflects the increasing legitimisation of creator-based labour within traditional institutions, demonstrating how educational and employment structures are adapting in response to broader technological and cultural change.

While this institutional recognition strengthens the legitimacy of content creation as a career pathway, it also reinforces the competitive and commercialised nature of the industry. The emphasis on brand partnerships and monetisation highlights that success within this space is closely tied to marketability and unpredictable audience engagement, rather than formal qualifications or traditional career progression. Such a limitation drives many individuals away from the pursuit of content creation as a career³⁴. These concerns can be observed across generations whereby Generation X and Generation Y respondents that state the Creator economy is “Too unpredictable with the factors that influence if this will be a success”³⁵ and it “only address[ing] the top 0.1% of them. For the majority, they are having to work and hustle for ad share revenue, and branded content promotions within their channels.”³⁶ As well as this, Generation Z respondents express that “Content creation can be unstable as it follows quickly changing trends, ever evolving expectations (in standards which the content must reach).”³⁷ along with other responders stating “It relies on the number of views, shares, or likes it obtains. These factors make a content creators income very reliant on having popular videos or media that interests a certain demographic.”³⁸ Thus, the enduring individual concern for income stability, unknown shifts in consumer trends, and the limited success rate for creator's act as deterrents that encourage individuals to pursue traditional employment over a career in content creation. The persistence of these concerns demonstrates that while the Creator Economy has challenged traditional employment structures, societal

³² Flinders University ‘Diploma in Digital Content Creation, “Diploma in Digital Content Creation” (OpenUnisAu2026) <<https://www.open.edu.au/degrees/diploma-in-digital-content-creation-flinders-university-fli-dcc-dip>> accessed July 26, 2026.

³³ Primary Research - Interview – Conducted 28 May 2026

³⁴ Alexander Bleier, Beth L Fossen and Michal Shapira, ‘On the Role of Social Media Platforms in the Creator Economy’ (2024) 41 International Journal of Research in Marketing 411 <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167811624000545>> accessed 11 June 2026.

³⁵ Primary Research – Questionnaire, Generation X – Published April 2026

³⁶ Primary Research - Questionnaire, Generation Y - Published April 2026

³⁷ Primary Research - Questionnaire, Generation Z – Published April 2026

³⁸ Primary Research - Questionnaire, Generation Z - Published April 2026

values surrounding stability and security remain highly influential. As a result, the rise of digital labour reflects an incomplete transformation in how individuals perceive risk opportunities, and career success.

Chapter 2 – Rewriting work: How the Creator Economy is Restructuring Employment Norms

Edeling and Wies suggest that the Creator Economy has not only generated alternative employment pathways but has also begun restructuring societal understandings of work itself, as Creators are increasingly operating as entrepreneurial labourers rather than traditional employees.³⁹ Traditional employment systems have historically been associated with stability, fixed working hours and institutional career progression; however, the rise of platform-based labour has disrupted these long-standing norms. Through processes of digitalisation and globalisation⁴⁰, social media platforms have enabled individuals to transform personal interests, identities and leisure activities into monetised labour, fundamentally reshaping how employment is perceived within contemporary society.

This shift is strongly linked to the commodification⁴¹ of identity within popular culture. Crystal Abidin⁴² argues that creators strategically construct "micro celebrity personas" through ongoing self-presentation and audience engagement online.⁴³ Unlike traditional celebrities, whose careers are often managed by institutions such as television networks or media companies, creators cultivate audiences through relatability and perceived authenticity. Consequently, labour within the Creator Economy extends beyond simply producing content, requiring creators to constantly maintain visibility, audience interaction and personal

³⁹ Alexander Edeling and Simone Wies, 'Embracing Entrepreneurship in the Creator Economy: The Rise of Crepreneurs' (2024) 41 International Journal of Research in Marketing.

⁴⁰ A situation in which available goods and services, or social and cultural influences gradually become similar in all parts of the world. Cambridge Dictionary, 'GLOBALIZATION | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary' (Cambridge.org) <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/globalization>> accessed 30 June 2026.

⁴¹ The fact that something is treated or considered as a commodity (a product that can be bought and sold) Cambridge Dictionary, 'COMMODIFICATION | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary' (dictionary.cambridge.org) <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/commodification>> accessed 30 June 2026.

⁴² Crystal Abidin, School of Social Sciences, The University of Western Australia

⁴³ Crystal Abidin, "'Aren't These Just Young, Rich Women Doing Vain Things Online?': Influencer Selfies as Subversive Frivolity' (2016) 2 Social Media + Society 1 <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2056305116641342>> accessed 4 November 2025.

branding. This reflects what Abidin describes as “visibility labour” where everyday life itself becomes economically valuable.⁴⁴ This transformation has significant implications for contemporary employment structures as the boundaries between work, identity and leisure are undergoing transformative change, raising both concerns surrounding precarity while creating new economic opportunities.

Primary research findings strongly supported this transformation in employment norms. Questionnaire responses revealed that many Generation Z participants associated content creation with freedom, creativity and independence rather than simply financial income with one respondent illustrating that “People are valuing high independence and creative freedom”⁴⁵ and another explaining “It’s not as structured, allowing the individual to have creative freedom and have a flexible working day/week.”⁴⁶ This has dramatically shifted from Generation X as respondents suggest that the income potential is the main reason for individuals pursuing content creation with one respondent stating, “the glamour of potentially earning lots of money online.”⁴⁷ and another “Easier way to make money quickly.”⁴⁸ These responses suggest a broader cultural and societal shift whereby younger generations are increasingly valuing flexibility and self-expression within employment, rather than solely associating success and fulfilment in a career with income.

However, while the Creator Economy offers increased autonomy, it also introduces significant instability and precarity. Unlike traditional employment structures that provide predictable wages and institutional protections, holidays, and paid leave. Creators often rely heavily on algorithms, audience engagement and rapidly shifting online trends, and the requirement to constantly post to keep up with trends and stay relevant. Edeling and Wies highlight that success within the Creator Economy is heavily shaped by environmental factors such as platform infrastructure, commodification systems and audience visibility.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Crystal Abidin, “Aren’t These Just Young, Rich Women Doing Vain Things Online?”: Influencer Selfies as Subversive Frivolity’ (2016) 2 *Social Media + Society* 1

<<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2056305116641342>> accessed 4 November 2025.

⁴⁵ Primary Research - Questionnaire, Generation Z - Published April 2026

⁴⁶ Primary Research - Questionnaire, Generation Z Published April 2026

⁴⁷ Primary Research - Questionnaire, Generation X, Published April 2026

⁴⁸ Primary Research - Questionnaire, Generation X, Published April 2026

⁴⁹ Alexander Edeling and Simone Wies, “Embracing Entrepreneurship in the Creator Economy: The Rise of Creatrepreneurs” (2024) 41 *International Journal of Research in Marketing*

<<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167811624000570#ab005>> accessed November 5, 2025.

Consequently, creators are positioned within an employment system where financial security is uncertain and highly dependent on digital relevance.

These concerns were consistently reflected throughout questionnaire findings. When respondents were asked what concerns would prevent them from pursuing content creations as a main source of income⁵⁰, recurring themes included financial insecurity, inconsistency and fear of failure. Generation X respondents stated that their main reason for not pursuing the Creator Economy as a career was due to it being “Unreliable”⁵¹ and that “Income can be instable”⁵², as well as “long term security is low.”⁵³ Similarly, Generation Z respondents acknowledged the unstable nature of platform-based labour, with three participants stating that “it is not very secure long term.”⁵⁴ Such findings demonstrate that despite increasing interest in creator-based careers, traditional employment structures continue to be associated with greater security and reliability.

However, Mrs Ghatti explains that creators increasingly approach content creation as a business venture rather than simply a hobby, requiring strategic audience engagement, adaptability and insistent digital presence.⁵⁵ She further identified creativity, digital literacy and adaptability as highly valuable contemporary workplace skills, particularly within industries increasingly shaped by digital communication and platform engagement.⁵⁶ Thus, while the Creator Economy may be perceived as a one-dimensional and unreliable platform, it is undeniably reshaping the skills increasingly valued within contemporary labour markets.

The Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities (ACEEU) argues that educational institutions are beginning to recognise the economic significance of creators and the growing relevance of creator-based skillsets.⁵⁷ Universities have reportedly considered implementing “Creator curriculums” and entrepreneurial initiatives that familiarise students with digital branding, monetisation and audience engagement.⁵⁸ This demonstrates how meso institutional structures themselves are gradually changing in

⁵⁰ Primary Research - Questionnaire, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z, Published April 2026

⁵¹ Primary Research – Questionnaire, Generation X, Published April 2026

⁵² Primary Research – Questionnaire, Generation X, Published April 2026

⁵³ Primary Research – Questionnaire, Generation X, Published April 2026

⁵⁴ Primary Research – Questionnaire, Generation Z, Published April 2026

⁵⁵ Primary Research - Interview, conducted 28 May 2026

⁵⁶ Primary Research - Interview, Conducted 28 May 2026

⁵⁷ Salil Sahadevan, ‘ACEEU | Spotlight Article’ (Acee.org2020)

<<https://www.aceeu.org/news/spotlightarticle/id/36>> accessed 27 October 2025.

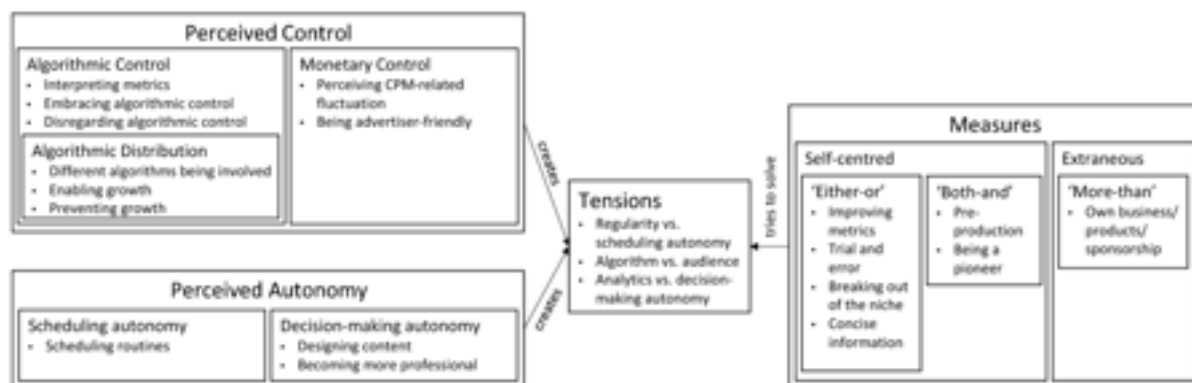
⁵⁸ Salil Sahadevan, ‘ACEEU | Spotlight Article’ (Acee.org2020)

<<https://www.aceeu.org/news/spotlightarticle/id/36>> accessed 27 October 2025.

response to shifting labour conditions, reflecting broader processes of modernisation within employment and educational systems.

Despite growing acknowledgment of the Creator Economy as a legitimate career, significant power inequalities remain embedded within platform-based labour systems. While social media platforms create the perception that anyone can succeed, creators operate within complex systems of platform governance, algorithmic visibility and audience engagement that influences their capacity to achieve success. Edeling and Wies note that many creators struggle to generate sustainable income due to oversaturation and intense competition,⁵⁹ while ACEEU similarly identifies the growing disparity between highly successful creators and “middle-class” creators who struggle to monetise their audiences effectively.⁶⁰ Consequently, although the Creator Economy presents itself as accessible and democratic, structural inequalities continue to shape who is most likely to succeed. Furthermore, algorithmic systems are continually creating a tension between perceived autonomy and institutional power as seen below in Figure 1.⁶¹ As a result, the Creator Economy does not necessarily redistribute power equally but rather restructures traditional employment hierarchies into new forms of digital labour characterised by both entrepreneurial autonomy and institutional constraint.

Figure 1 – “Field of tension in content creation on revenue-sharing social media platforms”



⁵⁹ Alexander Edeling and Simone Wies, “Embracing Entrepreneurship in the Creator Economy: The Rise of Creatrepreneurs” (2024) 41 International Journal of Research in Marketing <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167811624000570#ab005>> accessed November 5, 2025.

⁶⁰ Salil Sahadevan, ‘ACEEU | Spotlight Article’ (Acee.org2020) <<https://www.aceeu.org/news/spotlightarticle/id/36>> accessed 27 October 2025.

⁶¹ Tatjana Hödl and Thomas Myrach, ‘Content Creators between Platform Control and User Autonomy’ (2023) 65 Content Creators Between Platform Control and User Autonomy <<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12599-023-00808-9#Fig1>> accessed 2 July 2026.

These concerns were also expressed throughout questionnaire findings as several participants acknowledged that creators rely on visibility and platform algorithms to succeed.⁶² However, a generational difference can be observed as Generation Z respondents recognised the growing professional value of creator-based labour as they noted that content creation “should absolutely be treated as a legitimate long term career path.”⁶³ This generational perspective shift was reinforced by Ghatti, who explained that businesses increasingly view creators as valuable strategic partners rather than simply social media personalities⁶⁴ Ghatti noted that creators offer brands direct access to highly engaged audiences and are often able to communicate products in ways that feel more authentic and culturally relevant than traditional advertising.⁶⁵ This reflects a significant shift in employment norms as creators are no longer positioned on the margins of the workforce but are increasingly embedded within mainstream business practices and digital marketing strategies. Consequently, the Creator Economy is not simply generating online entertainment; it is reshaping how labour is performed, how businesses engage with consumers, and what skills are considered economically valuable within contemporary society.

Ultimately, the Creator Economy is actively restructuring societal understandings of employment by redefining the relationship between labour, identity, and economic participation. Through processes of digitalisation, commodification, and modernisation, creators increasingly operate as entrepreneurial individuals who monetise personal identity and audience engagement rather than relying solely on institutional employment structures. However, this transformation remains highly contradictory. While creators gain flexibility, autonomy and new opportunities for self-expression, they simultaneously face instability, algorithmic dependency and increasing competition. Therefore, the Creator Economy does not simply replace traditional employment pathways but reflects a broader structural transformation in which work itself is becoming increasingly personalised, precarious and digitally mediated.

⁶² Primary Research - Questionnaire, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z, Published April 2026

⁶³ Primary Research - Questionnaire, Generation Z, Published April 2026

⁶⁴ Primary Research - Interview, conducted 28 May 2026

⁶⁵ Primary Research - Interview, conducted 28 May 2026

Chapter 3 – Opportunity or Illusion? The Creator Economy and the Future of Work

One of the most significant appeals of the Creator Economy is its apparent accessibility. Unlike many traditional careers that require formal qualifications, substantial financial investment or institutional support, content creation can theoretically be pursued by anyone with access to a smartphone and internet connection⁶⁶. This accessibility has contributed to the perception that the Creator Economy democratizes employment opportunities by enabling individuals to monetise their skills, interests and creativity regardless of their social background.

This perception has been reflected throughout primary research, with 74% of respondents who are actively engaging with creator-based work across Generations X, Y, and Z stated that their main reason for pursuing content creation was the ability to explore their passion and creativity⁶⁷. This suggests that content creation is often viewed as more than simply a source of income; it is also perceived as a means of self-expression and personal fulfilment. Thus, highlighting the changing social values surrounding work, where individuals increasingly seek careers that align with their identity, interests and personal goals rather than prioritising financial stability alone.

While these motivations may appear individual in nature, they reflect broader shifts in societal attitudes towards work, income generation and career progression.⁶⁸ Edeling and Wies argue that the Creator Economy represents the emergence of a new entrepreneurial class of workers, legitimising content creation as a recognised form of economic participation and employment.⁶⁹ As discussed by Susmitha Ghatty, TikTok has significantly lowered “barriers to entry” to participation by providing individuals with opportunities to share content, build communities and potentially generate income without requiring powerful traditional gatekeepers such as employers, media organisations or large corporations.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Primary Research - Personal reflection written 14th June 2026

⁶⁷ Primary Research - Questionnaire Published April 2026

⁶⁸ Personal Reflection, 14th June 2026

⁶⁹ Alexander Edeling and Simone Wies, “Embracing Entrepreneurship in the Creator Economy: The Rise of Creatrepreneurs” (2024) 41 International Journal of Research in Marketing <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167811624000570#ab005>> accessed November 5, 2025.

⁷⁰ Primary Research - Interview, Completed 28 May 2026

Furthermore, broader government agencies such as the Australian eSafety Commissioner⁷¹ have webpages that explicitly outline benefits, tips and risks associated with content creation, demonstrating how the Creator Economy is no longer operating on the margins of society, but is increasingly being recognised by macro institutions as a significant component of Australia's evolving employment landscape.

This demonstrates a process of social and cultural change whereby employment opportunities are increasingly being acknowledged as being accessible through digital platforms rather solely through traditional career pathways.⁷² The Creator Economy therefore functions as both a product and a driver of modernisation, reflecting what Renana Peres, Martin Schreier, David A. Scweidel, Alina Sorescu, describe as the intersection of technological, economic and societal change that continues to reshape contemporary employment structures.⁷³ Thus, challenging conventional assumptions surrounding how employment opportunities are accessed and achieved.

Power structures in the Creator Economy

The concept of power is central to understanding the future of the Creator Economy as while institutions like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and others may be the catalyst for shifting work cultures and norms, they also hold the power to shape creators' visibility, influence earning potential, and determine the opportunities available within the digital economy. Traditional employment structures often place power within organisations and institutions. However, within the Creator Economy, power is increasingly concentrated within digital platforms themselves. Algorithms determine which content is promoted, monetised and recommended to audiences. As a result, creators become dependent on systems they do not control. ACEEU identifies this as a form of platform dependency, whereby creators rely on platform policies, algorithm changes and monetisation systems to maintain their livelihoods.⁷⁴ Susmitha Ghatti highlighted this issue, explaining that

⁷¹ The Australian Governments independent online safety regulator. eSafety Commissioner, "What We Do | eSafety Commissioner" (eSafety Commissioner2020) < <https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/what-we-do> accessed July 8, 2026.

⁷² Personal Reflection 14th June 2026

⁷³ Renana Peres and others, "The Creator Economy: An Introduction and a Call for Scholarly Research" (2024) 41 International Journal of Research in Marketing <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0167811624000594>> accessed January 15, 2026.

⁷⁴ Salil Sahadevan, 'ACEEU | Spotlight Article' (Acee.u.org2020) <<https://www.aceeu.org/news/spotlightarticle/id/36>> accessed 27 October 2025.

“Platforms hold a lot of control in what kind of videos you are shown. They have control over these monetisation structures.”⁷⁵ This highlights the significant influence platforms have over creators’ visibility and earning potential, reinforcing concerns about platform dependency and the concentration of power within digital systems.

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) further complicates these power dynamics. Ghatty explains that AI technologies are being incorporated into TikTok in the sense that AI is used “to ensure their algorithm is as strong as it can be.”⁷⁶ As well as this, she explained how AI in the general content creator space is being used to enhance videos, edit, and create ideas, and thus is likely to become an increasingly significant aspect of the Creator Economy in the future. This increasing influence of platforms and AI suggests that the Creator Economy is not eliminating power structures within the workforce but is redistributing them. Rather than employers controlling employment opportunities, power is now increasingly exercised through technological systems and digital infrastructure.

Despite concerns surrounding platform instability and inequality, the Creator Economy has emerged as a significant economic force. Susmitha Ghatty repeatedly emphasised that creators are increasingly viewed by businesses as valuable commercial partners rather than simply social media personalities. Brands now actively collaborate with creators because they can build trust, authentically and direct engagement with audiences in ways that traditional advertising often struggles to achieve.⁷⁷

This perspective aligns with broader industry trends as events such as The Forbes Creator Upfronts brought together major brands, marketers and creators, positioning content creators as influential economic actors capable of shaping consumer behaviour and marketing strategies.⁷⁸ Similarly, research conducted by Shaper Ritcher⁷⁹, Alexander Ritcher⁸⁰, and Drew Franklin⁸¹ estimates that more than 50 million individuals identify as creators on

⁷⁵ Primary Research - Interview 28th May 2026.

⁷⁶ Primary Research - Interview 28th May 2026.

⁷⁷ Primary Research - Interview 28th May 2026.

⁷⁸ ForbesLive, ‘Forbes Creator Upfronts in Partnership with Walmart Creator’ *Forbes* (7 November 2024) <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeslivetteam/2024/11/07/forbes-creator-upfronts-in-partnership-with-walmart-creator/>> accessed 15 April 2026.

⁷⁹ Senior Lecturer in Digital Marketing, University of Auckland, Waipapa Taumata Rau

⁸⁰ Professor of Information Systems, Te Herenga Waka — Victoria University of Wellington

⁸¹ Senior Lecturer in Marketing, University of Auckland, Waipapa Taumata Rau

Instagram alone, highlighting the scale of the Creator Economy and the growing reliance of brands on creator-led marketing to establish authentic consumer relationships.⁸²

Consequently, the Creator Economy should not be dismissed as a temporary trend or limited to perceptions of online entertainment.⁸³ Rather it represents an evolving employment ecosystem in which digital literacy, creativity, adaptability and entrepreneurial thinking are becoming increasingly valuable forms of cultural capital. Edeling and Wies, argue that the Creator Economy has contributed to the emergence of a new entrepreneurial workforce in which individuals monetise personal skills, identities and online communities through digital platforms.⁸⁴ Similarly, the ACEEU identifies the Creator Economy as a rapidly expanding sector that is reshaping employment pathways by enabling individuals to generate income through content production, audience engagement and brand partnerships. In this sense, the Creator Economy is actively rewriting traditional understanding of work by transforming personal interests, identities and online participation into economically valuable assets.

As of July 2026, macro level power structures such as government immigration authorities in Indonesia have introduced new visa regulations for foreign travellers that are entering the country on a tourist visa to create content.⁸⁵ The Australian Smart Traveller website⁸⁶ and other international government travel advisories are warning their citizens to have the correct visas if traveling to Indonesia for commercial purposes, such as obtaining revenue from social media posts while in the country and even post visiting, as it violates the terms of a tourist visa due to it being considered an activity that is not in accordance with the purpose of the visa. These new regulations highlight how major power structures outside the creator

⁸² Alexander Richter, Drew Franklin and Shahper Richter, 'Telling Stories: The 4 Ways Micro-Influencers Build and Keep Their Loyal Audiences' (*The Conversation* 28 July 2025) <<https://theconversation.com/telling-stories-the-4-ways-micro-influencers-build-and-keep-their-loyal-audiences-260806>> accessed 15 January 2026.

⁸³ Primary Research - Personal reflection, June 14th 2026

⁸⁴ Alexander Edeling and Simone Wies, "Embracing Entrepreneurship in the Creator Economy: The Rise of Creatrepreneurs" (2024) 41 *International Journal of Research in Marketing* <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167811624000570#ab005>> accessed November 5, 2025.

⁸⁵ Emma Kirk, "Bali Visa Rules Crackdown on One Group" (*news.com.au* July 6, 2026) <<https://www.news.com.au/travel/travel-updates/bali-visa-rules-crackdown-on-influencers-and-content-creators/news-story/60022d6e6d58bb2384799eef5bcfad71>> accessed July 8, 2026.

⁸⁶ Government website that provides travel advice for Australians planning to travel, already traveling, or living overseas. "About Us" (Australian Government Department of Affairs and Trade 2025) <<https://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/about-us>> accessed July 20, 2026.

platforms themselves are exerting control over influencers, furthering the legitimacy of content creation as a profession, while confirming its dynamic nature in society.

Ultimately, the Creator Economy represents opportunity and illusion. It offers unprecedented opportunities for creativity, entrepreneurship and economic participation while simultaneously creating new forms of inequality, instability and platform dependence. Rather than replacing traditional employment pathways, it is contributing to a broader restructuring of work in which success is increasingly shaped by digital participation, technological change and evolving cultural values. As society continues to adapt to these transformations, the challenge will not be whether the Creator Economy influences future employment, but how individuals, institutions and governments respond to its growing significance.

Conclusion

The traditional career pathway has long been conceptualised as a linear progression, characterised by education, employment, stability, and institutional security. However, throughout the process of investigating how the Creator Economy is challenging traditional pathways of employment, it became increasingly evident that these assumptions are undergoing significant transformation. As digitalisation, globalisation and technological advancement continue to reshape social institutions, employment is no longer exclusively defined by organisational structures, formal qualifications or long-term stability. Rather, work is increasingly characterised by flexibility, entrepreneurship, platform participation and individual self-branding.

Through undertaking this Personal Interest Project, I have developed a far deeper understanding of the extent to which the Creator Economy represents both continuity and change within contemporary employment systems. While traditional employment structures remain highly valued for their perceived stability and security, my research demonstrated that younger generations increasingly view work through alternative frameworks that prioritise autonomy, flexibility self-determination. Consequently, my investigation supports the hypothesis that the Creator Economy is challenging traditional pathways of employment by redefining how individuals conceptualise work, success and economic participation.

The findings of Chapter One demonstrated how the processes of modernisation and digitalisation have facilitated the emergence of the Creator Economy as a legitimate alternative career pathway. Through both primary and secondary research, I found that

content creators are increasingly recognised as entrepreneurs, with institutions and businesses actively engaging with creators as valuable economic actors. Chapter Two further highlighted how the Creator Economy is restructuring employment norms by redefining the boundaries between work, leisure and identity. Through the application of concepts such as commodification, power and authority, this chapter analysed how creators increasingly transform aspects of their personal identities into economic value. My questionnaire findings and expert interview with Susmitha Ghatti revealed that individuals are increasingly willing to accept precarity and instability in exchange for autonomy, flexibility and creative fulfilment. Finally, Chapter Three explored the opportunities and limitations of the Creator Economy, revealing that while digital platforms provide increased accessibility and entrepreneurial opportunity, structural inequalities, platform governance and algorithmic control continue to shape who can achieve long term success.

This topic expresses significant social and cultural relevance as it reflects broad processes of continuity and change occurring within contemporary society. The Creator Economy demonstrates the dynamic interaction between persons, society, culture and environment, illustrating how technological developments can transform social institutions, alter cultural values and reshape employment ideals across generations. Furthermore, investigating this topic reinforced the importance of understanding power, authority and inequality within emerging digital labour systems.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies strengthened the validity of this investigation. The questionnaire provided valuable generational perspectives, while my expert interview offered professional insight into the evolving relationship between creators, business and digital platforms. Although limitations exist regarding sample size and the rapidly evolving nature of this topic, these challenges ultimately strengthened my ability to critically evaluate and synthesise competing perspectives.

Ultimately, this investigation has demonstrated that the Creator Economy is not simply an alternative pathway to employment as it represents a broader social and cultural transformation in how work is understood, valued and experienced. As digital technologies continue to evolve, the question is no longer how the Creator Economy will influence the future of work, but how society will adapt to a future where the boundaries of employment are continually being redefined.

Annotated Reference list

Title: From Paycheque to Platform – An investigation into how The Creator Economy is challenging traditional pathways to employment.

Primary research methods

Expert interview 28/5/2026:

Susmitha Ghatti – Global head of business marketing for Australia and New Zealand

My expert interview was conducted with Susmitha Ghatti, a former colleague of a teacher from my school who I contacted due to her professional experience in the content creator sector. Her background in the Creator Economy was extremely valuable as it provided an insider perspective on the evolving relationship between creators, audiences, brands and platform structures. The interview revealed that the Creator Economy is increasingly being recognised as a legitimate economic sector rather than simply a form of entertainment. Ghatti emphasised that creators now function as entrepreneurs and business owners who generate value through audience engagement, personal branding and strategic partnerships. She also highlighted the growing importance of creators to businesses and marketing industries, while acknowledging challenges surrounding platform dependency, income instability and algorithmic change. As this was a semi-structured expert interview conducted specifically for the purposes of this PIP, the information was tailored towards investigating how the Creator Economy is challenging traditional employment pathways. The interview consisted of predetermined questions while also allowing for elaboration and follow-up discussion, enabling the collection qualitative data. This interview was highly valid due to the interviewees direct professional involvement within one of the world's largest creator platforms. The qualitative nature of the interview allowed for detailed insights that would not have been accessible through quantitative methods alone. However, potential institutional bias must be acknowledged, as Ghatti's position within TikTok may have influenced the representation of the Creator Economy's opportunities and limitations. To minimise this limitation, findings from the interview were compared with questionnaire responses and secondary academic research. This interview proved to be one of the most valuable sources used throughout this investigation. It provides critical evidence for all three chapters of the PIP. The interview also strengthened the synthesis between primary and secondary research by providing contemporary industry perspectives that could be compared with existing

academic literature. A major strength of this methodology was the opportunity to ask follow-up questions, allowing emerging themes such as platform power, AI integration and creator-businesses relationships to be explored in greater depth. The interview also generated several direct quotations that enhanced the authenticity and validity of the final PIP. Overall, this interview was an extremely valuable primary source due to its depth, relevance and contemporary industry perspective. Although some institutional bias was evident, the expertise and professional experience of the interviewee significantly enhanced the validity of this investigation and provided critical insights into how the Creator Economy is reshaping traditional employment pathways.

Questionnaire 30/01/2026:

My second primary research method was a questionnaire. It generated 63 qualitative and quantitative responses. These valid responses became a key primary source throughout this PIP. It was distributed online via email to local communities and personal networks in order to investigate contemporary generational attitudes toward the Creator Economy and traditional employment. The questionnaire was intentionally divided into generational sections with Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z respondents all answering in separate sections with identical questions, enabling a cross generational comparison regarding career preferences, employment security and perceptions of content creation. A separate section was also included for respondents who are currently pursuing or are taking interest in content creation. This section generated 22 targeted responses that provided deeper insights into the motivations, opportunities and perceived challenges of the Creator Economy. As well as this the 'Content creator section' allowed for further generational insights as the initial question asked what generation the respondent was from, enabling a comprehension of what generations are interested in the Creator Economy, facilitating a greater continuity and change aspect of this investigation. This methodology was particularly valuable as it produced evidence that informed all three chapters of this PIP. The quantitative data identified broader social patterns across generations, while the qualitative responses provided greater depth and allowed findings to be validated alongside my expert interview and secondary academic research, strengthening the overall validity of this investigation. Several limitations should be acknowledged. Although responses were collected across multiple generations, the overall sample size of 63 participants was relatively small and therefore cannot be considered representative of the wider Australian population. The unequal number of respondents within each generation also limited the reliability of some comparisons.

Furthermore, as the questionnaire was distributed primarily through personal networks, a degree of location and self-selection bias was present, and some qualitative responses lacked sufficient detail for extensive analysis. Overall, the questionnaire proved to be an effective research method, providing contemporary insights into changing perceptions of work while complementing both my secondary research and interview findings.

Personal reflection 11/06/2026:

My final primary research method was a personal reflection. This method allowed for a qualitative understanding that consolidated my research into a short reflection that encompassed personal understandings of the Creator Economy, and its effects on work both in contemporary society and in the future. This methodology was undertaken within my PIP diary whereby guiding questions set out by my teachers enabled a concise response that could be referenced throughout the PIP. This personal reflection was the least used piece of primary research through this investigation as it was conducted later than my other two methods as it was important to obtain sufficient understanding of the topic before reflecting on it in order to have the most well-rounded understanding and improve reliability. Due to the personal aspect of this methodology, bias was present, however, drawbacks to the Creator Economy were addressed alongside the positive aspects, allowing for a partial improvement on the bias. Due to the sufficient academic research and synthesis conducted before the reflection, the reliability was relatively strong, however as personal qualifications and expertise on the topic was limited, the reliability was impacted and thus this methodology can only be considered somewhat reliable. Furthermore, this reflective methodology was somewhat accurate as personal understandings may be impacted by location, resources and bias, thus effecting the overall accuracy of the method. However, sufficient primary and secondary research was conducted prior to the undertaking of this method, and thus this method can be viewed as relatively accurate. Overall, this methodology provided a well-rounded and concise piece of research that informed the synthesis and personal understanding on the Creator Economy as well as allowing for deeper reflection on both future and present implications of this topic.

Secondary Research:

Abidin C, “‘Aren’t These Just Young, Rich Women Doing Vain Things Online?’: Influencer Selfies as Subversive Frivolity” (2016) 2 *Social Media + Society* 1

<<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2056305116641342>> accessed November 4, 2025

“Aren't These Just Young Rich Women Doing Vain things Online?": Influencer Selfies as subversive Frivolity” written by Crystal Abidin is a journal article that examines how influencers (particularly women) on Instagram use selfies as a deliberate form of commercial labour. This article is heavily reliable as it was published in *social media + society*, a peer reviewed academic journal from SAGE publications. The Author Crystal Abidin as she is a recognised digital anthropologist, and her findings have been supported by an ethnographic study involving 190 influencers, enhancing both reliability and credibility of the article. This article also has strong validity as it directly investigates real world influencer and social media practices rather than assumptions and stereotypes. However, this data is predominantly from female influencers in southeast Asia, thus, the findings may not represent broader society. Abidin has a slightly empathetic approach to influencers, making this article may contain slight bias. This article provided useful background knowledge for this investigation as it allowed for deeper understandings of commodification, identity, and creativity in the context of the Creator Economy.

“About Us” (Australian Government Department of Affairs and Trade 2025)

<<https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/about-us>> accessed July 20, 2026

This official Australian Government source outlines the role of Smartraveller, Australia’s official travel advisory service operated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It was used in Chapter 3 to support discussion of Indonesia's 2026 visa changes affecting content creators, demonstrating how macro institutions are recognising content creation as a legitimate form of commercial employment through official travel guidance. The source is highly reliable and valid as it is produced by the Australian Government and provides authoritative information designed to inform the Australian travellers about international regulations and legal obligations. However, as its primary purpose is to provide travel advice rather than analyse the Creator Economy, it offers limited sociological depth and presents information from an Australian government perspective. Despite this limitation, it strengthens my investigation by providing contemporary evidence that governments are adapting policies to regulate creator-based work, reinforcing my discussion of the increasing legitimacy and institutional recognition of the Creator Economy.

Berning J, “Kickstarter” (*Crowdcru.com*2024) <<https://www.crowdcru.com/all-about-kickstarter/>> accessed June 30, 2026

Jack Berning's article on Kickstarter was used as a credible source that gave insight into the platform. It was primarily used as a site for a definition of Kickstarter that I used in my Chapter 1. This blog was somewhat reliable as the author has multiple similar articles on various topics to do with crowd funding, as well as the site owner Salvador Briggman being an expert in the crowd funding space. Furthermore, this blog was relatively credible as the author has significant experience in the crowdfunding field and his description of Kickstarter matched other sources. Due to the author working in the crowdfunding area, this blog entry has potential bias toward the site it is describing, however, as it was only used for a definition, this bias has not impacted the overall reliability and credibility of this investigation. This blog was useful in providing a definition at the beginning of Chapter 1, however was not used again through this PIP, and therefore was only somewhat useful.

Bleier A, Fossen BL and Shapira M, "On the Role of Social Media Platforms in the Creator Economy" (2024) 41 International Journal of Research in Marketing 411
<<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167811624000545>> accessed June 11, 2026

This article by Alexander Bleier, Beth L.Fossen, and Michal Shapira investigates the role of social media platforms in constructing the Creator Economy. It investigates the role of platforms as powerful institutions that can impact the production of content, and income generation. It was published by the International Journal of Research and Marketing, a peer reviewed academic journal, granting it strong reliability. Its authors specialise in marketing, consumer behaviour and digital platforms, and its use of existing academic literature and theoretical frameworks further enhance its reliability. This piece of secondary research is also highly valid as it directly examines the relationship between social media platforms and creators which is central to understanding the Creator Economy. However, the research focuses broadly on platforms and markets rather than individual creator experiences, thus providing less insight into personal motivations or lived creator experiences that would enhance its validity. The bias forms the authors may be slightly inclined to a business/marketing perspective meaning social and cultural impacts are less focused on. Overall, this article was extremely useful for analysing the Creator Economy as a form of employment rather than simply entertainment and gave me a clear understanding of the power structures that govern this dynamic network, thus, expanding my knowledge on this

topic, and contributing therefore having an extremely positive impact on the findings of this investigation.

By Screen Australia, “Screen Australia and YouTube Australia Fund Four New Teams through Tenth Skip Ahead Initiative - Screen News - Screen Australia” (*Screen Australia*2021) <<https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/sa/screen-news/2025/08-19-skip-ahead-10-recipients>> accessed January 15, 2026

This recently written (2025) government article aimed to describe the new additions to its Skip Ahead initiative whereby Australian youtubers are given the opportunity to learn new skills and grow in their content creation. Due to this article being government written on the Screen Australia website, and being supported by 43 content creation teams, it has strong reliability. Moreover, this article is both credible and valid as it is recent and has been published by official authorities. This article however was only somewhat useful in this investigation as while it assisted with the legitimisation of the Creator Economy, it provided very little information on the functioning of economy itself, nor did it provide any information on the past or future of it. Therefore, this article, while being reliable, credible and valid, was only somewhat useful and thus was not used thoroughly through this investigation.

Cambridge Dictionary, “Cambridge English Dictionary: Meanings & Definitions” (*Cambridge.org*2025) <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/>> accessed June 30, 2026

Cambridge Dictionary was used throughout this investigation for definitions of important terms. This site is both reliable and credible as it is a world-renowned university site that utilises the Cambridge English Corpus, a database that contains over 1.5 billion words of real, spoken and written English. Furthermore, this site was a valid source for definitions as it is consistently being updated by professional scholars and definitions are cross checked over multiple written and spoken sources. This site proved to be extremely useful throughout this investigation as not only did it improve my social and cultural literacy through learning definitions of words that were previously unknown but allowed me to accurately footnote key terms throughout the research, enhancing the PIPs validity and accuracy. Therefore, Cambridge Dictionary was a reliable, credible, valid and extremely useful site throughout the duration of this investigation.

Clelland G, "State Launches Bootcamp for Social Media Stars, Courier Mail, The: Web Edition Articles (Brisbane, Australia), May 24, 2024, P1" (*Newsbank.com* May 24, 2024) <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info%3Asid/infoweb.newsbank.com&svc_dat=AWGLNB&req_dat=19C8961F261B46F28F4ACBB122DF4830&rft_val_format=info%3Aofi/fmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=document_id%3Anews%252F19942BE92ADB1990> accessed December 15, 2025

Georgia Clelland's article, 'State launches bootcamp for social media stars' highlights the introduction of a Queensland state program that enhances Content Creators skills through a 16-week bootcamp. This article is relatively reliable as it was written by a professional entertainment journalist Georgia Clelland. This article was published by Courier Mail, a well-known and trusted newspaper, enhancing its reliability. The validity of this article is strong as it fits its intended purpose of expanding the Queensland Content Creator 'Bootcamp'. However, this article may be somewhat biased as it was not peer reviewed and therefore may have personal bias. However, this piece of secondary research was extremely useful in the early stages of this investigation as it gave a baseline for the Creator Economy and its legitimacy in macro society. Furthermore, it provided insight into real programs that are developing because for the Creator Economy, intensifying the changes to employment due to its rapid growth in contemporary society. Although this article was useful and reliable, it was slightly outdated due to it being written in 2024, and therefore it was not used consistently throughout this investigation as more recent programs have been developed since.

Cote C, "Personal Branding: What It Is and Why It Matters" (*Harvard Business School Online* March 21, 2024) <<https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/personal-branding-at-work>> accessed June 30, 2026

This Harvard Business School article by Catherine Cote was used in this investigation to obtain a reliable and relevant definition of Personal Branding, while also providing information that deepened personal understandings of this topic. Due to this article being published by Harvard Business School, it is extremely reliable and credible as it is a world renowned, academic institution. Furthermore, the author Catherine Cote is a reliable academic who has been working in the technology and business field for many years. Moreover, this article has strong validity as it fulfils its indented purpose of explaining what a personal brand is, which was extremely useful for this investigation. Finally, while this article provided key definitions and explanations surrounding the topic of personal branding, it

didn't cover much about the broader Creator Economy and thus it was only used in a small part of this investigation.

“Diploma in Digital Content Creation” (*OpenUnisAu2026*

<<https://www.open.edu.au/degrees/diploma-in-digital-content-creation-flinders-university-fli-dcc-dip>> accessed July 26, 2026

The Open Universities Australia site is an extremely reliable and credible source as it partners with well-known universities in Australia to provide Undergrad and Postgraduate, and no-ATAR students with opportunities to study selected courses. This site was used to inform my knowledge in Chapter 1 as I discussed the rising legitimacy of the Creator Economy, whereby universities, such as Flinders University as stated through this site, are offering courses in content creation. Due to the site focusing selected universities, there was no information on universities outside of those specified, thus, there was limited information acquired. However, this site was still extremely useful in providing a real, reliable, and credible university course that specialises in content creation, and therefore legitimises the Creator Economy as an industry that is challenging employment norms.

Edeling A and Wies S, “Embracing Entrepreneurship in the Creator Economy: The Rise of Creatpreneurs” (2024) 41 *International Journal of Research in Marketing*

<<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167811624000570#ab005>> accessed November 5, 2025

This peer-reviewed journal explores the emergence of the Creator Economy through an entrepreneurial perspective, arguing that content creators have evolved into ‘creatorpreneurs’ who combine creativity, business strategy and digital innovation to generate economic value. It examines the environmental and individual factors that influence success while acknowledging challenges including platform dependency, market saturation and income instability. This publication is located within the *International Journal of Research in Marketing* and was recently published in 2024. Its arguments are supported by extensive contemporary literature and recognised academic frameworks. However, as a conceptual review rather than an empirical study, it relies largely on existing research rather than original large-scale data. Additionally, its marketing perspective, may place greater emphasis on entrepreneurial opportunities rather than broader sociological implications. This article was one of the most valuable sources used throughout my PIP. It informed Chapter One by

explaining the rise of creators as entrepreneur's, Chapter Two through its analysis of changing employment structures, and Chapter 3 by highlighting structural inequalities and platform dependence. Overall, it provided a strong academic framework that was effectively examined alongside my questionnaire and expert interview findings.

eSafety Commissioner, “What We Do | eSafety Commissioner” (*eSafety Commissioner*2020) <<https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/what-we-do>> accessed July 8, 2026

This Australian Government source outlines the role of the eSafety Commissioner in promoting online safety through education, regulation and public awareness. This source was particularly relevant to this investigation due to the dedicated content creator resources, including guidance surrounding online opportunities, digital professionalism and potential risks associated with creating content on social media platforms. As an official Australian government publication, this source is highly reliable and credible, as its information is evidence based and produced by a statutory authority responsible for online safety. However, its primary purpose is to educate and protect the public rather than provide academic analysis, meaning it offers limited sociological interpretation of the Creator Economy. Consequently, it was used alongside peer reviewed literature and primary research to provide greater analytical depth. This source contributed to Chapter Two, supporting the research into how macro institutions are increasingly recognising content creation as a legitimate form of employment that needs guidance and regulation.

Florida R, Gulden T and Mellander C, “The Rise of the Creator Economy” (2022) 1 Creative Class 459 <https://creativeclass.com/reports/The_Rise_of_the_Creator_Economy.pdf> accessed November 6, 2025

This report provides a broad overview of the emergence of the Creator Economy, examining its origins, economic significance and the technological developments that have enabled individuals to generate income through digital platforms. It also explores creator demographics, patterns of digital participation and the structural challenges faced by smaller creators, including limited monetisation opportunities and platform dependency. Although this report is not peer reviewed, it is highly credible due to Richard Florida's extensive expertise in urban studies, innovation and economic development, alongside the reputation of the Creative Class Group as an international research and advisory organisation. However, the report adopts a predominantly North American perspective and was published in 2022,

meaning some statistics and platform examples are outdated and somewhat biased, and therefore were supplemented with more recent findings. This source was particularly valuable during the early stages of my investigation, providing a strong conceptual foundation for understanding the origins and development of the Creator Economy. It informed the direction of my research, assisted in refining my hypothesis and strengthened the conceptual framework underpinning Chapter One.

Forbes Live, “Forbes Creator Upfronts In Partnership With Walmart Creator” *Forbes* (November 7, 2024) <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeslivetteam/2024/11/07/forbes-creator-upfronts-in-partnership-with-walmart-creator/>> accessed April 15, 2026

This Forbes article examines the Forbes Creator Upfronts, an industry event that brought together major brands, marketers and digital creators to discuss the expanding commercial role of the Creator Economy. It highlights how creators are increasingly viewed as strategic business partners capable of influencing consumer behaviour, marketing campaigns and brand engagement, demonstrating the growing institutional legitimacy of content creation as a form of employment. Although this source is not peer reviewed, it is highly relevant due to Forbes’ established reputation in reporting on business, entrepreneurship and emerging industries. As the article reports directly on a contemporary industry event, it provides current insights into how businesses perceive creators within the evolving labour market. However, because its purpose is to report and promote the event, it may present a more optimistic perspective of the Creator Economy while giving limited attention to structural inequalities and employment risks. This source was highly valuable throughout Chapters One and Three, where it supported my analysis of the increasing integration of creators into formal business structures and demonstrated how macro institutions and global brands are legitimising content creation as a recognised and influential form of economic participation. It also provided contemporary evidence that complemented my academic research and expert interview findings.

Hall M, “Facebook” (*Britannica* March 30, 2024)
<<https://www.britannica.com/money/Facebook>> accessed June 30, 2026

This Encyclopaedia Britannica article provides a concise overview of Facebook, outlining its establishment in 2004, founders, ownership by meta platforms and its development into one of the world's largest social media networks. It was used to verify factual background

information regarding the origins of Facebook within my analysis of the historical development of the Creator Economy. As a publication produced by Encycloaedia Britannica, this source is highly reliable for factual and historical information due to its editorial review process and reputation as a trusted source. However, it is not an academic journal and thus provides descriptive information rather than analysis. Therefore, it was only used to provide background and a definition of Facebook. Although its contribution to my PIP was limited, this source ensured the historical accuracy of the contextual information presented in Chapter One, strengthening the credibility of my discussion surrounding the emergence of digital platforms.

Hödl T and Myrach T, “Content Creators between Platform Control and User Autonomy” (2023) 65 Content Creators Between Platform Control and User Autonomy
<<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12599-023-00808-9#Fig1>> accessed July 2, 2026

This peer-reviewed journal examines the relationship between platform control and creator independence, arguing that while digital platforms appear to offer creators independence, they remain subject to algorithmic systems, platform policies and revenue sharing models that significantly impact the opportunities that creators have for success. The articles diagram illustrated the tension between creator autonomy and platform control was particularly valuable and was therefore used as Figure 1 to support my analysis. As a recent peer-reviewed publication, this source is highly reliable and academically credible. Its analysis is supported by contemporary research into digital labour and platform economies, making it highly relevant to this investigation. However, the article primarily approaches the issue from a business and information systems perspective, a limitation that was addressed through the integration of sociological concepts and incorporating its findings with primary research and other academic literature. This source informed my Chapter Two, where it strengthened my analysis of power structures, institutional control and inequality within the Creator Economy. The visual model effectively illustrated that although content creation promotes entrepreneurial autonomy, creators remain constrained by digital platforms that govern visibility monetisation and long-term success.

Kazi E, “Council Post: How The Creator Economy Is Disrupting Higher Education” *Forbes* (August 12, 2024)<<https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinesscouncil/2022/02/04/how-the-creator-economy-is-disrupting-higher-education/>>

This article explores how the Creator Economy is challenging traditional higher education by enabling creators to share knowledge, mentorship and specialised skills through digital platforms, it argues that online communities, courses and creator-led learning are providing alternative pathways for individuals to acquire knowledge and employment-related skills outside conventional institutions. Although this source is not peer reviewed, it was published through the Forbes Business Council and written by Emad Kazi, a marketing professional with extensive experience supporting entrepreneurs and creators. Consequently, it provides valuable contemporary industry insight, although its focus on the benefits of the Creator Economy may introduce a positive bias and limit discussion of its structural disadvantages. Additionally, it's a predominantly American perspective required comparison with Australian peer reviewed sources. This source was particularly useful during the early stages of my investigation, informing Chapter One by supporting my discussion of how the Creator Economy is extending beyond employment to challenge traditional education pathways. It helped establish the broader social and cultural significance of digital work and was compared alongside academic literature and primary research.

Kirk E, "Bali Visa Rules Crackdown on One Group" (*news.com.au* July 6, 2026)

<<https://www.news.com.au/travel/travel-updates/bali-visa-rules-crackdown-on-influencers-and-content-creators/news-story/60022d6e6d58bb2384799eef5bcfad71>>

accessed July 8, 2026

This news article reports on the introduction of new Indonesian visa regulations restricting foreign content creators from generating commercial social media content while travelling on tourist visas. It highlights how governments are increasingly recognising content creation as a legitimate form of economic activity that requires legal regulation rather than being viewed solely as a recreational online activity. As a contemporary news source, this article was valuable in providing current evidence on the rapidly evolving Creator Economy. However, unlike peer-reviewed literature, it is primarily intended to inform the public and therefore offers limited academic analysis. To improve validity, the information was verified using the Australian Government Smart Traveller advisory, ensuring that the legislative changes referenced were accurate and supported by an official government source. This source informed Chapter Three, strengthening my investigation into how macro institutions are increasingly responding to the Creator Economy through regulation. It demonstrated that

governments are adapting employment and immigration policies to reflect the growing legitimacy and global significance of digital labour.

Peres R et al. “The Creator Economy: An Introduction and a Call for Scholarly Research” (2024) 41 International Journal of Research in Marketing
<<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0167811624000594>> accessed January 15, 2026

This peer-reviewed journal introduces the Creator Economy as a significant area of academic research, arguing that it has emerged through the convergence of technological innovation, digital platforms and challenging patterns of entrepreneurship. The authors, Renana Peres, Martin Schreier, David A. Schweidel, and Alina Sorescu, establish a conceptual framework for understanding the Creator Economy, outlining its rapid expansion, economic significance and the need for greater scholarly investigation into its broader social, cultural and economic implications. As a recent publication in the international journal of research in marketing, this source is highly reliable and academically credible. Its arguments are supported by contemporary literature and provide a balanced overview of the opportunities and challenges associated with platform-based work. However, the article primarily adopts a marketing perspective and therefore required supplementation with sociological research and primary data to explore the wider social and cultural implications of the Creator Economy. This source informed basic components of Chapter One, while also contributing to Chapter 3 as it assisted in the analysis of the Creator Economy’s role digitalisation and modernisation. Finally, it reinforced my analysis that the Creator Economy represents a transformation of employment rather than simply growth of social media platforms.

Richter A, Franklin D and Richter S, “Telling Stories: The 4 Ways Micro-Influencers Build and Keep Their Loyal Audiences” (*The Conversation* July 28, 2025)
<<https://theconversation.com/telling-stories-the-4-ways-micro-influencers-build-and-keep-their-loyal-audiences-260806>> accessed January 15, 2026

This article explores how micro-influencers establish and maintain audience engagement through authenticity, storytelling and personal connection. It also highlights the rapid expansion of the Creator Economy, estimating that more than 50 million people identify as creators on Instagram alone, while demonstrating how brands increasingly collaborate with creators to build consumer trust and strengthen marketing outcomes. Although ‘The

Conversation’ is not a peer reviewed source, its articles are written by academic experts and undergo an additional review process, making it a credible source for contemporary research. However, as the article focuses primarily on the opportunities associated with creator-brand relationships, it provides limited discussion of structural disadvantages and platform dependence. To address this limitation, it was coordinated alongside peer-reviewed research, government sources and primary data. This source informed Chapter Three, supporting analysis of the growing legitimacy and economic significance of the Creator Economy. It also reflects societal shifts in employment, entrepreneurship and contemporary marketing practices as it reinforced the analysis of creators being increasingly recognised as commercial partners.

Rieder B and others, “Making a Living in the Creator Economy: A Large-Scale Study of Linking on YouTube” (2023) 9 Social media and society
<<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/20563051231180628>> accessed November 3, 2025

This peer-reviewed journal investigates how YouTube creators generate income by analysing millions of external links embedded within creator content. Rather than relying solely on platform advertising revenue, the study demonstrates that successful creators frequently diversify their income through sponsorships, merchandise, crowdfunding, affiliate marketing and subscription services. The article argues that content creation increasingly resembles entrepreneurial activity, requiring creators to develop multiple revenue streams to maintain financial sustainability. As a large-scale empirical study published in ‘Social Media + Society’ this source is highly reliable and methodically rigorous. Its findings are based on extensive quantitative data, providing evidence of the economic structures underpinning the Creator Economy. However, the study focuses exclusively on YouTube, meaning some findings may not be fully transferable to platforms such as TikTok or Instagram. To address this limitation, its findings were measured with expert interview results and broader literature examining multiple creator platforms. This source informed Chapter 1, strengthening my discussion of creators as entrepreneurs by demonstrating that long-term success depends upon diversified income streams rather than platform monetisation alone. It reinforced my argument that the Creator Economy is reshaping traditional employment into a more entrepreneurial and self-directed form of work.

Sahadevan S, “ACEEU | Spotlight Article” (*Aceeu.org*2020)

<<https://www.aceeu.org/news/spotlightarticle/id/36>> accessed October 27, 2025

This article from the Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities (ACEEU) examines the rapid expansion of the Creator Economy and its significance within contemporary labour markets. It explores the emergence of creators as entrepreneurs, the growth of influencer marketing, changing employment structures, and the challenges associated with monetisation, platform dependence and income inequality. This source was highly valuable across all three chapters of my PIP. It informed my discussion of the historical rise of the Creator Economy (Chapter 1), the Restructuring of Employment Norms (Chapter 2), and the Opportunities and Limitations of Creator-based work (Chapter 3). As an international organisation specialising in entrepreneurship and innovation within higher education, ACEEU is a highly credible institutional source. While the article adopts a generally optimistic perspective by emphasising entrepreneurial opportunities, it also acknowledges structural barriers such as unequal monetisation and the difficulties faced by ‘middle class creators’, reducing potential promotional bias. Although it is not peer-reviewed, its industry focus, contemporary examples and statistical evidence made it a useful and reliable source for understanding how digital platforms are transforming employment pathways. Its broad perspective complemented primary research by providing macro-level evidence that supported the social and cultural changes identified through my questionnaire and expert interview.

Wikipedia, “Wikipedia” (Wikimedia Foundation 2001) <<https://www.wikipedia.org/>> accessed June 30, 2026

Wikipedia entries were used solely to verify basic information regarding the origins, launch dates and functions of early blogging platforms, specifically WordPress and Blogger, which were referenced in introductory discussion of the historical development of the Creator Economy. While this information provided useful contextual background for Chapter 1, it was not used to support any analytical claims or arguments within the investigation. Although Wikipedia is not considered an academically reliable source due to its open-editing model, where content can be modified by the public, the entries were used only for widely accepted historical facts that could be cross-checked against more authoritative sources. Consequently, the information was treated with caution and was supplemented by peer-reviewed journals and reputable publications throughout the PIP. Its usefulness was therefore limited to

providing concise background information rather than evidence supporting the central argument, ensuring that the overall validity and credibility of the investigation were not compromised.