

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i5.1605>

The Moderating Role of Cooperation and Job Satisfaction in the Wanghong Industry: The Impact of Technological Integration on Power Dynamics and Creative Labor Management

Qinghao Guo¹, Somdech Rungsrisawat²

Abstract

With the advent of the digital age, the Wanghong industry, as an emerging digital cultural industry, is profoundly changing the operation mode and power structure of traditional creative work. Technological integration plays an important role in promoting industrial innovation and improving efficiency, but its impact on the management of creative work and power dynamics has not been fully studied. This paper reveals how technology enhances creators' decision-making capabilities and optimizes resource allocation by analyzing the role of technological integration in task allocation, feedback mechanisms, and creator decision-making, thereby changing the power structure between creators and platforms and among creators. The study also explores how collaboration and job satisfaction, as moderating variables, influence the role of technological integration in creative labor management and power dynamics in different social and organizational contexts.

Keywords: Wanghong Industry, Technological Integration, Power Dynamics, Creative Labor Management, Cooperation, Job Satisfaction.

Introduction

In recent years, the digital landscape has undergone a dramatic transformation, driven by rapid advancements in internet technologies and digital platforms. Among the most striking outcomes of this evolution is the rise of the *Wanghong* industry—a vibrant sector where online influencers, once casual content creators, have grown into powerful cultural and economic agents. What began as a niche phenomenon rooted in entertainment has blossomed into a multifaceted industry that shapes advertising trends, product marketing strategies, and even consumer behavior on a global scale (Zhou & Lee, 2020).

Yet, behind the glamour and visibility of this industry lies a more intricate narrative—one where technological integration continuously reshapes the rules of engagement, the distribution of power, and the nature of creative labor. As digital platforms evolve, so do the tools and systems that creators rely on to produce content, engage audiences, and manage their personal brands. Technology, in this context, is more than a facilitator—it becomes a force that reorganizes the very structure of the industry. It empowers creators with data-driven insights, enhances their ability to make informed decisions, and allows for more efficient use of resources (Li, 2018). At

¹ PhD student in Communication Arts, College of Communication Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand, Email: aaronguo676@gmail.com, Email: s65584946019@ssru.ac.th

² Chairman of Doctoral program of Communication Arts, College of Communication Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand, Email: somdech.ru@ssru.ac.th, (Corresponding Author)



the same time, it alters power relations between creators and platforms and challenges traditional models of labor and collaboration.

Technology also plays a pivotal role in the everyday work of influencers. With improved task allocation systems and refined feedback mechanisms, creators are finding new ways to collaborate, innovate, and manage their creative processes (Chen et al., 2019). This technological evolution enables more agile and responsive production workflows, but it also introduces new forms of pressure—often invisible—that influence how creators work, whom they work with, and how much autonomy they truly possess. Within this shifting landscape, a deeper question begins to emerge: How are these technological changes affecting the balance of power and the management of creative labor in the Wanghong industry? And further, what role do intangible yet crucial elements—such as collaborative culture and job satisfaction—play in shaping these outcomes? This study seeks to explore these interconnected dynamics. Specifically, the research begins with an exploration of how technological integration reshapes the power structure in the influencer ecosystem. By focusing on decision-making and resource allocation, the study examines how creators navigate their relationships with platforms and with one another in a digitally mediated environment. Next, it turns to the labor that fuels this industry—creative work—and investigates how technology influences collaboration, efficiency, and innovation in content production. Finally, it asks how the broader cultural and emotional context, particularly a sense of collaboration and job satisfaction, moderates these impacts. These factors, often overlooked, may hold the key to understanding whether technological integration leads to sustainable and equitable growth—or exacerbates existing inequalities.

With these questions in mind, this study sets out three core objectives. First, to uncover the ways in which technology transforms power dynamics through enhanced decision-making and optimized resource use. Second, to analyze how technology supports or hinders the management and innovation of creative labor. And third, to assess how collaborative culture and job satisfaction shape the long-term impact of these technological changes. In doing so, the research aims not only to offer a clearer picture of the current state of the Wanghong industry, but also to provide valuable insights for creators, managers, and policymakers who are navigating this complex and rapidly evolving digital environment.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

When exploring the development and dynamics of China's Wanghong industry, theoretical underpinnings are an important tool for understanding the phenomenon. Research on the Wanghong industry draws on several theoretical perspectives, including Technological Determinism (TD), Attention Economy Theory (AET), Social Capital Theory (SCT), Cultural Production Theory (CPT), Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Theory (EET), and theories of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (EET). (Cultural Production Theory (CPT), Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Theory (EET), and Digital Labor Theory (DLT).

Technological determinism (TD) emphasizes the central role of technological advances in shaping social behavior and structure (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). In the Wanghong industry, technological determinism helps explain how social media and digital platforms have changed the way content is created and distributed through technological innovation. Attention Economy Theory (AET), on the other hand, proposes that in today's information overload environment, attention becomes a scarce resource, and that Wanghongers realize economic value by attracting

Social Capital Theory (SCT), on the other hand, emphasizes the social capital that Wanghong acquire through the establishment and use of social networks. Wanghong use social media platforms to build relationships with their fans and accumulate social capital through interactions, which in turn translates into economic gains (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). Cultural Production Theory (CPT) further explores the process of cultural content production and its transformation in the digital environment, and Wanghong's content production is an important manifestation of this theory (Peterson & Anand, 2004).

The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Theory (EET) emphasizes the importance of networks and resources that support entrepreneurial activities. In the Wanghong industry, platforms, resources and social networks together form an entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports Wanghong' individual entrepreneurial activities (Stam, 2015). Digital Labor Theory (DLT), on the other hand, focuses on labor practices and the exploitation behind them in the digital era, pointing out that Wanghong, as digital laborers, face pressures and exploitation from platforms and markets despite their creative freedom (Jin, 2020; Duffy, 2017).

The theoretical framework of this study draws on the six core theories mentioned above in order to fully understand the Wanghong industry and its dynamics in the digital economy. The framework aims to explain how technology, social networks, attention management, cultural production, entrepreneurial support, and labor conditions work together to shape aspects of the Wanghong industry (Zhang & Su, 2019).

The Formation and Development of Wanghong Industry

Wanghong (Wanghong), as a new social phenomenon, has evolved along with the rise of social media platforms and the popularization of the Internet. Researchers generally agree that the Wanghong phenomenon represents a unique cultural and economic model that transforms an individual's social media influence into economic gains (Senft, 2008; Zhang & de Seta, 2018). With the increased interaction between e-commerce platforms such as Taobao and social media, the Wanghong economy is gradually integrating into the mainstream market and becoming an important part of China's digital economy (Ao, 2018; Craig et al., 2021).

Scholars have explored the formation of the Wanghong economy from three main perspectives: one is that as an emerging industry, Wanghong monetize their personal influence through live broadcasting and short videos, a model that promotes the integration of e-commerce and the cultural industry (Sandel & Wang, 2022); two is that the Wanghong economy is regarded as a transformational dream for ordinary people, helping many ordinary people to achieve freedom of wealth and social influence (Li, 2020); and third, Wanghong, as part of digital labor, face challenges posed by platform rules and commercialization pressures (Wang & Picone, 2021). These studies not only reveal the commercial value of the Wanghong economy, but also reflect the labor exploitation behind it (Zhou & Liu, 2021).

The Role of Technology in the Wanghong Industry

Technological advancement is a key factor driving the rapid development of the Wanghong industry. Scholars of technological determinism believe that the technological characteristics of social media platforms have played a decisive role in the formation and development of the Wanghong economy (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). From live streaming to short videos, from algorithmic recommendation to real-time data analysis, technological platforms not only provide

tools for content production, but also influence the distribution and dissemination path of content (Senft, 2008). For example, the design of platform algorithms influences which content gets more exposure, thus determining the success or failure of Wanghong (Zhang & Su, 2019).

In addition, the social attributes of digital platforms have also largely enhanced the interaction between Wanghong and their fans, forming a strong community support network (Cunningham & Craig, 2019). This large-scale interaction realized through the medium of technology not only increases the social capital of netstars, but also promotes the direct connection between brands and consumers to a certain extent (Xu & Zhao, 2019). The impact of technology on the Wanghong industry is reflected in the competition for audience attention, particularly how platforms utilize algorithms and recommender systems to regulate user attention in order to improve the effectiveness of advertisements and content (Goldhaber, 1997).

Characteristics and Economic Value of Wanghong Industry

The formation and dissemination of Wanghong culture reflects the characteristics of digital cultural production, especially in the context of Attention Economy (Attention Economy), how to attract and maintain the attention of the audience has become a key factor in the success of Wanghong (Wu, 2016). Most of the content creation of Wanghong is based on audience preferences, and utilizes the interactive features of social media to establish an emotional connection with the audience by sharing personal stories, life details, etc., so as to enhance the influence (Marwick, 2015).

Existing research has also emphasized the importance of social capital in the Wanghong industry (Coleman, 1988). The success of Wanghong not only relies on the attractiveness of their content, but is also closely related to the size and quality of their social networks (Bourdieu, 1986). Through real-time interactions on the platform and continuous support from their fans, Wanghong are able to rapidly expand their reach, and this accumulation of social capital is further translated into commercial value (Abidin, 2016). Collaboration with brands and advertising endorsements are the main avenues of monetization for Wanghong, and technology plays a bridging role in this process, facilitating the connection between creators and brands (Cunningham & Craig, 2019).

Challenges of Wanghong as Digital Laborers

Although the Wanghong economy provides individuals with the opportunity to gain wealth and fame through social media, there is also the issue of digital labor exploitation behind it. Digital labor theory suggests that while Wanghong enjoy creative freedom, they are also under tremendous pressure from platforms and markets (Jin, 2020). These pressures include the constant demand for content production, the constant changes in platform rules, and the uncertainty of income (Duffy, 2017). The nature of Wanghong' work makes their labor conditions unstable, and their income level is highly dependent on the number and activity of their fans, all of which puts a double burden on Wanghong both psychologically and financially (Wang & Picone, 2021).

In addition, studies have noted that the autonomy of Wanghong is often limited by technology platforms and business models. Platforms limit Wanghong' creative freedom through algorithms and business rules, forcing them to constantly adjust their content style and forms of collaboration to meet the needs of platforms and advertisers (Abidin, 2016; Cunningham & Craig, 2019). This dynamic not only affects the creative direction of Netstars, but also limits their personal expression (Jin, 2020).

Policy and Social Implications

Policy research on the Wanghong economy has also gradually received attention from academics. Scholars have pointed out that as the Wanghong economy continues to expand and its influence on society and the economy is gradually expanding, the government needs to formulate reasonable policies to regulate the development of the industry and ensure fairness and sustainability (Zhang & Su, 2019). Especially in terms of intellectual property protection, platform responsibility and creators' rights and interests, the improvement of policies is crucial for the healthy development of the Wanghong economy (AskCI, 2020).

Wanghong economy has also had a profound impact on social culture. As a new type of social phenomenon, Wanghong have had a significant impact on the consumption habits, aesthetic interests and values of the general public by displaying their personal lives, sharing their consumption experiences and promoting their products through digital platforms (Song, 2022). This influence is not only reflected in the commercial level, but also in the changes in the cultural level, such as the reshaping of individual identity and the diversification of self-expression forms (Zhang & de Seta, 2018).

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, with the aim of exploring the phenomenon of mobilizing popular creativity in China's "Wanghong industry". Based on a combination of descriptive and explanatory principles, the research design explores the process of creator-centered digital cultural production and its influencing factors through in-depth interviews with creators and questionnaire surveys with audiences (Creswell, 2014).

In this study, 20 Wanghong creators, 5 platform managers, and 150 social media users were selected as research subjects using a purposive sampling method. The selection criteria for the Wanghong creators included their number of followers, the type of content they created, and their representativeness in the industry, while the platform managers were from major social media platforms (e.g., Jieyin, Xiaohongshu). Social media users were then randomly selected to cover a range of ages, genders and regional backgrounds in order to obtain a diverse range of perspectives (Patton, 2015).

In-depth interviews: Semi-structured interviews with netizen creators and platform managers covering the creative process, platform support, fan interaction, financial gains and career development. A combination of face-to-face and online interviews ensures the depth and breadth of information collected (Kvale, 2007).

Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire was designed for social media users, focusing on the audience's preference for Wanghong content, their interaction style and their consumption behavior. The questionnaire was distributed through an online platform and 150 valid returned questionnaires were obtained, and the data were used for quantitative analysis to explore the characteristics of audience behavior and its influence on creators (Dillman, 2014).

The study started with a literature review to identify the research questions and hypotheses, and then designed the research instruments (interview outlines and questionnaires). In the data collection stage, the required data are obtained through multiple rounds of interviews and questionnaires. After the data collection is completed, qualitative and quantitative analyses are carried out, and finally the results are synthesized to draw conclusions about the creative

production mechanism of Wanghong industry.

Results

Demographic Information

This study analyzes the current state of creativity of the college student population in the Wanghong industry based on a questionnaire survey covering 600 students from 10 universities in Beijing, China, with a dataset covering basic demographic information on gender, educational background, and types of Wanghong followed.

Basic Information		Quantities	Percentage (%)
distinguishing between the sexes	male	335	55.83%
	daughter	265	44.17%
educational background	undergraduate (adjective)	486	81.00%
	bachelor's degree	96	16.00%
	PhD and above	18	3.00%
Concerned Types of Wanghong	content creator	114	19.00%
	live anchor (TV)	369	61.50%
	opinion leader	67	11.17%
	(sth. or sb) else	50	8.33%

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

In terms of gender distribution, there were 335 male and 265 female participants, representing 55.83% and 44.17% of the total sample, respectively. This indicates that there is a slightly higher percentage of males than females in the sample of this study.

In terms of educational background, undergraduate degrees accounted for the vast majority of respondents, with a total of 486 participants, or 81% of the sample; followed by master's degrees, with 96 participants, or 16%; while only 18 participants, or 3%, had doctoral degrees and above. This distribution reflects that the participants as a whole have a high level of education, with undergraduate degrees predominating and a relatively small proportion of master's degrees and above.

The types of Wanghong that the participants were concerned about, among which live anchors were the most popular, with 369 people indicating their concern, accounting for 61.5%; followed by content creators, with 114 people, accounting for 19%; opinion leaders were followed by 67 people, accounting for 11.17%; while 50 people, accounting for 8.33%, chose other types. This data suggests that in the current digital cultural environment, content in the form of live

streaming has a greater appeal to viewers, while content creators and opinion leaders also occupy a certain market share.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis and Normal Distribution Test

The descriptive statistics section analyzes the sample data through SPSS, which includes calculating metrics such as maximums, minimums, means, and standard deviations to summarize the concentration trends and degree of dispersion of the variables. The sample size of this study was 600, and the means of the variables were generally around 4, with a standard deviation close to 2. This suggests that the majority of the creators had a more neutral-positive attitude towards the variables in the study, but that there was a wide variation of individual experiences within the group.

In normal distribution testing, the distribution of data is assessed by calculating skewness and kurtosis. Skewness reflects the symmetry of the data distribution, and most skewness in this study is negative, indicating that the data distribution is slightly left-skewed, with some of the variables experiencing slightly higher than average values. Kurtosis is used to measure the degree of spikiness of the data distribution, and most of the kurtosis is negative, indicating that the data distribution is relatively flat, with fewer extreme high or extreme low values, and the overall distribution of the data is more balanced. The skewness and kurtosis of the normal distribution have small standard errors (0.1 for skewness and 0.199 for kurtosis), indicating a high degree of precision in the statistical estimates and a high degree of confidence in the data.

Measurement Model Analysis

The relationship between the apparent and latent variables was explored, with a focus on including tests of reliability and validity to assess the validity and reliability of the model. First, factor loading analysis was used to verify the association between the measurement items and their latent variables. The results showed that the factor loading values of all measurement items exceeded the critical value of 0.70, which indicated that each item had a strong explanatory power for the latent variable to which it belonged, and the convergent validity was good. In addition, the combined reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were higher than 0.70 and 0.50, further indicating that the measurement model has high internal consistency and convergent validity.

For the reliability test, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used in this study for assessment. The Cronbach's α coefficients for all latent variables exceeded 0.80, indicating high internal consistency and good reliability for the measurement scales in the model. In addition, the corrected item total correlations (CITC) were also generally high, indicating that the correlations between each measurement item and the scale to which it belongs are strong, and that deleting any of the items would not significantly improve the overall reliability of the scale.

For the test of discriminant validity, the Fornell-Lacker criterion and the HTMT ratio were used. All diagonal elements exceeded 0.50 and most of the non-diagonal elements were below the diagonal, which indicates that the discriminant validity among the latent variables is good and there is no problem of multicollinearity. The results of the analysis of the HTMT ratios showed that the HTMT values among the variables were below 0.85, which further supports the discriminant validity of the model.

Structural Modeling Analysis

The structural model assessment verifies the hypothesized relationships between latent variables

through path analysis. The path coefficients of the model reveal causal links between variables such as technology integration, cooperation, and job satisfaction, and measure the strength and direction of influence between variables.

The results of the path coefficient analysis indicate that technology integration (TI) has a significant positive effect on both power dynamics (PD) and creative labor management (MCL). The path coefficient of technology integration on power dynamics is 0.488 with a T-value of 13.070 and a p-value of less than 0.05, indicating that this relationship is significant and the confidence interval does not contain zero, further supporting the validity of hypothesis H1. Similarly, the path coefficient of technology integration on creative labor management is 0.531 with a t-value of 13.993 and a p-value of less than 0.05, which verifies the significance of hypothesis H2 and the confidence interval does not contain 0, proving that this relationship is significant and has a positive impact.

Cooperation (CB) has a moderating effect on the relationship between technology integration and power dynamics. The path coefficient is -0.087, the t-value is 2.799, and the p-value is 0.005, indicating that cooperation has a somewhat weakening effect on the positive impact of technology integration and power dynamics. This negative moderating effect implies that the impact of technology integration on power dynamics is weakened when the level of cooperation increases, which validates hypothesis H3.

Job satisfaction (JS) also showed a moderating effect between technology integration and creative labor management. The path coefficient is -0.075, the t-value is 2.725, and the p-value is 0.006, indicating a significant negative moderating effect of job satisfaction. When job satisfaction is low, the positive effect of technology integration on creative labor management is weakened, thus supporting hypothesis H4.

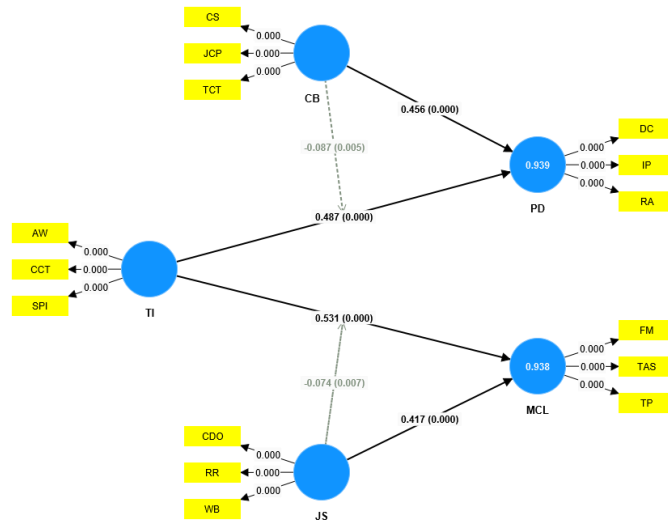


Figure 1 Model Path Diagram

Analysis of Moderating Effects

The results of the analysis show that cooperation has a negative moderating effect between technology integration and power dynamics (PD), with a path coefficient of -0.087, a T-value of 2.799, and a p-value of 0.005, suggesting that cooperation has a significant attenuating effect on

the positive impact of technology integration on power dynamics.

Job satisfaction likewise exhibits a negative moderating effect on the relationship between technology integration and creative labor management (MCL). The path coefficient is -0.075, the t-value is 2.725, and the p-value is 0.006, suggesting that the positive effect of technology integration on creative labor management is attenuated when job satisfaction is high. This phenomenon suggests that creators are more inclined to rely on intrinsic motivation and autonomy to manage creative labor and the role of technology is relatively weakened in the presence of high job satisfaction.

	Original sample (O)	STDEV	2.5%	97.5%	T
CB x TI -> PD	-0.087	0.031	-0.152	-0.030	2.799
JS x TI -> MCL	-0.075	0.028	-0.134	-0.026	2.725

Table 2 Table of Moderating Effects

Analysis of Total Effects

The path coefficient of technology integration on power dynamics is 0.488 with a T-value of 13.070 and a P-value significantly less than 0.05, showing that technology integration has a significant positive effect on power dynamics. Similarly, the path coefficient of technology integration on creative labor management is 0.531 with a T-value of 13.993 and a P-value significantly less than 0.05, which indicates that technology integration can significantly improve the efficiency and quality of creative labor management.

The total effect analysis verifies the central role of technology integration in digital cultural production, which not only improves the management of creative labor, but also enhances the creators' power and autonomy in the digital creation process through effective task allocation and feedback mechanisms. These findings provide important theoretical support for further understanding of creators' behavior and creative management in the "Wanghong industry".

	Original sample (O)	STDEV	2.5%	97.5%	T	P
TI -> PD	0.488	0.037	0.413	0.563	13.070	0.000
TI -> MCL	0.531	0.038	0.455	0.603	13.993	0.000

Table 3 Total Effects Analysis Table

Qualitative Research

The effects of factors such as technology integration, collaboration, and job satisfaction on creators' power dynamics and creative labor management were explored in depth through semi-structured interviews. The study participants included three communication experts, five Wanghong, and 12 university students in Beijing, totaling 20 people. Through these interviews, this study draws out different experiences and perceptions about creators in digital cultural production.

Interviewees agreed that technology integration has played a positive role in giving creators more autonomy and voice. The application of technological tools, such as short videos and live streaming, has lowered the threshold of creation, allowing creators to interact directly with audiences and obtain real-time feedback. This feedback mechanism not only helps creators understand audience needs, but also enhances creators' control in content creation, thus promoting the enhancement of their power dynamics .

Regarding the impact of collaboration on creators, most respondents indicated that collaboration affects the power dynamics and creative labor management of creators to some extent. Particularly in the case of joint content creation with other creators, collaboration contributes to the sharing of resources and the expansion of the audience base, but it may also lead to a loss of autonomy in some of the decisions made by the creators .

Regarding job satisfaction, interviewees mentioned that a high level of job satisfaction contributes to creators' motivation and creative output, but may also diminish the impact of technology integration on creative labor management to some extent. In particular, those creators who are satisfied with the current state of their work are more inclined to rely on their own experience and intuition to create rather than relying exclusively on technological tools .

Conclusion

Taking China's "Wanghong industry" as an object of study, this research explores how mass creativity is mobilized in digital cultural production and its impact on creators. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the study finds that technological integration, platform support, and cooperation among creators have a significant impact on the power dynamics and creative labor management of digital cultural production. Technological integration significantly enhances creators' position in digital cultural production by improving their decision-making ability and resource allocation efficiency. Meanwhile, job satisfaction plays an important moderating role in the interaction between creators and platforms and brands, positively affecting creative labor management and economic returns. Overall, digital technology has driven the development of the Wanghong industry, which has not only changed the way cultural content is produced, but also the career paths of individual creators, leading to China's emerging creative economy.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that the role of technological integration in digital cultural production is crucial. The technological tools and data support provided by platforms enable creators to efficiently manage creative content, interact with audiences, and make immediate feedback adjustments during creation. This technology-driven process allows creators to optimize creative production and improve the quality of content and audience stickiness. However, the double-edged nature of technology cannot be ignored; creators' work is often constrained by platform algorithms, resulting in limited creative freedom, which is consistent with the exploitation and pressure in existing digital labor theories (Jin, 2020).

Collaboration is an important factor affecting the efficiency of creative production. Collaboration among creators can effectively expand their social networks, enhance their voice and influence on the platform, and thus improve the economic returns of their creations. Especially in the Wanghong economy, creators make each other's influence stack up through collaborative content production, cross-promotion, and brand linkage. Studies have found that collaboration has a moderating role between technological integration and power dynamics, and

the higher the degree of cooperation, the stronger the position of creators in the digital ecosystem (Cunningham & Craig, 2019).

Findings on job satisfaction show that satisfaction not only affects creators' motivation and output quality, but also influences the way they interact with platforms, brands, and other relevant parties. High satisfaction can stimulate creators' motivation to innovate and enhance their initiative and self-expression in creative labor management. However, as platforms gain more control over content, creators may face the risk of income fluctuation and burnout, which also suggests the relevance of improving creators' working environment and labor conditions.

Implications

The findings of this study offer several important implications for stakeholders within the Wanghong industry, including creators, platform operators, brand partners, and policymakers. As digital technology continues to redefine the boundaries of cultural production, a nuanced understanding of how technological integration shapes power relations and creative labor management is essential for fostering a more sustainable and equitable digital economy.

For Creators, the study highlights the critical role of technological literacy and strategic collaboration. Creators who actively engage with digital tools and platform analytics are better positioned to make informed decisions, allocate resources effectively, and adapt content to audience preferences. At the same time, building strong networks of collaboration with other creators not only enhances visibility but also reinforces individual autonomy within a highly competitive and algorithm-driven environment. These insights point to the importance of continuous digital skill development and collaborative strategies as core competencies in digital cultural production.

For Platform Operators, the findings underscore the dual responsibility of empowering creators while ensuring ethical governance. While technology can provide creators with new opportunities, it can also reproduce hierarchies and exert pressure through algorithmic control. Platforms must therefore strive to maintain a balance between automation and transparency, ensuring that creators have access to fair visibility, equitable monetization models, and mechanisms for meaningful feedback. Supporting collaborative features, clearer content policies, and more inclusive algorithmic designs are all steps that can contribute to a healthier creator-platform relationship.

For Brand Partners and Advertisers, the study reveals that creators' job satisfaction and creative autonomy are closely tied to the success of branded content. Brands that engage with influencers in ways that respect their creative freedom and align with their authentic voice are more likely to produce impactful and credible content. This calls for more flexible and co-creative models of brand collaboration that consider not only performance metrics but also the long-term well-being and creative integrity of influencers.

For Policymakers and Regulators, the rise of the Wanghong industry signals the need for updated labor protections in the digital age. As creators increasingly rely on platform-based income, they are exposed to new forms of precarity, such as income instability, overwork, and burnout. Policies aimed at improving creators' working conditions—through clearer labor classifications, access to social protections, and transparency in platform governance—can play a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of the digital creative economy.

Overall, the study suggests that while technology is a powerful enabler of mass creativity, its impact is mediated by social, organizational, and emotional factors. The future development of the Wanghong industry will depend not only on technological innovation but also on cultivating a more supportive and equitable digital ecosystem—one that values creator autonomy, collaborative culture, and well-being alongside productivity and profit.

Recommendations

Strengthen technical support and creator empowerment: Platforms should provide creators with more autonomous technical support and decision-making tools, such as more transparent algorithmic rules and data analysis tools, so as to help creators better understand audience needs and optimize content creation. By increasing the transparency of the platform, it can enhance creators' sense of control in the process of content creation and dissemination, and reduce the uncertainty and creative pressure brought by algorithms.

Promote collaboration and resource sharing among creators: Platforms should actively promote collaboration among creators and establish incentive mechanisms to support cooperation, such as traffic support for joint content creation and sharing opportunities for brand cooperation. Through enhanced collaboration, creators can not only improve the diversity of their content, but also expand their influence and form a more stable creator ecosystem.

References

- Asarch, S. (2021). Hot tub livestreamers broadcasting in bikinis on Twitch have divided the platform's community. Retrieved from [<https://www.insider.com/twitch-hot-tub-meta-controversy-explained-2021-5>], 2021-07-11.
- Beer, D. (2017). The social power of algorithms. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(1), 1-13.
- Benkler, Y. (2018). *The wealth of networks: how social production transforms markets and freedom*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Banks, J., & Deuze, M. (2009). Co-creative labor. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 12(5), 419-431.
- Beer, D. (2017). The social power of algorithms. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(1), 1-13.
- Benkler, Y. (2017). *The wealth of networks: how social production transforms markets and freedom*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Chan, J.M. (2021). Administrative boundaries and media marketization: A comparative analysis of the newspaper, TV and internet markets in China. In Chin-Chuan Lee (ed.), *Chinese media, global contexts* (pp. 159-176). London: Routledge.
- Cunningham, S., Metha, S., Lunardi, G., & Healy, G. (2022). YouTube: The Interface between Television and Social Media Entertainment (forthcoming). In Derek Johnson (Ed.), *From Networks to Wanghong: A Guide to Changing Channels*, 2nd edition. Routledge, New York, NY.
- Cunningham, S., & Silver, J. (2021). *Screen distribution and the new King Kongs of the online world*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deuze, M., & Lewis, N. (2016). Professional identity and media work. in M. Banks, R. Gill & S. Taylor (Eds.), *Theorizing cultural work* (pp. 161-174). London: Routledge.
- Deuze, M., & Steward, B. (2020). Managing media work. in M. Deuze (Ed.), *Managing media work* (pp. 1-10). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Douyu. (2021). New streamer growth task. Retrieved from [<https://www.douyu.com/cms/gong/202108/02/18524.shtml>], 2021-09-10.
- Glatt, Z., & Banet-Weiser, S. (2021). Productive ambivalence, economies of visibility, and the political potential of feminist YouTubers. In S. Cunningham & D. Craig (Eds.), *Creator culture: An*

- introduction to global social media entertainment (pp. 39-56). New York: New York University Press.
- Hair, L. (2021). Friends, not ATMs: Parasocial relational work and the construction of intimacy by artists on Patreon. *Sociological Spectrum*, 41(2), 196- 212.
- Keane, M., Yu, H., Zhao, E. J., & Leong, S. (Eds.). (2021). *China's digital presence in the Asia-Pacific: Culture, technology and platforms*. London: Anthem Press.
- Lu, Z. (2020). From e-Heroism to e-Sports: The development of competitive gaming in China. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 33(18), 2186 -2206.
- Phelps, E. (2017). *Mass Flourishing-How Grassroots Innovation Created Jobs, Challenge and Change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rigney, D. (2017). *The Matthew effect: How advantage begets further advantage*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Twitch. (2021). Let's talk about hot tub streams. twitch blog. retrieved from <https://blog.twitch.tv/en/2021/05/21/lets-talk-about-hot-tub-streams>
- Vonderau, P. (2018). *The video bubble: Multichannel networks and the transformation of YouTube*.
- Wu, M., Jakubowicz, P., & Cao, C. (2016). *Internet mercenaries and viral marketing: the case of Chinese social media* (online ed). IGI Global.
- Wu, W. (2017). *Chinese animation, creative industries, and digital culture*. London: Routledge.
- Xu, J., & Zhao, X. (2019). Changing platformivity of China's female wanghong: From Anni Baobei to Zhang Dayi. in S. Cai (Ed.), *Female celebrities in contemporary China*. In S. Cai (Ed.), *Female celebrities in contemporary Chinese society* (pp. 127-158). Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Yiti. (2019). Transform, submerge and exile: the parallel life of Renren wanghong. zhihu. <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/68862305>
- Zhang, P. (2020). Douyin, Chinese version of TikTok, says it will help over 1,000 craftspeople earn 1 million yuan a year. Cntechpost
- Zhou, Z. H. (2019). Goldrush on TikTok: Overseas strategies for Chinese MCNs [keynote speech]. Jinriwanghong: Ecommerce and Short-video, livestreaming industry, 26 October, Shenzhen.