

Research Article

Evolution of Digital Platform for Gig Economy in Design Industry

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Abstract.

Evolution in digital platform for gig economy has transformed rapidly since the global pandemic. The evolution spikes, especially on digital platform jobs, are referred to as “freelancers”, “giggers”, or “work on demand” depending on their industry. Hence, this study examines the evolution of digital platform for gig economy, specifically for design industry from various field such as advertising, graphic design, brand design management, photography, fashion, architecture and the latest in the digital era Non-Fungible-Token (NFT). Systematic literature review was applied to identify the objective of evolution in digital platform for the business market in design industry which leads to digital business. Client relationships and management were also included as the impact factors of the evolution. The current research synthesis is obtained to develop a fundamental conceptual framework for the purpose of delivering the summary of the available primary resources. The current study produced preliminary results in reflection amongst the designers on the forced evolution on the new digital platform, challenges in transformation of business plan, marketing Metaverse, and artificial intelligence (AI), the gig economy attitude toward work as well as reduced professional efficacy if lack of management. This study hopes to support the business for gig economy practitioner performance to shed light on the new normal of work in design industry.

Keywords: design industry, digital platform, design Management, GIG economy

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1. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of digital platforms within the gig economy has witnessed a swift and profound transformation in the wake of the global pandemic [1]. This metamorphosis has been particularly pronounced in the realm of digital platform jobs, which are often colloquially referred to as “freelancers,” “giggers,” or “work on demand,” their nomenclature varying depending on the specific industry they serve [2]. Consequently, this study is committed to examining the multifaceted evolution of digital platforms in the gig economy, with a specific emphasis on the dynamic and multifarious design industry [3]. This industry encapsulates a wide spectrum of creative domains, encompassing

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advertising, graphic design, brand design management, photography, fashion, architecture, and, most notably in the contemporary digital era, the advent of Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) [4]. In order to comprehend the full implications of these transformative developments, it is essential to engage with the corpus of scholarly work that has emerged in recent years. The disruptive influence of the global pandemic on work structures and economic paradigms has been well-documented by numerous scholars [5]. Its compelled individuals and businesses to adapt to the digital landscape, thereby catalyzing a surge in the demand for freelance design services [6]. This transformation has had far-reaching consequences, not only in terms of the modes of work and their conduct but also the economic viability and sustainability of gig workers, especially in the design industry [7]. Furthermore, the design industry's landscape has been significantly reshaped by the emergence of NFTs, which offer artists and designers unique opportunities to monetize their digital creations in innovative ways, thereby introducing a new set of challenges and prospects [8]. This study, by scrutinizing the evolution of digital platforms in the gig economy within the design industry, aims to contribute to our understanding of the evolving nature of work structures and economic paradigms, thereby adding depth to the scholarly discourse in this study.

In 2019, the Ministry of Human Resource in Malaysia implemented an active policy aimed at promoting the Gig economy, with a strong focus on "Futurizing the Future of Work"[9]. The rapid advancement and pervasive influence of technology have had a profound impact on various aspects of life, not only at the individual level but also in terms of how work patterns are evolving [10]. While permanent jobs continue to be prevalent, the effects of the gig economy on youth development, particularly among students, have become a subject of investigation in this research. It is imperative to gain a comprehensive understanding of the gig economy's context within the framework of the Twelfth Malaysian Plan (RM12) for the years 2021-2025, which places a significant emphasis on economic restructuring, enhancing security, well-being, inclusivity, and promoting sustainability [11]. The Malaysian MADANI approach includes initiatives to boost the economy and financial well-being of the youth, with a specific focus on raising awareness among students in higher education institutions [12]. In the present era, any generation are increasingly venturing into freelance or project-based work, encompassing roles such as design, event crew, part-time modeling, or even social media related tasks[13]. Which lead to this study, the evolution of digital platform for gig economy in design industry.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research paper employs a comprehensive searched systematic literature review to investigate the theory and historical context of rapid transitions in the design industry, specifically within the gig economy, spanning the years between the year of 1998 to 2023. The methodology integrates data collection from multiple sources, including an extensive literature review that will synthesize existing knowledge and theories in the field. Additionally, content analysis is conducted to assess the internal and external factors influencing the evolution of the design industry in the context of the gig economy during the specified timeframe. Furthermore, direct observations will be employed to gain empirical insights into the industry's transformation. This methodology is informed by Chatzoglou's work in the year of 1997 on research design and data collection techniques, which provides a framework for structuring and conducting the research [14].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Over the period from 1998 to 2010 in the Table 1, the digital platform landscape for the gig economy in the design industry underwent significant evolution. In 1998, *Rubylane*, a curated antiques and fine art platform, was established in the United States. In 2000, France introduced *Artmajeur*, focusing on art agent services for contemporary artists. The year 2004 saw the emergence of *Yokaboo* in Ukraine, specializing in creative publishing for comics. In 2005, the United States gave rise to *Etsy*, a global artist community, and *Behance.net* by *Adobe*, a platform for social media creative showcases. In 2006, Australia introduced *Redbubble*, a print-on-demand platform, and in 2007, *Zibbet*, a creative marketplace, was established in Australia. The gig economy in the design industry continued to grow in 2008 with the United States hosting *ArtFire*, a handcraft community, and the United Kingdom launching *Folksy*, an online craft marketplace. Australia also contributed to this trend with *99designs*, a graphic design platform. In 2009, the United States introduced *Dribbble*, a digital community, while Canada gave birth to *Cargoh*, focusing on design and music. Furthermore, *TurningArt* was founded in the United States in 2009, specializing in artwork corporate management. This evolution culminated in 2010 with *Toptal*, a platform for software developers, established in the United States. These platforms represent the dynamic development of the gig economy in the design industry during this period, catering to various creative needs and originating from different parts of the world.

TABLE 1: Digital Platform for Design Industry Year 1998 until 2010. (Source Author, 2021).

Digital Platform	Area	Year	Country
Rubylane	Curated Antique and Fine art	1998	United States
Artmajeur	Art Agent Contemporary Artiste	2000	France
Yakaboo	Creative Publishing Comics	2004	Ukraine
Etsy	Global Artist Community	2005	United States
Behance.net by Adobe	Social Media Creative Showcase	2005	United States
Redbubble	Print-On-Demand	2006	Australia
Zibbet	Creative Marketplace	2007	Australia
ArtFire	Handcraft Community	2008	United States
Folksy	Online Craft Marketplace	2008	United Kingdom
99designs	Graphic Design	2008	Australia
Dribbble	Digital Community	2009	United States
Cargoh	Design and Music	2009	Canada
TurningArt	Artwork Corporate Management	2009	United States
Toptal	Software Developer	2010	United States

The second Table 2, resulted from the year of 2010 until 2023, the digital platform landscape for the gig economy in the design industry continued to evolve. In 2013, *Pixieset Media Inc* was established in the United States, focusing on photography services. The United States also gave rise to *Amazon Handmade* in 2015, which operates as a handcraft marketplace. Additionally, the United Kingdom introduced *Twine* in the same year, catering to the music and film industry, while *ArtYah*, specializing in art and fashion, was founded in the United States. South Korea made its mark in 2018 with *SHAPL*, a crowd design and direct-to-consumer e-commerce platform. In 2019, *CafePress* emerged in the United States, providing design merchandise services. The year 2021 saw a surge in non-fungible token (NFT) artiste marketplaces, with *IDNFT* established in Indonesia, *Pentas.io* in Malaysia, and *Van Ham* in Germany. In 2022, *Squarespace* became prominent in the United States, offering services for designers and developers. Lastly, in 2023, *Foyr* was established to cater to interior designers and is based in Singapore and India. This period witnessed the introduction of various digital platforms that adapted to the changing needs of the gig economy in the design industry, reflecting global diversity and specialization in design-related services.

TABLE 2: Digital Platform for Design Industry Year 2010 until 2023. (Source Author,2021).

Digital Platform	Area	Year	Country
Pixieset Media Inc	Photography	2013	United States
Amazon Handmade	Handcraft Marketplace	2015	United States
Twine	Music and Film	2015	United Kingdom
ArtYah	Art and Fashion	2015	United States
SHAPL	Crowd Design D2C Ecommerce	2018	South Korea
CafePress	Design Merchandise	2019	United States
IDNFT	Non-Fungible Token (NFT) Artiste Marketplace	2021	Indonesia
Pentas.io	Non-Fungible Token (NFT) Artiste Marketplace	2021	Malaysia
Van Ham	Non-Fungible Token (NFT) Artiste Marketplace	2021	Germany
Squarespace	Designers Developer	2022	United States
Foyr	Interior Designer	2023	Singapore/India

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The evolution of digital platforms in the gig economy within the design industry represents a rapidly advancing paradigm that offers valuable insights into the emerging employment landscape in Malaysia and across the world. As these platforms adapt swiftly to changing needs, their influence on employment patterns is undeniable. Moreover, the pervasive use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies has been a significant driver, fostering a demand for AI-powered tools and platforms to enhance productivity and innovation in the gig economy. However, this technological transformation raises concerns related to data privacy, cyber threats, and the need for secure and trustworthy mechanisms for verifying the credentials and reputations of freelance workers in a decentralized and digitally-driven work environment. As the gig economy continues to evolve, addressing these challenges becomes essential for ensuring the sustainable growth and success of this dynamic sector. Future recommendation for this study within the design industry presents opportunities for a reevaluation of work patterns, financial security, and awareness in the modern employment landscape. This paradigm shift invites us to reconsider conventional work structures, enabling greater flexibility and adaptability for workers. As the gig economy grows, it provides individuals with the potential for diversified income streams, enhancing financial security by reducing reliance on traditional employment models. Moreover, as more individuals participate in the gig economy, there is a growing need for increased awareness and education

regarding the benefits and challenges it entails, empowering workers to make informed decisions and navigate this evolving landscape effectively. In sum, the ongoing development of digital platforms in the gig economy offers a dynamic framework that can reshape how work is perceived, how financial stability is achieved, and how awareness is cultivated, ushering in a new era of employment possibilities.

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