



DIGITAL ART MARKETPLACES AS STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURES FOR YOUNG ARTISTS: ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION, GLOBAL INTEGRATION, AND CREATIVE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

This article examines the strategic importance of digital art marketplaces in supporting young artists and transforming the creative economy of Uzbekistan. The research analyzes the digitization of artworks, online art-sales platforms, NFT technologies, virtual galleries, blockchain-based transaction systems, and the integration of national art markets into global digital ecosystems. Particular attention is devoted to the economic, technological, cultural, and institutional dimensions of digital art-platform development. The study applies comparative, analytical, statistical, and systemic approaches to evaluate the impact of digitalization on artistic commercialization, market transparency, professional accessibility, and international cultural integration. Research findings demonstrate that digital art platforms significantly expand market opportunities for young artists, reduce transaction barriers, strengthen copyright protection, and increase the export potential of national creative industries. The article further explores the role of digital infrastructures in democratizing access to art markets, supporting cultural entrepreneurship, and accelerating the transformation of Uzbekistan's creative economy within the context of global digitalization.

Keywords: Digital art platform, online art market, NFT, blockchain, creative economy, digitalization, cultural industries, virtual gallery, art commercialization, young artists.



Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies and the transformation of global economic systems have fundamentally reshaped the structure of contemporary cultural industries. In recent years, the global art market has increasingly shifted toward digital environments, where online platforms, virtual exhibitions, NFT technologies, and blockchain-based transaction systems have become central components of artistic production and commercialization processes. Under these conditions, the digitization of artworks no longer functions merely as a technical preservation mechanism; rather, it represents a transformational process redefining the economic architecture of the global creative ecosystem.

The integration of art into digital infrastructures has significantly altered traditional mechanisms of artistic exchange, exhibition, promotion, and sales. Virtual galleries, online auctions, marketplace systems, and metaverse-based exhibitions increasingly operate as alternative institutional spaces replacing or complementing conventional galleries and physical exhibition systems. These transformations accelerated particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, when digital interaction became a dominant mechanism of global cultural communication.

International statistics demonstrate that online art sales have experienced continuous growth over recent years. According to the chart presented in the uploaded material on page 3, online art-market turnover increased steadily between 2020 and 2024, with particularly sharp growth beginning after 2022 due to the revitalization of post-pandemic digital markets.

The emergence of NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens), blockchain certification systems, and digital ownership technologies has further expanded the economic possibilities of contemporary art markets. Consequently, digital art has become an increasingly important component of international creative economies.

In Uzbekistan, however, the digital transformation of the art market remains at an early developmental stage. The majority of young artists continue to rely on traditional channels such as:

- galleries;
- exhibitions;
- state competitions;
- private commissions;
- personal networks.



Such mechanisms substantially limit international visibility and economic scalability. The relevance of this research is determined by the increasing necessity of creating specialized digital platforms capable of integrating Uzbek young artists into global art-market ecosystems. Digital platforms can eliminate geographical barriers, democratize artistic participation, and create sustainable economic opportunities for emerging creators.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the institutional, economic, technological, and cultural significance of digital art marketplaces in Uzbekistan and evaluate their role in supporting young artists and developing the national creative economy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical approaches to digital art markets intersect several academic disciplines, including creative-economy theory, cultural economics, digital sociology, media studies, and innovation management.

David Throsby's cultural-economics theory provides an important framework for understanding the dual cultural and economic value of artistic products. According to Throsby, creative industries generate both symbolic and financial capital, making artistic production an increasingly important sector of contemporary economies.

Richard Florida's concept of the "creative class" further explains the growing importance of creativity, innovation, and digital infrastructures within post-industrial economies. Florida emphasizes that digital ecosystems and creative entrepreneurship significantly influence regional competitiveness and economic modernization.

The rapid growth of digital art markets has also been analyzed through platform-economy theories. Srnicek defines digital platforms as infrastructural intermediaries organizing economic interactions, data circulation, and market accessibility. Within the art sector, digital platforms increasingly function as:

- marketplaces;
- communication networks;
- branding systems;
- data infrastructures;
- transaction environments.

Research on NFTs and blockchain technologies emphasizes the growing importance of decentralized ownership systems within digital art economies. Blockchain



technologies provide transparent transaction histories and copyright protection mechanisms while reducing risks related to forgery and unauthorized reproduction. Contemporary studies additionally highlight the democratizing potential of online art platforms. Traditional gallery systems historically favored limited groups of artists with institutional access. Digital marketplaces, however, substantially lower entry barriers and enable independent artists to reach global audiences without institutional mediation.

Recent literature also focuses on virtual galleries and metaverse-based artistic environments. These digital ecosystems transform artistic experience from geographically limited exhibition systems into globally accessible interactive spaces. Another important direction within the literature concerns the relationship between digitalization and cultural globalization. Scholars increasingly emphasize that digital platforms accelerate international cultural exchange while simultaneously intensifying competition within global creative markets.

Research additionally demonstrates that successful digital art ecosystems require:

- technological infrastructure;
- payment-security systems;
- intellectual-property protection;
- professional cataloging mechanisms;
- transparent pricing systems;
- institutional trust.

The literature therefore confirms that digital art platforms function not merely as technological tools but as complex economic and cultural infrastructures transforming global creative industries.

METHODOLOGY

The study applies qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches integrating:

- systemic analysis;
- comparative analysis;
- institutional interpretation;
- statistical evaluation;
- cultural-economic analysis.

The methodological framework focuses on:

- artwork digitization systems;



- online art marketplaces;
- blockchain technologies;
- NFT integration mechanisms;
- virtual gallery infrastructures;
- copyright-protection systems;
- digital commercialization strategies.

RESULTS

The findings demonstrate that digital art marketplaces significantly transform the economic structure of contemporary artistic production and commercialization.

One of the most important findings concerns the rapid growth of artwork digitization processes in Uzbekistan. According to the statistical table presented on pages 5–6 of the uploaded material, the number of digitized artworks increased from approximately 12 thousand in 2020 to 55 thousand in 2024, representing nearly fivefold growth over four years.

The research identifies several major drivers behind this expansion:

- increasing integration of museums and galleries into digital systems;
- growth of digital art practices;
- expansion of online audiences;
- increased interest in NFT technologies;
- wider participation of young digital artists.

The analysis also confirms the growing importance of online art sales. The graph on page 3 demonstrates stable and accelerating growth dynamics between 2020 and 2024, with especially rapid market expansion occurring after 2022 due to post-pandemic digital-market revitalization.

Research findings indicate that online platforms significantly reduce barriers associated with traditional art-market systems. Unlike physical galleries, digital marketplaces:

- eliminate geographical limitations;
- provide unlimited exhibition space;
- reduce marketing expenses;
- enable direct interaction with collectors;
- increase transaction speed;
- improve pricing transparency.



The study additionally demonstrates the strategic role of blockchain technologies in strengthening copyright protection and transaction security.

Another important finding concerns market democratization. Traditional art markets historically restricted access primarily to institutionally connected artists. Digital platforms, however, enable independent creators from various regions of Uzbekistan to access international audiences directly.

The research further identifies important institutional gaps within Uzbekistan's current digital art ecosystem. Social-media platforms currently function mainly as promotional spaces rather than professional commercial infrastructures.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that digital art marketplaces have become strategic infrastructures within contemporary creative economies and global cultural ecosystems.

One of the central conclusions of the study is that digitalization fundamentally transforms artistic commercialization mechanisms. Traditional gallery systems are increasingly supplemented or replaced by decentralized digital-market structures capable of operating continuously across international borders.

The research also highlights the democratizing role of online platforms. Digital systems substantially reduce institutional barriers previously limiting market access for young and regional artists. Consequently, creative participation becomes more inclusive and economically accessible.

Another important issue concerns the relationship between digitalization and globalization. Online art platforms enable Uzbek artists to participate directly within global creative markets without geographical restrictions.

The study further demonstrates that blockchain technologies and NFT systems significantly strengthen institutional trust within digital art economies. Copyright transparency and transaction security become essential prerequisites for sustainable online commercialization.

Another significant aspect concerns institutional infrastructure limitations within Uzbekistan. While demand for digital art ecosystems continues to grow rapidly, professional digital-market mechanisms remain insufficiently developed. Social-media platforms alone cannot satisfy the complex economic and legal requirements of contemporary art markets.



The research therefore emphasizes the necessity of creating specialized national art platforms integrating:

- secure payment systems;
- blockchain certification;
- professional cataloging;
- multilingual interfaces;
- global-market accessibility;
- collector-oriented analytics.

The study additionally demonstrates that digital art ecosystems increasingly function as interdisciplinary innovation environments connecting:

- artists;
- collectors;
- designers;
- researchers;
- educators;
- investors;
- cultural institutions.

The development of such ecosystems may significantly accelerate the modernization of Uzbekistan's creative industries and strengthen integration into global digital economies. Consequently, successful platform development requires balanced institutional regulation and technological modernization.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that digital art marketplaces represent one of the most important strategic mechanisms for developing contemporary creative economies and supporting young artists within global cultural ecosystems. The analysis confirms that digital platforms transform traditional art-market structures by eliminating geographical barriers and democratizing access to artistic exchange systems.

Blockchain technologies and NFT infrastructures substantially strengthen trust, ownership security, and market transparency within digital art economies.

The study additionally demonstrates that digital art ecosystems contribute significantly to:

- youth entrepreneurship;
- employment generation;



- export growth;
- cultural diplomacy;
- national branding.

For Uzbekistan, the development of specialized digital art platforms represents a strategically important direction for modernizing the national creative economy and integrating local artists into global market systems.

In conclusion, digital art marketplaces should be understood not merely as technological innovations but as comprehensive institutional infrastructures shaping the future development of artistic production, creative entrepreneurship, and cultural-economic globalization.

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