

## Why Digital Brands Must Think Like Business Ecosystems: The Experience of Mariia Shubina

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### Abstract

Digital brands are rapidly evolving from innovative ventures into full-fledged business ecosystems. This approach ensures sustainability, diversified revenue streams, and international growth. The case study of Ms. Shubina illustrates how launching Patreon, merchandising, advertising partnerships, and collaboration with international communities can be used to build a long-term strategy.

**Keywords:** Digital Brand; Ecosystem; Monetization; Patreon; Merchandising; Collaboration; International Audience; Creator Economy

### 1. Introduction

The creator economy has experienced explosive growth over the past few years. According to *Forbes* (2024), it is already valued at over \$250 billion and is projected to reach \$480 billion by 2030. For creators, this means that a blog or account is no longer just a personal page — it becomes a business platform.

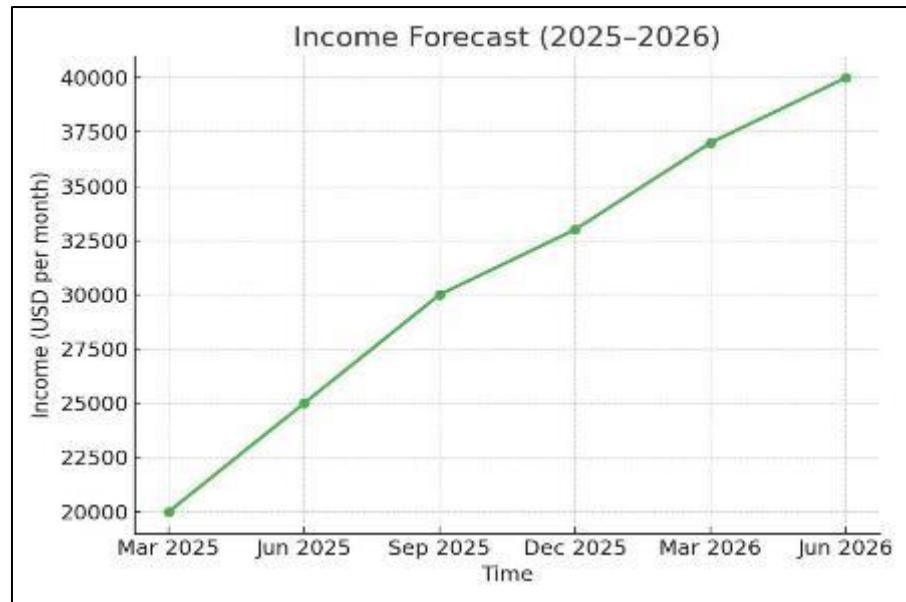
A mere presence on social media only captures attention. An ecosystem brings together various revenue sources and communication streams: subscriptions, advertising, products, partnerships, and global marketing. It is this kind of strategy that ensures resilience amid shifting algorithms and intense competition.

### 2. An Ecosystem Approach to Digital Branding

An ecosystem is a sequence of mutually reinforcing streams:

- Audience → subscriptions;
- Subscriptions → products;
- Products → recognition and new partnerships;
- Collaboration → expanded audience.

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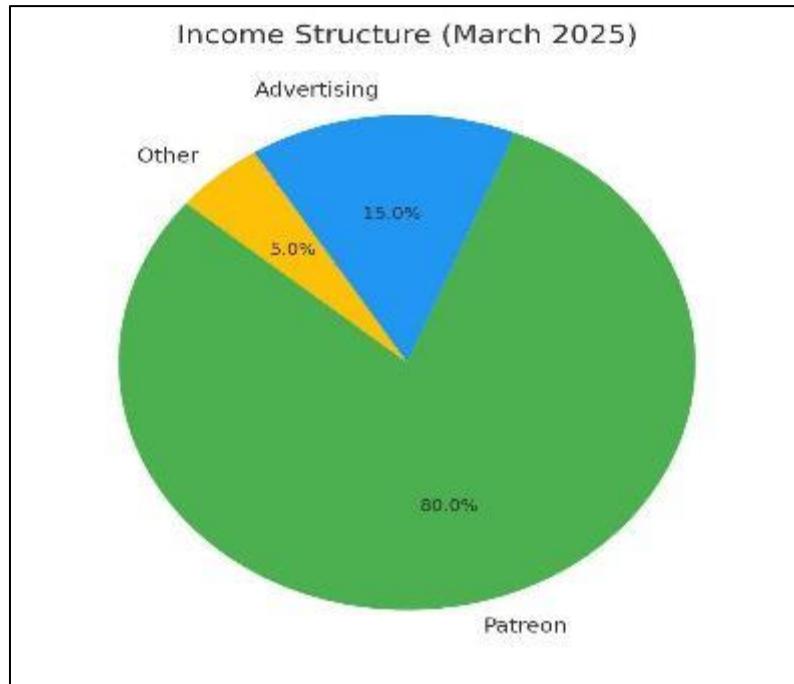


**Figure 1** Income Forecast(2025-2026)

It is a closed loop in which each element supports the others. Diversification is the key principle: the failure of one channel is offset by the strength of the others.

## 2.1. Shubina's Experience: The Path to an Ecosystem

The project was launched with simple sketches, but the breakthrough came when a character was developed and transformed into a lifestyle blog format. This significantly increased engagement and attracted readers from around the world.



**Figure 2** Income Structure (March 2025)

## 2.2. By March 2025

- The number of subscribers reached 60,000,

- Monthly reach totaled 8–10 million views,
- Individual posts received 25,000–55,000 likes.

The launch of Patreon became the core of the ecosystem: in its first month, it generated \$20,000 in revenue. Shortly after, advertising integration and the launch of physical products (toys, stickers, postcards) followed.

### 2.3. Revenue breakdown

- Patreon: 80%
- Advertising: 15%
- Other sources: 5%

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## 3. International Expansion and Sustainability

The majority of the project's audience resides in the **U.S. and EU**, which offers access to premium advertisers but also requires content adaptation and cultural sensitivity.

The sustainability of an online business depends on:

- Diversified revenue streams,
- Development of physical and web-based products,
- Reduced reliance on any single platform.

Forecasts indicate that growth in merchandising and partnerships will lead to a monthly revenue increase from \$20,000 to \$35,000–\$40,000 by 2026.

A digital brand is no longer just a blog — it is a complete ecosystem. Success is no longer measured by the number of followers, but by the quality of interconnected revenue sources.

The experience of Ms. Shubina demonstrates that an ecosystem-based approach can transform a creative project into a sustainable business with global reach.

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## 4. Conclusion

The study highlights that the evolution of digital brands into full-fledged business ecosystems ensures long-term sustainability, diversified income, and global scalability. The case of Mariia Shubina demonstrates that integrating multiple revenue channels—such as Patreon, advertising, merchandising, and partnerships—creates a resilient model capable of withstanding market fluctuations and platform dependency. By adopting an ecosystem approach, creators can transform individual projects into structured, self-sustaining businesses. This study contributes to understanding how digital entrepreneurship can promote economic inclusivity, inspire innovation, and encourage future creators to build meaningful, sustainable ecosystems within the global digital economy.

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