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Examining the decision journey of platform refugee : Focusing on the case of Korean live-streaming industry

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Keywords: Live-streaming, Creator economy, Involuntary migration, Refugee theory, Analytic Hierarchy Process

Abstract

The rapid growth of the digital content market has fueled the expansion of the creator economy, driving platforms to innovate and vie for creators' attention. In South Korea, the competitive landscape intensified with Twitch's withdrawal from the market in December 2023. This decision significantly impacted streamers who create content and shape the ecosystem, compelling them to quickly undertake involuntary platform migration to maintain their stability. However, most previous research has focused on voluntary migration. To address this gap, this study adopts refugee theory and analytic hierarchy process (AHP) approach to systematically examine the decision-making process in involuntary migration and identify the key criteria that streamers consider in this unique circumstance. As the result, this study found that streamers considered their own characteristic as the most important criterion in case of involuntary migration. Additionally, it reveals that fan preference, content category, and platform ambience similarity play crucial roles in the decision-making process, with CHZZK emerging as the most attractive alternative platform. As one of the first studies to explore involuntary platform migration, it provides both academic and practical implications for understanding how streamers adapt to sudden platform changes and highlights the importance of maintaining robust fan communities.

1. Introduction

The digital content market has experienced

unprecedented growth, catalyzing the expansion of the creator economy. The creator economy, projected to reach USD 600 billion by 2036 with an annual growth rate of 23% from 2024, accelerated rapidly as COVID-19 lockdowns increased time spent at home, boosting information consumption (Research Nester, 2024). This vibrant sector allows individual creators to leverage various digital platforms to visualize and monetize their interests and experiences (Kopf, 2020). As these platforms vie for dominance, they increasingly offer strategic benefits to attract creators, who in turn evaluate and select platforms that best align with their content creation and monetization goals. Especially in the South Korean live-streaming market, large global firm and domestic business compete by highlighting their respective advantages. This competitive landscape compels platforms to innovate continually and adapt to the evolving needs of content creators. The intensification of platform competition became particularly apparent when Twitch, a dominant force in the live streaming vertical, announced its withdrawal from the South Korean market in December 2023. Twitch asserted that the management burden from Korea's network usage fee policy was the reason for this decision, placing Korean creators in a precarious situation where they were forced to involuntarily switch platforms. This scenario marks a significant departure from the voluntary transitions typically observed within the creator community, introducing substantial challenges for creators who must adapt to these changes.

Based on Twitch API data from Twitch

Tracker (<https://twitchtracker.com>), in the case of Korea, around 240,000 users are watching broadcasting through Twitch, and approximately 4,600 streamers are distributing their content through the platform. It is anticipated that cases of Twitch discontinuation would have a significant impact on the streamers and users. Unlike ordinary users, creators occupy a distinct role where they do not just consume but actively produce content, thereby contributing to and shaping the ecosystem. This unique position means that scenarios involving involuntary migration can exert a considerably greater influence on them. Live streaming has transcended mere platform use for many creators, becoming their profession and a significant economic activity (Johnson & Woodcock, 2019). These creators depend on Twitch to build and maintain relationships with fellow streamers and viewers, which is essential for their economic well-being (Lee et al., 2019; Törhönen et al., 2021). For the streamers, Twitch is more than just a platform; it is a community hub where they engage with others and generate income, making it an integral part of their livelihood. In situations where platform disruptions can significantly affect the professional and economic stability of streamers, it is needed to focus on the necessity of suddenly moving to another platform if service interruptions occur. In such circumstances, alternatives for streamers to transition include domestic live-streaming platforms like AfreecaTV (SOOP) which has been competing with Twitch, a newly launched platform by South Korea's largest portal operator NAVER called CHZZK, and the live-streaming services offered by the global content platform, YouTube. Each platform operates based on a variety of characteristics, and this diversity provides multiple options that streamers must consider when they need to switch platforms. Previous research has actively explored the considerations users face when transitioning from one service to another, including the criteria that influence their decisions to move. However, this Twitch's disruption situation represents a unique case of involuntary migration

within the digital content realm, fundamentally different from the voluntary platform transitions typically documented in the research. Existing literatures, while rich in discussions of voluntary movement between platforms, rarely explore the complexities and challenges associated with forced transitions (Rawis et al., 2022; Fang & Tang, 2017). In response to this gap, this paper aims to analyze the key criteria that influence creators' decisions to switch platforms under involuntary circumstances, such as service discontinuation by a platform provider. By exploring these involuntary transitions, this study will contribute to a broader understanding of how creators adapt to forced changes in their operating environments and how they strategize to maintain or even enhance their creative output and audience engagement in new settings. This analysis not only enriches the dialogue around platform dynamics in the creator economy but also provides valuable insights into the resilience and adaptability of creators facing unanticipated challenges.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 reviews literatures to explain the live streaming industry and the concept of involuntary migration, and presents the research questions. Section 3 describes the configuration of the AHP (Analytic Hierarchy Process) and the research method for examining streamers' decision-making processes, with results discussed in section 4. The overall discussion takes place in section 5, and finally, section 6 provides a detailed conclusion and implications.

2. Literature review

2.1. The overview of live-streaming industry

2.1.1. What is live-streaming industry

The live-streaming industry represents a dynamic and rapidly evolving segment of the digital media landscape, characterized by the real-time broadcasting of content over the internet. In the live-streaming environment, content creators produce online that is simultaneously viewed and

interacted with by audiences, utilizing microphones and webcams to foster immediate and engaging social exchanges (Giertz et al., 2022). Live-streaming platforms have become central hubs where individuals can share a wide array of content ranging from entertainment and gaming to activities and personal vlogs (Xu & Zhang, 2022). Live-streaming is identified as a unique form of media that combines traditional broadcasting elements with interactive features, allowing viewers to participate through comments, donations, and sharing (Smith, 2018; Johnson et al., 2020). This interactivity is highlighted as a key driver of success, enhancing viewer engagement and retention by transforming passive viewership into an active, participatory experience (Doe & Clark, 2019). Economically, the live-streaming industry has created substantial opportunities for monetization. Creators can generate revenue through advertisements, subscriptions, sponsorships, and viewer donations, which are uniquely facilitated by the platforms' built-in payment and reward systems (Lee & Andreassen, 2021). This has not only provided a viable career path for many individuals but has also shifted the economic dynamics within the broader entertainment and media industries, challenging traditional revenue models and creating new market paradigms (Zhao & Zhou, 2019). Furthermore, the industry's growth has been significantly influenced by cultural and societal trends. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for digital entertainment and online social interactions surged, propelling the live-streaming sector to new heights as individuals sought connectivity and community during periods of isolation (Nguyen et al., 2022). This surge demonstrated that it not only provides entertainment but also plays a crucial social role, offering a sense of normalcy and continuity in unprecedented times. In this context, live-streaming platforms act as a key player in the live streaming industry, serving as service providers (Xu & Zhang, 2022). In the live-streaming industry, various platforms provide services, leading to

prosperity within the sector while also intensifying competition to secure content creators and users (Hu et al., 2017). At this point, each platform accentuates distinct characteristics to allure both creators and viewers. In particular, since creators generate revenue for platforms and play a substantial role in their composition, attracting creators is considered a crucial aspect by the platforms.

The notable changes in the live-streaming industry have recently taken place in the South Korean market. South Korea is renowned for its advanced internet infrastructure and high penetration rates, which have facilitated the rapid growth of digital media consumption, making it a potential hotspot for the live-streaming market (Kim & Park, 2021). The live-streaming industry in South Korea presents a particularly compelling case due to its unique market dynamics and the presence of robust domestic platforms alongside international competitors. In this industrial context, the global platform Twitch, which had dominated the market in South Korea, decided to withdraw its business due to issues with network usage fees in Korea. As the platform with the highest number of creators and users in South Korea ceased operations, a mass exodus of creators was anticipated, intensifying competition among the remaining players to preempt these creators. As a key domestic alternative prior to Twitch's entry into South Korea, AfreecaTV, launched in 2006, has been a leading platform driving the live-streaming industry within the country. Another significant domestic contender is CHZZK, launched by South Korea's largest search portal, NAVER, leveraging the parent company's brand value to gain market attention. Globally, YouTube, as the largest content platform, offers live-streaming features that attract creators by leveraging its substantial user base and diverse content formats, including long-form and short-form videos. As illustrated in Table 1, these platforms highlight varied strategic approaches to capturing and sustaining creator and viewer engagement in the competitive live-streaming market. The competitive situation among live

Table 1. Status of live-streaming platform players in Korea.

	Twitch*	AfreecaTV(SOOP)	CHZZK	YouTube Live
Parent Company	Amazon	SOOP	Naver	Google LLC
Launched date in Korea	2017	2006	2024	2017
Monthly active channel	132,702	124,237	77,164	8,134**
Monthly active user	2,161	2,436	2,204	470**
Content format	Live/ VOD / Clip	Live / VOD / Short form / User-clip / User-VOD	Live / VOD	Live / VOD / Short form
Revenue model for streamer	Subscription fee / Bits (donation) / Ads / Amazon Associates (link commission)	Subscription fee / Star-balloon (donation) / Ads / Ad-balloon / Star-BJ / Partner BJ	Subscription fee / Cheese (donation) / Ads	Super Chat (donation) / Super sticker / Ads

* Data before the announcement of business withdrawal (December 2023)

** Estimated : value excluding the figures of AfreecaTV and CHZZK from the total figures of the Korean market

streaming platforms offers a variety of options for creators who need to migrate from existing platforms. This has emerged as a significant event that could shift the alignments within the domestic live-streaming industry.

2.1.2. Two-sided market and B2B interaction in live-streaming industry

In the context of digital economics, the live-streaming industry can be effectively analyzed as a two-sided market, a concept that explains interactions between two distinct but interdependent groups that provide each other with network benefits (Huang et al., 2022). In the live-streaming arena, these groups are typically the content creators on one side and the viewers on the other. The platforms that facilitate these interactions serve as intermediaries that not only host but also manage and enhance the exchange between these two groups. The two-sided market framework is particularly relevant for understanding the dynamics of the live-streaming industry due to its reliance on network effects. As Rochet and Tirole (2003) elucidate, platforms in two-sided markets seek to attract and balance both sides—creators and viewers—in a way that maximizes the overall value of the platform. For

live-streaming platforms, the value to one group is significantly dependent on the size and engagement of the other group. For instance, a larger base of engaged viewers attracts more creators, as it increases the potential for monetization through advertisements, sponsorships, and viewer donations. Conversely, a diverse and active creator community enhances viewer satisfaction and retention by offering a variety of engaging content.

From a two-sided market perspective, understanding the relationship between the actual service providers and the platforms that deliver these services to consumers plays a crucial role in the competitive landscape of platforms. In various platform environments, considerable research has been conducted on how service providers choose which platform to select and whether to maintain that choice. By analyzing the perspective of providers within a two-sided market, such as the sharing economy platform, it was revealed that key motivations impacting providers' trust in the platform include safety systems and online review mechanisms (Li & Wang, 2020). This discovery suggests strategies for two-sided market platforms to attract providers. Additionally, research into the intentions of auction sellers to switch from one online auction platform to another within a two-

sided market context showed that costs associated with switching, alongside website design and interaction quality, are significant influencers (Lin et al., 2012). In the context of a two-sided market, a variety of factors influence a provider's decision to choose a platform. This indicates that, within the live-streaming industry as a two-sided market, the choice of platform by providers, such as content creators, can differ based on their specific criteria.

In the live-streaming industry, the relationship between platforms and providers can be interpreted not only as a two-sided market but also as a B2B (Business-to-Business) interaction. As content creators increasingly professionalize, platforms are providing environments for monetization, leading many creators globally to pursue content creation as their full-time occupation (Ma et al., 2023). This phenomenon allows us to interpret creators not just as customers of the platforms but as business entities engaging in transactions with the platforms. Creators who generate income through their content view themselves as their own bosses, operating their craft with a business-oriented perspective (Hoose & Rosenbohm, 2023). Interpreting the live-streaming industry from a B2B interaction perspective provides a robust framework for analyzing the strategic relationships between content creators (viewed as independent business entities) and the platforms they utilize. In this context, creators are entrepreneurs or micro-enterprises who produce content to generate revenue, while platforms act as service providers that offer the necessary infrastructure for content distribution and monetization. The B2B paradigm in live-streaming involves complex negotiations and partnerships where both creators and platforms strive to maximize profit through their relationship. This dynamic is akin to traditional B2B interactions where mutual benefit is paramount—platforms seek to enhance their offerings and user base by hosting popular creators, whereas creators look for platforms that provide optimal revenue models, audience reach, and technical support.

From the perspective of transaction cost

economics (Williamson, 1981), these interactions can be viewed through the lens of minimizing transaction costs associated with negotiating, monitoring, and enforcing agreements. Creators select streaming platforms based on the comparative costs of partnership, such as revenue share terms, platform reliability, and audience engagement tools, which directly impact their profit margins and operational efficiency. Additionally, resource-based theory (Barney, 1991) offers insights into how creators leverage their unique resources—content and viewer relationships—to gain competitive advantages on specific platforms. Platforms, on the other hand, develop unique capabilities such as advanced analytics and marketing tools to attract and retain top content creators, thereby enhancing their value offering in a competitive market. In the digital age, the strategic interactions between creators and platforms often involve leveraging digital resources and capabilities to maximize economic outcomes. As argued by Bharadwaj et al. (2013), digital business strategy integrates the rich opportunities offered by digital technologies to forge competitive advantages in business ecosystems. In the live-streaming industry, both creators and platforms employ digital strategies to optimize content delivery, viewer engagement, and monetization processes.

2.2. Involuntary migration in platform business

2.2.1. Voluntary and involuntary migration

Human migration, a demographic study area, involves movements from an original habitat to a new one, seen as a form of residential switching behavior (Clark & Knapp, 1996). The Push-Pull-Mooring (PPM) model analyzes reasons why people move, including 'push' factors driving them from their old homes and 'pull' factors attracting them to new locales, along with 'mooring' factors that either retain them or aid their relocation (Moon, 1995). In the business field, prior research has applied migration theory to understand the intentions and actions of companies or users to

switch to new platforms or technologies. This area of study merges the concepts of migration from traditional human geography with modern business strategies concerning technology adoption and market movement (Hou et al., 2011; Bhattacharjee & Park, 2014). Scholars have posited that switching intention among businesses can be effectively analyzed through the lens of migration theory by examining the factors that influence such decisions.

This conceptual application has been actively used to examine transitions in the platform business environment. From the perspective of consumers using the platform, Ryu et al. (2023) applied the PPM model to investigate factors influencing consumer switching behaviors across various platform businesses such as music, content, and e-commerce. Research on switching behaviors has become increasingly prevalent in environments where competition intensifies over time due to the diversification of platform operators. They confirmed that different types of platforms exhibit distinct push, pull, and mooring effect factors according to their respective categories. Such studies frequently focus on consumer intentions and behaviors concerning switching platforms under similar service conditions, primarily within mobile application services like social network sites (SNS) and mobile payment systems (Chang et al., 2014; Loh, 2021; Salo & Makkonen, 2018). The application of the PPM model based on migration theory has also been applied to platform studies in two-sided markets, not just from a consumer perspective but also to understand the switching intentions of providers. Hsieh et al. (2012) explored the motivations behind bloggers (content providers), who were early adopters of Social Networking Services (SNS), migrating to newer SNS platforms. This study marked a shift in applying migration theory from focusing on user perspectives to examining provider perspectives. The adoption of migration theory has extended beyond platform sectors to the broader business context, especially in B2B relationships, where it has been applied to understand how businesses re-evaluate and choose new partner firms. In the B2B

context, the PPM model has been applied to understand situations where buyers and suppliers consider switching to different suppliers. It has been found that factors such as quality, cost, and the attractiveness of alternatives influence these decisions, similar to migrations in a platform environment (Suh & Kim, 2018; Kilic & Uray, 2015).

The PPM model, based on migration theory, has been diversely utilized to explore transitions involving consumers, suppliers, and businesses. This theoretical application primarily interprets scenarios where users switch from existing services to new services, platforms, or competitors. In other words, the focus is solely on voluntary migration situations where individuals choose to switch even though they could continue using the service. In highly competitive platform industries, the strategies of dominant players can lead to the exit of less competitive platforms from the market (Baker, 2021). Such business withdrawals can result in users experiencing the sudden discontinuation of services they were using, potentially placing them in an involuntary migration situation. From this perspective, Fang and Tang (2017) explored the phenomenon of involuntary migration in the instant messaging business, using the case study of the transition from Microsoft's Windows Live Messenger (formerly MSN Messenger) to Skype. Despite attempts to study involuntary migration, the prior research was limited in providing a conceptual framework to understand actual involuntary migrants (such as refugees) because it applied the existing migration theory-based PPM model to their investigation.

2.2.2. Refugee theory

The definition of a refugee has been interpreted through various refugee-related institutes and literatures, and efforts have been made from multiple academic perspectives to refine the concept. According to the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), A refugee is defined as "a person who is outside their country of nationality because they have a well-founded fear of

persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion." This definition has been expanded by regional legal documents in Africa and the Americas to include individuals who must leave their country due to "external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights, or events seriously disturbing public order." In addition, those who were forced to leave territories due to the collapse of empires or the loss of territories through war have been referred to as refugees (Panayi, 2011; Ballinger, 2012). Overall, refugees can be defined as people who are forced to leave their country (place of residence) to seek safety in another territory.

While migration theory has been applied from the perspective of voluntary migration, there have been attempts by various scholars to develop a refugee theory for understanding involuntary migration. The concept of refugee theory, as articulated by Egon F. Kunz in his work on "Exile and Resettlement," provides a robust framework for examining involuntary migration in a socio-political context (Kunz, 1981). Kunz describes different categories of refugees based on their degrees of connection or alienation from their countries of origin, which significantly influence their migration experiences and resettlement outcomes. This nuanced understanding helps delineate the complex dynamics at play when individuals or groups are compelled to migrate. In the initial attempt to create a conceptual framework for understanding refugees, the process of resettlement was divided into three stages influenced by Home-related factors, displacement-related factors, and host-related factors. Home-related factors focus on the environmental reasons that compel refugees to leave their homeland. While some refugees leave due to political or ideological alienation, others are not marginalized by their country but must flee due to natural disasters or wars. This type of refugee is described as a Majority identified refugee, who tends to identify themselves with their country and places

value on their experiences there. The refugee types identified in the Home-related factors migrate to the host country through different pathways, which are explained by the displacement-related factors. Kunz emphasizes the importance of the refugees' choice of destination, which is influenced by factors categorized as host-related. These influencing factors include cultural compatibility, population policies, and social attitudes. This categorization was later expanded in Gwynne-Vaughan's (2000) reestablishment of refugee theory, adding factors such as economic factors and population size. In another attempt to understand refugees, Kuhlman (1991) built upon Kunz's refugee theory to develop a comprehensive refugee model. This model incorporated characteristics of refugees themselves that were not previously considered, such as demographic, economic background, and cultural affiliation, thus deepening the understanding of refugee resettlement.

2.3. Research Questions

Due to the discontinuation of Twitch's services, streamers are forced to migrate from their existing platform to new ones. The existing literatures on service transitions, by adopting PPM model, reveals various factors that influence these migrations to new services (Hou et al., 2011; Bhattacharjee & Park, 2014). Beyond simple usage perspective, previous works revealed that specific factors influence the transition of platforms or services within two-sided markets, where providers act as intermediaries connecting consumers (Hsieh et al., 2012). Furthermore, it has been discovered that these factors also impact business-to-business relationships when selecting new partners (Suh & Kim, 2018; Kilic & Uray, 2015). The findings from previous studies on service users, providers, and business perspectives suggest that the same decision-making factors recognized in these roles may also influence streamers, who encompass all these aspects, in their migration to new platforms. However, the literature primarily examined migration from a voluntary perspective based on migration theory, which presents a limitation in

fully understanding the dynamics of involuntary transitions (Fang & Tang, 2017). Refugee theory can address the limitations found in existing research that primarily focuses on voluntary migration. By examining involuntary migration situation, where refugees are compelled to find new homes due to circumstances beyond their control, this theory highlights how features of their home country, characteristics of new countries, and personal traits of the refugees can influence their decision-making (Kunz, 1981). This approach proposes that factors not considered in traditional migration theories can significantly impact decisions in involuntary migration contexts. When considering the impact of a platform's business withdrawal on creators, who are both users and providers, it is evident that their situation transcends mere inconvenience and is closely linked to their livelihood. The loss of accumulated assets or business opportunities through the platform can significantly affect their economic stability and lifestyle. Consequently, creators evaluate other existing platforms as alternatives for establishing a new base, especially in Korea where local live-streaming providers are actively competing following Twitch's exit. These providers become potential new destinations for creators acting as platform refugees. This study focuses on understanding the criteria streamers use to select their new platforms in involuntary migration scenarios, and which platforms best meet their needs. Therefore, this study poses the following research questions to examine the process of involuntary migration decisions by creators due to the withdrawal of Twitch's business in Korea, and to explore the factors and final destinations considered important by creators acting as platform refugees.

RQ1. What is the most important criteria for creator's decision-making in the context of involuntary migration?

RQ2. As alternatives, which platform most closely aligned the streamers' criteria in the context of involuntary migration?

3. Methodology

3.1. Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) on live-streaming platform migration

This paper aims to explore the decision-making process of creators, termed platform refugees, in the context of involuntary platform migration. To analyze this decision-making processes systematically, the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) is employed as the methodology. Originally developed by Saaty (1980) and subsequently expanded by Partovi (1994), AHP facilitates the assessment of options through pairwise comparisons. This method leverages expert judgment to effectively prioritize based on predefined objectives, criteria, and alternatives. Additionally, AHP incorporates the Consistency Ratio (CR) to mitigate potential biases, ensuring a rigorous analytical framework. Based on the advantage of providing a systematic analysis of decision-making processes, this methodology is actively applied across various objectives. In competitive industrial environments, the AHP systematically incorporates expert judgments to interpret complex issues by analyzing various factors into a meaningful hierarchical model, thereby providing direction for the situation at hand (Sirikrai & Tang, 2006; Kramulová & Jablonský, 2016). Moreover, this academic approach is also utilized in industrial environments to explore priority factors that businesses need to focus on amidst new environmental changes, such as sustainability and technology transfer (Rosa Pires da Cruz et al., 2013; Calabrese et al., 2019; Angelou & Economides, 2008; Lee et al., 2012). In the media industry, AHP method assists businesses in competitive situations such as content differentiation and adaptation to new digital environments by helping them establish prioritized strategies (Pratama & Fauzan, 2024; Wang & Jung, 2022). Additionally, the methodology provides a structured method to efficiently navigate logical decision-making flows, particularly in scenarios where rapid decisions are required due to sudden environmental changes (Hwang & Kim, 2022).

Based on this methodological potential, this study identifies creators who distribute content via platforms as key stakeholders and seeks to examine the criteria they use to make decisions about involuntary platform migration, focusing specifically on the live-streaming industry.

3.2. Criteria for involuntary migration of creator

Building on previous studies related to refugee theories and models, this study established AHP criteria. Traditional refugee theories described migration in terms of Home, displacement, and host, with subsequent research adding the characteristic of the refugee. These academic models were applied to the context of involuntary migration in platform environments by attempting to measure each factor. In explaining the Home-related factor, this study identified creators as majority identified refugees, a category previously distinguished in earlier research. Creators placed in involuntary migration situations had continuously utilized the platform to provide services until the platform's withdrawal decision. This scenario corresponds to the majority identified refugee as described in existing models, where migration is not due to persecution or marginalization but rather external environmental conditions forcing them to leave the platform. This type places importance on experiences in their home country, and this tendency is expected to significantly influence the choice of their destination. Therefore, this study aims to explore the similarity with the home country as a home-related factor, referred to as existing platform similarity. As previously mentioned, this study defines a single type of refugee, demonstrating a standardization of displacement forms across the existing models. This means that in the context of involuntary platform migration, the forms of displacement do not vary. Consequently, this research does not measure displacement as a significant factor and excludes it from the analysis. Moreover, the existing concepts of Host and characteristic of the refugee were maintained as target platform characteristic and individual characteristic,

respectively, consistent with the explanations in the existing models. Accordingly, this study has established the following criteria: 1) Similarity with the platform before migration, 2) Characteristic of the migrated platform, 3) Characteristic of Individual. Based on these criteria, sub-criteria for each criterion were derived. In setting the sub-criteria, literature related to factors influencing refugees' decisions on choosing a host country was reviewed, as well as studies on factors affecting the selection of partners or platforms in two-sided markets and B2B relationships. Interviews were conducted with managers and creators currently working in the live-streaming industry to construct the research model.

3.2.1. Similarity with the platform before migration

Existing refugee theory has identified attitudes and ideologies in the home country as key factors in distinguishing refugees in cases of involuntary migration. The migration of creators due to the withdrawal from live-streaming platforms can be described as belonging to the Reactive Fate-group, a type identified in previous research as reacting to sudden changes such as wars and national disasters. This suggests a distinction from groups that migrate with a specific purpose. Refugees belonging to this group tend to identify with their nation and value their experiences in their home country (Kunz, 1981). This emphasis on experiences in one's home country becomes a major factor in choosing the next country in a migration context, leading to a pattern of seeking similar environments. Creators are also accustomed to the environment and broadcasting methods provided by existing platforms, having developed a familiar experience through continuous use of the platform. The previous platform experience of creators is likely to influence the decision-making process in choosing their next option when forced to transition to another platform. This suggests a tendency to seek directions that offer familiarity through similarities with the existing environment.

Interface similarity refers to the extent to

which user interface (UI) of different platforms or applications mirror each other. This concept is pivotal as it significantly reduces the learning cost for users when they transition to new software or applications (Smith et al., 1999). This similarity mirrors the way in which refugees select their destination countries, where transitioning between countries with similar cultures, languages, and rules facilitates quicker adaptation (Robinson, V., & Segrott, J. (2002). As such, a user is likely to experience increased satisfaction and efficiency, thereby enhancing the overall usability of the technology. Literature on user switching intentions substantiates the assertion that a high degree of interface similarity can elevate the likelihood of users migrating to alternative products or services (Yu et al., 2017). By offering an element of familiarity, interface similarity diminishes the barriers to adoption, making the transition to new platforms smoother and more intuitive. This reduction in resistance to technological changes is crucial as it helps users adapt more rapidly to new environments, maintaining continuity in their interaction with digital platforms.

Revenue model similarity refers to the extent to which various platforms or services provide comparable opportunities for users or content creators to generate revenue. This similarity encompasses mechanisms such as advertising revenue sharing, subscription models, and sponsorship opportunities, facilitating users' ability to maintain existing revenue generation strategies when transitioning to new platforms. This aspect is crucial for refugees selecting a host country, particularly for those dependent on specific monetization strategies to sustain their livelihood. The availability of similar economic opportunities and revenue generation mechanisms in the potential host country ensures that refugees can integrate economically more swiftly and maintain their financial independence without substantial alterations to their business models adaptation (Robinson, V., & Segrott, J. (2002). Furthermore, existing research in the B2B sector underscores the importance of business model

similarity when determining business partners. Studies indicate that similarity in business models between partners enhances operational synergy, increases collaboration efficiency, and positively impacts overall business performance (MacDonald et al, 2022; Fenton, 2020). Therefore, achieving consensus on business-impacting configurations, especially business model similarity, is essential when selecting partners. This principle can be analogously applied to the context of refugees, where monetization similarity significantly influences their decision-making process in choosing a host country.

Platform ambience similarity refers to the overall atmosphere of a platform created by the interaction of content, fellow creators, and users. It includes the tone and style of the platform's content, the image and characteristics of other creators using the platform, the demographics and behaviors of users, and patterns of usage. In other words, ambience refers to the overall impression of a particular environment, encompassing the experiences that occur within a given space. It is influenced by various factors, including the design of the space, the behavior of the people within it, and emotional elements. The concept of ambience has primarily been applied in spatial contexts, such as restaurants or cafes, referring to the atmosphere created by furniture, music, and scents. Furthermore, from an organizational perspective, ambience is used to describe the culture or common practices within a company, such as the surrounding colleagues and ways of working. It has been analyzed as a major factor influencing employee satisfaction (Tipuric et al., 2022). Similar to how refugees assess a host country's internal environment—considering aspects like democracy, friendliness, and service quality—platform refugees evaluate these digital environments to determine their fit (Bijleveld & Taselaar, 2000; Barsky, 2000). This assessment guides their decisions to join or migrate to new platforms, seeking an environment that supports their needs for creative expression, community interaction, and personal or professional growth.

3.2.2. *Characteristic of the migrated platform*

Even if refugees are bound by memories of their past, they actively engage in adapting to change by exploring their new environments. During this adjustment process, the character, culture, and institutional framework of the resettlement country emerge as crucial factors influencing their ability to integrate and thrive. Much like nations that each exhibit unique cultures, environments, and institutional frameworks, live streaming platforms differentiate themselves through distinct policies and operational environments, thereby engaging in competitive differentiation. Similarly, creators facing involuntary transitions explore the unique attributes of various platforms in a manner analogous to refugees evaluating potential resettlement countries, seeking platforms that offer the most beneficial features for their specific needs.

Resettlement policy is crucial mechanism provided by host countries to facilitate the integration of refugees, encompassing supports such as legal aid, housing, and employment assistance, aimed at stabilizing new arrivals (Böcker, 1998; Barsky, 2000; Robinson et al. 2003; Weidinger et al. 2017). Analogously, live-streaming platforms are adopting similar strategies to accommodate creators migrating from platforms like Twitch. These digital resettlement policies may include recognition of accumulated broadcasting hours, account linking, and use of existing custom emoticons, all intended to smooth the transition for creators. By reducing the barriers to entry and maintaining operational continuity, these policies not only ease the migration process but also encourage long-term commitment to the new platform, mirroring the objectives of traditional resettlement policies in fostering stability and integration.

Economic change refers to shifts in the economic conditions and opportunities within a society or environment, which can significantly impact individual and collective financial stability and growth prospects (Robinson & Segrott, 2002). In traditional refugee studies, these economic

changes are often a decisive factor in the resettlement decision-making process. Refugees diligently gather information about the economic outlook of potential host countries, viewing these data as critical indicators of a country's attractiveness (van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2011). The employment environment, in particular, is emphasized as a fundamental element for successful resettlement (Havinga & Böcker, 1999). Similarly, in the live-streaming platform ecosystem, financial considerations are paramount for creators, who regard these platforms as essential for maintaining their livelihood. Creators faced with involuntary migration assess the potential for new revenue-generating opportunities within new platforms. This economic assessment is vital as it influences their decision to migrate and their ability to sustain themselves financially in new settings, thereby highlighting the overarching importance of economic stability in the successful integration process, whether in traditional resettlements or digital platform transitions.

Platform reputation is external perception and reputation of a digital platform, which is critically assessed by creators when considering migration to a new platform. Drawing parallels to traditional refugee studies, where refugees react sensitively to the national image and rumors about potential host countries, the image of a platform significantly influences creators' decision-making processes (Robinson & Segrott, 2002; Havinga, 1999). This influence manifests both directly and indirectly; directly, by determining the perceived risks associated with the platform's support for creator success, and indirectly, by affecting creators' public personas, as a platform with a negative image could potentially tarnish a creator's reputation by association. Thus, the external image of a platform is a crucial factor for creators in selecting a new platform, as they seek environments that not only support their professional needs but also align with and potentially enhance their public image.

3.2.3. *Characteristic of Individual*

In addition to previous refugee theories that focused on the homeland and the countries refugees intend to migrate to, Kuhlman (1990) sought to differentiate his approach by incorporating the intrinsic characteristics that refugees themselves possess. He attempted to provide a more comprehensive explanation of refugees by adding this unique dimension, which considers the individual attributes of the refugees alongside the external factors of their origin and destination countries. The backgrounds, abilities, experiences, and needs of refugees are incredibly diverse, and these significantly influence how they adapt to and integrate into new environments. Creators, as individuals, also exhibit a diverse range of characteristics, especially within the live-streaming environment where their traits are centered around stakeholders such as fans and peers.

Platform experience is a creator's familiarity with and previous usage of a specific platform. Research on switching intentions has demonstrated that consumers' future behaviors, such as repurchasing or switching platforms, are often based on their past experiences, which they use as a reference for future decisions. For example, Twitch entered the Korean market in 2017, meaning that even broadcasters who are currently on Twitch would likely have had experience with other platforms prior to this date. This prior platform experience is a significant factor in the decision-making process of creators as they evaluate their options, reflecting how past interactions with different platforms can influence their current choices (Bansal et al., 2005; Ganesh et al., 2000; Hsieh et al., 2012). This insight highlights the importance of understanding the historical context of platform use when analyzing creators' behavior and preferences.

Content category refers to the specific focus area or thematic concentration that a creator selects for their live-streaming sessions. Despite the uniform framework of live-streaming, content can vary widely, such as gaming or talk shows, each demanding distinct platform functionalities. For

gaming, the integration between the game and the streaming service is crucial to enhance viewer engagement, whereas talk shows require robust features that support seamless audience interaction. Analogous to B2B research where the compatibility between provided technology and the tasks it needs to support is crucial, the choice of streaming platform for creators similarly hinges on the platform's ability to cater to the specific needs of their chosen content category (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995; Nguyen & Ha, 2022). Therefore, the alignment between the platform's capabilities and the creator's content focus is paramount, as it directly influences the broadcast's effectiveness and audience engagement.

Relatives preference is the preferences and inclinations of fellow creators or collaborators who work closely with a primary creator, often impacting their collective choices regarding platforms and content strategies. In traditional refugee studies, the presence of friends, relatives, or compatriots in a destination country has been identified as a significant factor influencing the choice of resettlement location (Morrison, 1998; Böcker and Havinga, 1998). Similarly, in the context of live-streaming, creators often collaborate and broadcast together, forming crews that share similar content themes. When these creators belong to different platforms, coordination and joint broadcasting can become cumbersome. Understanding the preferences of these close collaborators is crucial for a creator, especially when making decisions about which platform to use for joint broadcasts. This ensures smoother operations and better alignment of content strategies among the group, making "relatives preference" an essential consideration in the dynamic and interconnected environment of live streaming.

Fan preference pertains to the platforms preferred by the fanbase of a creator, significantly influencing where creators distribute their content to maintain viewer engagement and support. In the context of two-sided markets, research highlights

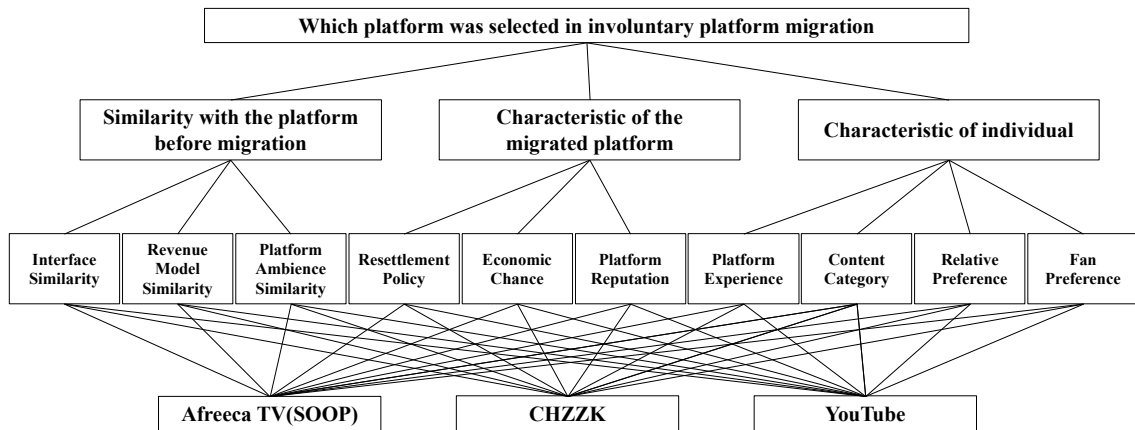


Figure 1. The AHP model for analyzing creator's decision process of involuntary migration

that producers recognize the importance of catering to customer preferences, as these preferences are directly linked to revenue generation (Ryu et al, 2014; Desai, 2000; Basole & Karla, 2011). Fans are crucial for sustaining a creator's broadcasting activities, as their support ensures the viability and growth of the creator's digital presence. Therefore, understanding and accommodating the platform preferences of a creator's primary audience becomes a critical factor in deciding where to host their content. This alignment not only enhances fan satisfaction but also optimizes the creator's potential for revenue, making fan preference a key consideration in the strategic decision-making process for creators as they navigate the competitive landscape of live-streaming platforms.

3.3. Alternatives for involuntary migration of creators

In the context of involuntary platform migration among creators in South Korea, there are three platforms to consider as potential destinations: SOOP (formerly known as AfreecaTV), CHZZK, and YouTube. SOOP, a domestic platform, was the first mover in South Korea's live-streaming market before Twitch launched its services in the country. It has established substantial brand recognition within Korea and is characterized by its creator-friendly environment, cultivated through many years of operation. CHZZK, launched in February 2024 by

NAVER, South Korea's largest portal site, is relatively new to the live-streaming scene. Despite its brief operational history, CHZZK leverages the name value of its parent company, NAVER, and offers strong integration with other services provided by the corporation, making it appealing to creators. Lastly, YouTube, a global content platform, is actively working to attract platform refugees. As the world's largest content company with an extensive user base, YouTube capitalizes on its ability to provide a diverse range of broadcasting formats including live, long-form, and short-form videos, thus appealing to a broad spectrum of content creators looking for versatility and global reach. With Twitch's withdrawal from Korea leading to a mass migration of creators, the competition among platforms to capture these creators has intensified. This study analyzed which platform creators had chosen as their destination based on three criteria, ten sub-criteria, and three alternatives. Additionally, the study will employ weighted criteria to identify the key factors contributing to such decisions. The proposed framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

This study conducted a survey among streamers who are actively broadcasting live streams in Korea, utilizing the AHP methodology to investigate the criteria for streamers' migration decisions in an involuntary context. Streamers who

Table 2. Description of respondents.

	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	15	65.2
	Female	8	34.8
Work experience as streamer	Less than 1 years	2	8.7
	1~3 years	4	17.4
	3~5 years	6	26.1
	5~7 years	8	34.8
Number of followers	More than 7 years	3	13.0
	Less than 10,000	9	39.1
	10,000 ~ 50,000	10	43.5
	50,000 ~ 100,000	3	13.0
	100,000 ~ 500,000	1	4.3
Content genre	Gaming	16	69.6
	Music	1	4.3
	Talk and communication	6	26.1
Total		23	100.0

were active in Korea and broadcasting on Twitch, but were compelled to transition to other platforms following Twitch's business withdrawal, were targeted for this survey. Prior to the cessation of Twitch's services, a list of streamers who had listed their contact email addresses on their channels was compiled. To enhance the response rate, priority was given to contacting streamers who had provided personal rather than corporate email addresses. Subsequent sampling through the snowballing method yielded a total of 34 responses. Data analysis was conducted using Matlab R2024a, a technical computing language software. Inappropriate cases were filtered out using the Consistency Ratio (CR) score. According to Saaty (1980), a CR score of 0.2 or less is considered acceptable. Consequently, 11 samples that did not meet the CR score requirement were excluded, leaving 23 samples for final analysis in the study.

The majority of respondents (60.9%) are streamers who have been broadcasting for more than three years, with those possessing follower counts ranging from approximately 10,000 to 50,000 representing the highest proportion. Predominantly, the streamers are engaged in the gaming genre, producing content primarily centered around video games. Detailed information regarding the respondents' experience is delineated in Table 2.

4. Result

4.1. Weighted Criteria

This The respective criteria weights used in the model are examined in Table 3. Findings indicate that the characteristic of individual (0.547) is the most critical criterion, followed by similarity with the platform before migration (0.269), and lastly the characteristic of the migrated platform (0.184). Within the characteristic of individual, fan preference had the highest weight (0.453), followed by content category (0.229), relative preference (0.186) and platform experience (0.132). Concerning the similarity with the platform before migration, platform ambience similarity (0.571) was weighted the highest, followed by interface similarity (0.218), and revenue model similarity (0.211). For the characteristic of the migrated platform, each specific criterion was weighted as follows: first, platform reputation (0.440), then resettlement policy (0.346), and economic chance (0.214).

Global weights represent the relative significance of each sub-criterion, and the value of each was determined by multiplying the first level criteria's weights with the local score of each sub-criterion. The global weights of ten sub-criteria illustrated that fan preference (0.247) and platform ambience similarity (0.154) are the most important

Table 3. AHP criteria weights and ranks.

Criteria	Weight (W_c)	Sub-criteria	Local score (W_L)	Global weight ($W_c * W_L$)	Ranking
Similarity with the platform before migration	0.269	Interface Similarity	0.218	0.059	8
		Revenue Model	0.211	0.057	9
		Similarity Platform Ambience	0.571	0.154	2
Characteristic of the migrated platform	0.184	Similarity Resettlement Policy	0.346	0.064	7
		Economic Chance	0.214	0.039	10
		Platform Reputation	0.440	0.081	5
Characteristic of individual	0.547	Platform Experience	0.132	0.072	6
		Content Category	0.229	0.125	3
		Relative Preference	0.186	0.102	4
		Fan Preference	0.453	0.247	1

sub-criterion for streamers' migration decision. Along with the two sub-criteria in the individual characteristics, content category (0.125), relative preference (0.102), and platform reputation (0.081) were highlighted as impactful factors. Notably, the platform's benefits of providing resettlement policies (0.064), platform experience (0.072), and economic chances (0.039) were identified as the least significant criteria.

4.2. Alternatives

The highest priority among the alternatives is established by first assessing the local score of each sub-criterion for a specific alternative. This

local score is then multiplied by the global weight score, which is calculated by multiplying the first level criteria weights with the sub-criteria local scores. These resulting values become the global weights for the alternatives, and the sum of these global weight values represents the total weight of each alternative criterion. Table 4 shows the sub-criteria's local values under each alternative category. The alternative option of migrating to Afreeca TV was significantly influenced by the resettlement policy (0.364) and the economic chance (0.336). Platform experience also played an important role for streamers choosing to migrate to Afreeca TV (0.269). Regarding the option of

Table 4. Local scores for AHP alternatives.

Sub-criteria	Afreeca TV (SOOP)		CHZZK		YouTube	
	Local score (W_L)	Ranking	Local score (W_L)	Ranking	Local score (W_L)	Ranking
Interface Similarity	0.148	7	0.661	3	0.191	9
Revenue Model	0.236	4	0.518	6	0.246	5
Similarity						
Platform Ambience	0.117	8	0.664	2	0.219	8
Similarity						
Resettlement Policy	0.364	1	0.487	8	0.149	10
Economic Chance	0.336	2	0.428	10	0.236	6
Platform Reputation	0.110	10	0.605	4	0.285	1
Platform Experience	0.269	3	0.474	9	0.257	4
Content Category	0.223	5	0.514	7	0.264	2
Relative Preference	0.179	6	0.563	5	0.258	3
Fan Preference	0.112	9	0.667	1	0.221	7

Table 5. Priorities in AHP alternatives.

Sub-criteria	Criteria weight	AfreecaTV(SOOP)		CHZZK		YouTube	
		Global weight ($W_c * W_L$)	Ranking	Global weight ($W_c * W_L$)	Ranking	Global weight ($W_c * W_L$)	Ranking
Interface Similarity	0.059	0.009	10	0.039	6	0.011	8
Revenue Model Similarity	0.057	0.013	7	0.029	9	0.014	7
Platform Ambience Similarity	0.154	0.018	6	0.102	2	0.034	2
Resettlement Policy	0.064	0.023	3	0.031	8	0.009	9
Economic Chance	0.039	0.013	8	0.017	10	0.009	10
Platform Reputation	0.081	0.009	9	0.049	5	0.023	5
Platform Experience	0.072	0.019	4	0.034	7	0.019	6
Content Category	0.125	0.028	1	0.064	3	0.033	3
Relative Preference	0.102	0.018	5	0.057	4	0.026	4
Ranking		3		1		2	

migrating to CHZZK, factors related to fan preference (0.667), platform ambience similarity (0.664) and interface similarity (0.661) were the key components that streamers considered when making that decision. Finally, the third alternative, migrating to YouTube, was strongly influenced by platform reputation (0.285), content category (0.264), and relative preference (0.258).

The global weight of each alternative is measured by using the first level criteria weights from Table 3 and the sub-criteria local weights from Table 4. The total weight of migrating to Afreeca TV was 0.179, which is the lowest among the three proposed alternatives. In contrast, migrating to YouTube ranked second with a global weight of 0.233. Finally, the most probable alternative, migrating to CHZZK, had a global weight of 0.588. Tables 4 and 5, along with Fig. 2, present the results of the AHP analysis.

5. Discussion

This study investigates the criteria that streamers considered when selecting a new platform following Twitch's sudden withdrawal from the Korean market. By employing the AHP methodology, we sought to systematically analyze the decision-making process of streamers in this

involuntary migration situation. The results indicate that among the criteria considered, the streamer's individual characteristic was of the highest importance. This finding suggests that, in involuntary migration, streamers focus primarily on their own attributes and the environment surrounding them when choosing a new platform. These results align with existing research in the creator economy, which highlights that individuals who engage as creators produce content, connect with their audience, establish their identity, build their unique brand, and showcase to the world who they are (Gardner & Lehnert, 2016). The topics, genres, and categories of content that creators engage with are based on their personal interests, forming the identity of their channels and making their work enjoyable, which serves as a crucial driving force behind their activities as content creators (Hoose & Rosenbohm, 2023). This tendency explains that why streamers choose platform which aligns well with their own characteristics when faced with the necessity to move to a new platform.

Further examination of the specific sub-criteria considered in the streamers' involuntary platform migration showed that fan preference, content category, and platform ambience similarity

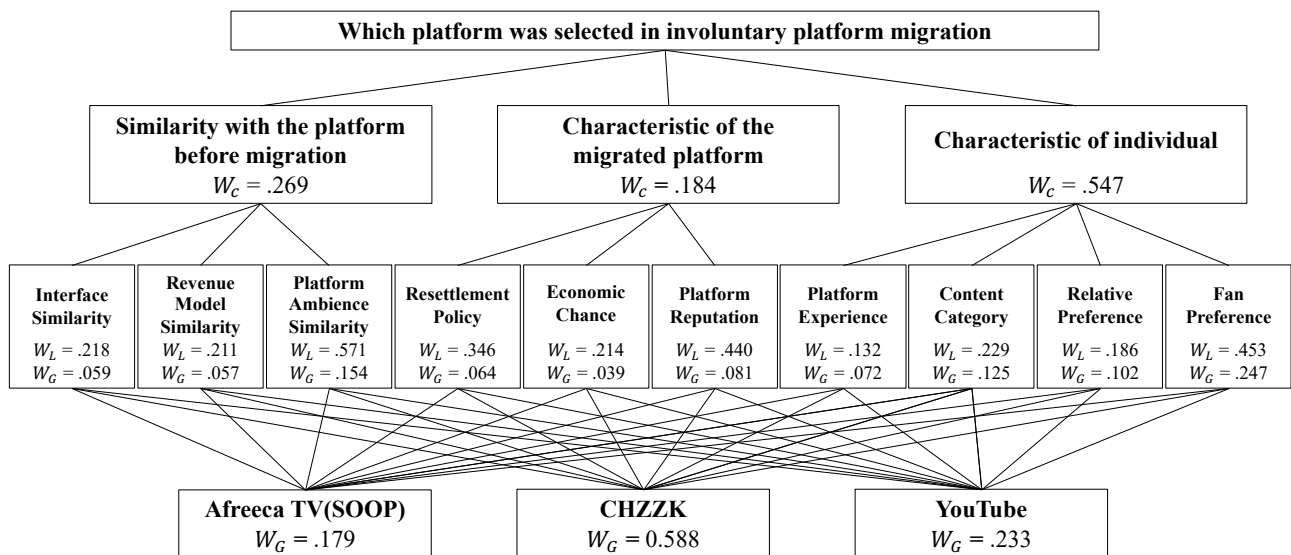


Figure 2. The result of AHP model for analyzing creator's decision process of involuntary migration

were highly rated. Among these, fan preference was identified as the most critical sub-criterion, suggesting that fans are a crucial element for streamers. The main reason for these results is that donations from followers constitute a significant portion of live streamers' income (Huang, 2019). In the creator economy, the relationship between streamers and fans is explained by parasocial interaction, where fans donate in response to good content provided by the streamer, who in turn offers enhanced performances based on these donations (Chen, 2021; Lee et al., 2019; Villegas-Simón et al., 2023). This relationship extends beyond mere financial aspects, evolving into a community with shared interests online. It develops into a strong fandom where intimate feelings and performances drive various activities, such as highest donor recognition, loyal fans, and events, generating additional relationships and income (Chen, 2021; Wang, 2024). Therefore, streamers prioritize maintaining and strengthening their connection with this community, which significantly influences their content creation and platform selection.

Moreover, the results of this study show that streamers place high importance on content categories, reflecting their need to find platforms that are suitable for their content. Creators tend to approach content production from an artistic

perspective, rather than merely as a manufacturing process, which leads them to invest considerable effort in enhancing the quality of their content through meticulous attention to lighting, editing, composition, effects, and presentation (Weber et al., 2021). From this perspective, streamers choose platforms that best showcase their content, thereby striving to improve quality through their choice of platform. Additionally, high scores for platform ambience similarity likely reflect the relatively wholesome atmosphere of Twitch and the established culture among its users, influencing streamers to seek platforms that could replicate this environment. This result indicates that when streamers operating within a platform are interpreted from an organizational perspective, the internal culture and ambience as members of the company similarly influence employees' company preferences, aligning with findings from previous research (Tipuric et al., 2022).

A notable finding from the sub-criteria results is that the five sub-criteria with low scores (Economic Chance, Revenue Model Similarity, Interface Similarity, Resettlement Policy, Platform Experience) are all directly related to the platform and what it provides to streamers. In other words, streamers in involuntary migration situations considered the operational aspects directly provided by the platform to a relatively lesser

extent. This result contrasts with the prevailing view in the existing creator economy, where the platform's role is interpreted as central to the industry and highly dependent (Hoose & Rosenbohm, 2024). Ultimately, the high-scoring sub-factors reflect an emphasis on the preferences of fans or peers, the ambience and reputation of the platform, and the creator's content domain. This suggests that creators prioritize streamer-centric environment over operational aspects.

When Twitch announced its exit, streamers considered AfreecaTV, CHZZK, and YouTube as alternative platforms. AfreecaTV scored highest in resettlement policies, CHZZK in fan preference, and YouTube in platform reputation. Ultimately, CHZZK emerged as the most attractive alternative, with YouTube as the second, and AfreecaTV as the least attractive option. This outcome becomes more apparent when comparing the local score ranking of alternatives with the global weight ranking of criteria (Table 6). CHZZK was rated highly across all sub-criteria, particularly scoring well in four out of the five top sub-criteria that streamers consider important. YouTube did not score uniquely high across all sub-criteria, but it met three out of the top five sub-criteria considered important by streamers, thereby receiving a weighted ranking and emerging as the second most attractive alternative. While

AfreecaTV did score higher in some sub-criteria compared to YouTube, it only ranked high in one of the sub-criteria highly valued by streamers, ultimately leading it to be assessed as the least attractive alternative. These findings illustrate that streamers prioritized fan engagement and content suitability over financial incentives and platform policies when choosing a new platform. This preference highlights the streamers' focus on sustaining their community and maintaining content quality during involuntary migration.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Implications

The live-streaming industry is an environment where streamers provide content to their followers through platforms that broadcast their streams. Streamers and platforms have an interdependent relationship, but the platform plays a crucial role in connecting streamers with viewers and other streamers. It serves as the industry's center and the primary space where streamers operate. The sudden withdrawal of a platform that plays such a crucial role would cause streamers to lose the ecosystem they have built unilaterally, depriving them of the space where they operate as streamers. From this perspective, this study

Table 6. Comparison of local score ranking of alternatives with the global weight ranking of criteria.

Criteria ranking	Sub-criteria	AfreecaTV(SOOP)		CHZZK		YouTube	
		Local score (W_L)	Ranking	Local score (W_L)	Ranking	Local score (W_L)	Ranking
1	Fan Preference	0.112	9	0.667	1	0.221	7
2	Platform Ambience Similarity	0.117	8	0.664	2	0.219	8
3	Content Category	0.223	5	0.514	7	0.264	2
4	Relative Preference	0.179	6	0.563	5	0.258	3
5	Platform Reputation	0.110	10	0.605	4	0.285	1
6	Platform Experience	0.269	3	0.474	9	0.257	4
7	Resettlement Policy	0.364	1	0.487	8	0.149	10
8	Interface Similarity	0.148	7	0.661	3	0.191	9
9	Revenue Model Similarity	0.236	4	0.518	6	0.246	5
10	Economic Chance	0.336	2	0.428	10	0.236	6

examined the criteria and alternative priorities considered by streamers, who are involuntarily placed in a migration environment as platform refugees, when selecting a new platform. Ultimately, this study reveals that the individual characteristics of streamers were the primary consideration when leaving an existing platform for an involuntary settlement on a new one, with fan preference, content category of the streamer, and platform ambience similarity being critical factors, and CHZZK emerging as the most attractive alternative. As one of the first studies to examine the decision-making processes of streamers as platform refugees who must migrate platforms involuntarily, this research provides both academic and practical implications.

From an academic perspective, this study makes a theoretical contribution by applying refugee theory in the context of digital platform migration, thus expanding the scope of platform migration context from voluntary to involuntary transitions. Additionally, it applies concepts of B2B relationships and two-sided markets to diversify and interpret the relationships between platforms and streamers. This approach not only enriches the theoretical understanding of digital migrations but also enhances the understanding of the complex interactions between platform providers and content creators, who play a central role in the digital content industry. Especially, it has made a theoretical contribution by deriving the decision-making criteria considered during platform migration from these theories and concepts. This theoretical and conceptual expansion can provide a framework for observing the decision-making processes of platform refugees, not only in the streaming industry but also in other two-sided market platforms and users (service providers) affected by sudden business cessations.

From the practical point of view, this study offers several suggestions to two different stakeholders: platforms currently competing in the live-streaming industry and the streamers who use these platforms. First, for platforms, they must identify the hidden needs of streamers who are

moving due to a competitor's withdrawal in order to attract them to their own platform. Observing consumers and incorporating their behaviors and needs into a company's innovation process play a crucial role in reducing the risk of business failure (Krawczyk, 2014). In the case of Twitch's business withdrawal, other competing streaming platforms have announced various policies to attract streamers to their platforms. However, most platforms adopted strategies that focused solely on the economic benefits and system compatibility that streamers could gain from migrating to their platforms. This is in contrast to the findings of this study, which systematically examined streamers' decision-making processes and found that they tend to prioritize maintaining their surrounding environment and community over immediate benefits or functional aspects from platform. In other words, platforms need to understand the real, hidden needs of streamers and emphasize what they truly require to attract them as new user and partners.

The importance of these hidden needs was ultimately explained as a result of the platform competition resulting from this Twitch withdrawal. AfreecaTV, which was evaluated as the least attractive alternative in this study, has the longest history in South Korea and operates in a advantageous position. However, it failed to meet the needs of streamers, ultimately losing the opportunity to CHZZK, a newcomer to the market. Such a defeat for AfreecaTV demonstrates that while streamers' demands focus on themselves, their surroundings, and environmental factors, the company's focus has been on practical operational aspects. This situation highlights an innovation dilemma, where even in the face of new circumstances, the company is unable to break away from its existing internal decision-making frameworks. To overcome the innovation dilemma that arises as companies mature and experience limited growth, it is essential to develop the right strategies and foster a supportive environment and culture (Cooper, 2011). In other words, AfreecaTV, with its extensive industry experience, needs to

match the company's strengths with the needs of the streamers and strive to improve its low-rated platform reputation, fan preferences, and the overall platform ambience.

CHZZK, which was rated as the most attractive alternative in this study, has emerged as the company with the greatest success in the current situation where migration has been completed. This result is contrary to the case of AfreecaTV, as streamers have managed to secure the most important factors they consider: fan preference, platform ambience, and reputation. This shows that even a latecomer like Naver, which was lagging in the video content market, was able to land stably in the content market by meeting the needs of streamers correctly. However, it is important to consider that the live-streaming industry is a volatile sector that can experience significant growth and decline (Wang, 2023). CHZZK, which has received good evaluations from the market, needs to develop strategies to prepare for sudden migration situations that may arise. In particular, maintaining the favorable attitude of fans, which is considered most important by streamers, can be a key factor.

YouTube, which has not heavily invested in live-streaming features compared to competing platforms, is the second most attractive alternative shows that YouTube's potential as the largest content platform cannot be overlooked. In this stage, position of YouTube in the live-streaming industry is not as a main platform but rather as an additional platform for uploading clips. However, it has been found that YouTube has a good reputation among streamers. Based on this reputation, YouTube needs to consider whether to maintain its current position or to advance as a mainstream platform within the live-streaming industry.

This study advises streamers, as another stakeholder, to pay more attention to maintaining a continuous fan community. As demonstrated by the findings of this study, streamers are acutely aware of the significant role their fans play. When such fans develop loyalty, it evolves into a preference for the creator as a whole rather than for specific

content (Hair et al., 2022). Given the highly volatile nature of the streaming industry, sudden changes like the Twitch incident can reoccur, and streamers should be prepared for this. A loyal fan community can provide the stability streamers need to continue their activities unperturbed by external changes.

6.2. Limitations

Despite implications of the study, there are several limitations. The primary limitations of this study include its small sample size and its restriction to the South Korean market, which may not fully represent global trends or the diverse circumstances of creators worldwide. Moreover, the study focuses on only three alternative platforms, which may not encompass all possible options available to creators. As an exploratory study, it establishes a foundational understanding of decision-making processes in involuntary platform migrations but does not explore causality. Future research could expand this study by including a larger, more diverse sample across different regions to validate and possibly generalize these findings. Investigating additional platforms could provide a more comprehensive view of the digital migration landscape. Further studies could also examine the long-term impacts of these migrations on creator satisfaction, retention, and economic success, thereby offering deeper strategic insights for both platform operators and content creators. This would not only help in understanding the broader implications of platform dynamics but also assist in crafting more effective strategies for managing digital ecosystems in the creator economy.

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