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CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP MODEL TRANSFORMATION IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETS: THE INTERPLAY OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND DIGITALISATION

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Abstract. *The internationalisation of creative enterprises is increasingly shaped by the simultaneous influence of intellectual property (IP) management and digitalisation, yet existing strategies typically address these factors in isolation. This study examines how the business models of creative entrepreneurs are transformed when entering international markets under the combined effect of IP and digital tools. A multiple case study analysis was conducted on three publicly traded companies in the architectural software sector (Autodesk, Trimble, and Nemetschek Group) using financial reports, licensing agreements, and digital channel data for the 2023–2025 period. The analysis identified three distinct types of transformation: an inertial model, where IP remains primarily a barrier to copying and digital channels serve as supplementary sales tools; a hybrid model, where IP acts as a linking element between software and hardware solutions, enabling integrated service offerings; and a platform-based model, where IP evolves into an ecosystem interface, generating network effects and significantly higher operating margins. The findings reveal that the depth of transformation, rather than its speed, determines long-term effectiveness. Companies that reconceptualise IP as an interface and a source of user engagement data, rather than merely a legal safeguard, achieve superior operational performance. The proposed typology offers a diagnostic framework for creative entrepreneurs and contributes to a more integrated understanding of how digitalisation and IP management jointly shape international business model transformation.*

Keywords: *Creative business; creative economy; international management; creative entrepreneurship; international markets; intellectual property; digitalization.*

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Introduction

In recent years, the creative economy has evolved from a theoretical concept into a tangible sector that accounts for a significant share of GDP in both developed and developing countries. Creative entrepreneurs (independent software developers, architectural firms, design studios, and others) are increasingly entering foreign markets, using digital channels as their primary scaling tool. This process differs fundamentally from the traditional internationalisation of industrial companies: the creative product is intangible, its value is determined by intellectual property, and distribution channels increasingly require no physical presence.

At the same time, the academic literature has yet to develop an integrated approach that addresses digitalisation and intellectual property management together with business model transformation. Some studies focus on the legal protection of creative assets (Handayani, Emirzon

and Yahanan, 2025; Kavlashvili, 2026), while others emphasise digital tools and platforms as drivers of growth (Judijanto, 2025a; Yudiono, 2026). However, these two dimensions are generally examined in isolation, despite the fact that in practice they operate in tandem: digital channels create new risks for intellectual property, while the level of digitalisation determines which protection tools become available and effective.

Existing internationalisation strategies, developed primarily for traditional manufacturing and service companies, do not account for the specificities of creative entrepreneurship. The key feature of the creative business is that its primary asset – intellectual property – is simultaneously its main source of competitive advantage and its most vulnerable element when entering foreign markets. Digitalisation, on the one hand, facilitates access to global markets by lowering entry barriers, but on the other, it exponentially increases the risks of copying, piracy, and the devaluation of intellectual property.

Moreover, digital tools do not simply facilitate market entry; they fundamentally alter the logic of business model construction. The shift from selling licences to subscription models, from one-off transactions to platform-based ecosystems, from controlling distribution to managing data and network effects – these transformations affect the foundational principles of creative entrepreneurship. At the heart of these changes lie two interrelated questions: how to protect intellectual property in new digital conditions and how to use digital tools to strengthen that protection, transforming it from a barrier into a source of competitive advantage.

The aim of this study is to describe how the business model of the creative entrepreneur is transformed when entering international markets under the simultaneous influence of intellectual property and digital tools. To achieve this aim, the study addresses the following objectives:

1. To systematise existing theoretical approaches to the study of the creative economy, digitalisation, and intellectual property management, identifying key concepts and research gaps.
2. Based on an analysis of three companies (Autodesk, Trimble, and Nemetschek Group) to identify types of business model transformation in the architectural software sector.
3. To describe the mechanisms through which intellectual property and digital tools jointly influence the choice of internationalisation strategy and business model transformation.
4. To propose a classification of transformation types that accounts for the level of digital maturity and intellectual property management strategy.

This study contributes to the development of theory on the internationalisation of creative entrepreneurship by offering a more nuanced understanding of how digitalisation and intellectual property interact in the process of entering foreign markets. The work provides a diagnostic tool for assessing the current state of a business model and for selecting directions for its transformation when entering international markets. Furthermore, the findings may prove useful for developing more targeted support measures for creative entrepreneurship at the level of industry associations and state development institutions.

Literature Review

The concept of the creative economy has become a cornerstone for understanding contemporary economic development, particularly in the context of digital transformation, which is reshaping industries, labour markets, and value-creation processes. The growing volume of publications in this area reflects its multidimensional nature, encompassing cultural production, technological innovation, intellectual property regimes, entrepreneurship, and regional development strategies. As a result of systematising current research, the literature has been grouped into four interconnected thematic clusters: foundational concepts and theoretical frameworks of the creative economy; the role of digitalisation and technological innovation in transforming creative industries; intellectual property management as a strategic tool for creative entrepreneurship; and the dynamics of creative entrepreneurship in local and global contexts. By analysing these strands of literature, the review establishes a theoretical foundation for understanding how creative enterprises enter international markets and adapt their business models in response to digitalisation and changes in the intellectual property landscape.

Foundational Concepts and Theoretical Frameworks

The demarcation of the creative economy from adjacent concepts remains a subject of ongoing academic debate. Mekh et al. (2025) offer a comprehensive theoretical and methodological analysis of the categorical space in creative sector research, developing a hierarchical model that distinguishes between cultural industries, creative industries, creative business, and the creative economy. At the operational level, creative business functions as a micro-level unit that transforms intellectual capital into marketable products and services. This hierarchical understanding, culminating in the creative economy as a meta-paradigm that integrates cultural, informational, innovation, and digital sectors, provides researchers with a coherent framework for analysing the structure and dynamics of the sector.

Tkachenko (2025) reinforces this conceptual foundation by examining the creative economy as a key element of innovation-driven development, grounded in creative potential, intellectual property, and cultural resources. This perspective explains why intellectual property protection and digital infrastructure are not merely supporting elements but constitutive characteristics of the creative economy's functioning.

Judijanto (2026) investigates the intellectual structure of the field, revealing that the literature is centred around core concepts: creative economy, creative industries, innovation, and economic development; which reflects a strong integration with knowledge-based and innovation-driven perspectives. This evolution demonstrates the field's responsiveness to technological change and suggests that the creative economy is increasingly understood as a system of interconnected actors and value-creation processes, rather than a collection of isolated cultural activities.

Kusumaningrum et al. (2024) explore the conceptualisation of creative economy resilience in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their research demonstrates that the adaptability of the creative economy depends in part on its digital infrastructure and the capacity of its actors to pivot towards digital business models.

Digitalisation and Technological Innovation in the Creative Economy

The integration of digital technologies into creative industries arguably represents the most significant transformation in the recent evolution of the creative economy. Judijanto's (2025b) bibliometric study of the creative economy ecosystem in the context of digitalisation reveals that innovation serves as the central node in this research domain, linking closely associated themes such as entrepreneurship, the digital economy, ecosystems, and sustainability. Yudiono's (2026) systematic bibliometric review identifies four major thematic clusters: digital transformation and innovation in the creative economy, technological impacts on economic growth, AI-driven entrepreneurship, and human-AI collaboration in the future of work. A notable observation is the shift in research focus from macro-level perspectives towards organisation-oriented approaches, while themes related to AI readiness, organisational capabilities, and human capital development in AI-driven creative environments remain underexplored.

The practical application of AI in specific creative domains is examined by Rao & Parikh (2026). Their research demonstrates how AI can address challenges of documentation, preservation, and intellectual property protection, thereby contributing to a sustainable and inclusive creative economy.

Abdullah et al. (2025) investigate the influence of digital innovation on entrepreneurial outcomes among young entrepreneurs in Indonesia's creative subsectors. Their quantitative analysis shows that digital innovation significantly enhances entrepreneurial performance through expanded market reach, operational efficiency, and product differentiation.

The relationship between open innovation ecosystems and business model innovation in cultural and creative firms is explored by Peñarroya-Farell et al. (2023). Their research underscores the importance of collaborative networks and knowledge sharing for creative enterprises seeking to innovate their business models, suggesting that firms operating within active innovation ecosystems may be better positioned to adapt to changing market conditions.

Intellectual Property Management in the Creative Economy

Intellectual property management constitutes a critical dimension of creative economy research, reflecting the central role of intangible assets in the value proposition of creative enterprises. Handayani et al. (2025) investigate the challenges of using trademark rights as collateral for financing in Indonesia's creative economy. Their analysis demonstrates that intellectual property protection alone is insufficient; mechanisms for translating intellectual property into financial value are equally crucial.

Kavlashvili (2026) broadens this perspective by analysing the systemic transformation of intellectual property management in the context of rapid AI development, arguing that intellectual assets have become the primary resource shaping economic development, competitiveness, and innovative potential. This distinction between protection and management is particularly relevant for creative enterprises, which may possess valuable intellectual property yet lack the strategic capabilities to leverage it effectively in international markets.

Judijanto (2025a) examines the role of intellectual property rights in supporting innovation and business growth in Indonesia's digital era, identifying obstacles such as weak law enforcement, widespread digital infringements, and low public awareness as primary challenges to the optimal implementation of IPR. This research underscores the importance of institutional frameworks in supporting the effectiveness of intellectual property rights, particularly in emerging economies where formal institutions may be less well developed.

Creative Entrepreneurship and International Market Dynamics

The final cluster of literature addresses entrepreneurship in the creative economy, with particular attention to local development, internationalisation, and the role of creative entrepreneurs in shaping market dynamics. Minho et al. (2026) examine how creative technology entrepreneurship can empower marginalised communities in emerging economies by enabling local entrepreneurs to create businesses that drive social change. This finding suggests that creative entrepreneurship is embedded in social relations, and its effectiveness depends on both technological and social infrastructure.

Svynous et al. (2025) analyse the creative economy as a driver of entrepreneurial initiative and infrastructure development in rural territorial communities of Ukraine. Their research demonstrates that implementing creative approaches in community development strategies creates preconditions for human capital development, investment attraction, and the formation of innovation ecosystems.

Tkachenko (2025) emphasises that the creative economy is not only an economic phenomenon but also a socio-cultural phenomenon shaping the future of society. The study recommends support for innovation, infrastructure development, and international cooperation as key strategies for stimulating creative economy growth.

The potential negative aspects of knowledge-intensive business services in the creative economy are examined by Cooke (2024), who analyses cases of misconduct by global professional services firms. This critical perspective is valuable for creative economy research, as it cautions against overly optimistic assessments of the sector's potential and underscores the need for robust governance mechanisms.

Synthesis and Research Gaps

The literature review reveals several important themes and identifies significant gaps that the present study addresses. First, while considerable research examines the creative economy at national and regional levels, less attention has been paid to how individual creative enterprises adapt their business models for international markets. This gap is particularly notable in the context of increasing globalisation of creative goods and services.

Second, although intellectual property management and digitalisation are recognised as central to the success of creative enterprises, their interaction in the context of international expansion remains undertheorised. The literature suggests that intellectual property rights and digital capabilities are mutually reinforcing, but the mechanisms through which they jointly shape business model transformation require further investigation.

Third, while the three types of business model transformation identified in this study (inertial, hybrid, and platform-based) are discernible in the literature, they have not been examined through the lens of the intellectual property-digitalisation nexus. Existing research tends to treat these factors separately rather than investigating their simultaneous influence on the international strategies of creative enterprises.

Fourth, longitudinal analysis of how creative enterprises' business models evolve as they move from domestic to international markets is relatively limited. The present study addresses this gap by examining business model transformation in the context of international market entry and expansion.

The literature on the creative economy provides a rich theoretical and empirical foundation for examining how creative enterprises transform their business models for international markets. The analysed studies characterise the creative economy as a dynamic sector shaped by digitalisation, intellectual property regimes, entrepreneurial agency, and institutional contexts. Building on these foundations, the present study examines how creative software enterprises in the AECO sector enter international markets while simultaneously managing intellectual property and digitalisation, contributing to a more integrated understanding of business model transformation in the creative economy.

Methods

To achieve the stated aim, this study employed a comparative case analysis. The choice of qualitative methodology is grounded in the nature of the research question: business model transformation is a complex, context-dependent process that is difficult to measure quantitatively. The case method allows for the documentation not only of formal changes in revenue structure or distribution channels but also of the implicit mechanisms through which intellectual property and digital tools reconfigure the underlying logic of business operations.

The study is designed as a multiple case study. Analysing several companies makes it possible to identify recurring patterns while simultaneously capturing the unique features of each strategy. This approach enables not merely the description of individual examples but the formulation of a typology that may prove useful for other creative sectors and markets.

Company selection was guided by several criteria. First, the companies were required to belong to the creative sector. To operationalise this concept, the definition proposed by Mekh et al. (2025) was adopted, according to which creative business is understood as a micro-level unit that transforms intellectual capital into marketable products and services. Second, the companies were required to operate in at least three foreign markets, allowing the international dimension of transformation to be analysed. Third, the business model of each company had to explicitly rely on both intellectual property and digital sales channels.

As a result, three companies from the architectural software (AECO) sector were selected: Autodesk, Trimble, and Nemetschek Group. This sector was chosen for several reasons. First, all three companies are publicly traded, which ensures the availability and comparability of financial statements and public disclosures. Second, the architectural software sector is undergoing an active phase of digital transformation, with companies shifting from perpetual licences to subscription models and cloud platforms, making it particularly relevant for this study. Third, all three companies operate globally, enabling the analysis of the international aspects of transformation.

The analysis drew on three main types of sources. The first comprised official financial reports for the period 2023-2025. For Autodesk and Trimble, Form 10-K and 10-Q filings submitted to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission were used, along with investor presentations. For the Nemetschek Group, annual reports prepared in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) were analysed. The financial reports allowed for the identification of structural changes in revenue streams (the share of subscriptions, licences, and services), growth dynamics, profitability, and the share of international sales.

The second source was the analysis of licensing agreements and intellectual property policies. Public offers, Terms of Service, corporate blogs, and official company statements regarding the transition to new licensing models were used. This made it possible to trace how

companies are transforming their approaches to intellectual property management in response to digitalisation.

The third source was the analysis of digital sales channels. This included the study of official company websites, sales platforms (e.g., Autodesk App Store, Trimble's Extension Warehouse), and descriptions of ecosystems and partner programmes. Additional data on market positioning were drawn from analytical reports (e.g., Cambashi, Verdantix), as well as from industry press and interviews with top management.

The analysis was conducted in several sequential stages. At the first stage, information was collected on the current state of each business model: how the company generates revenue, what products and services it offers, how revenue is structured, and in which markets it operates. This allowed for the creation of a profile of each company at the beginning of the analysed period.

At the second stage, changes in the business model over the 2023-2025 period were documented. Particular attention was paid to three aspects: a) revenue model transformation – the shift from licences to subscriptions and SaaS; b) changes in intellectual property management – the emergence of new licence types, changes in terms of use, and the development of ecosystems and APIs; and c) the development of digital channels – the creation of platforms, marketplaces, and the transition to direct sales through digital channels.

At the third stage, a comparative analysis of the identified changes was conducted. The aim was to identify recurring patterns while also capturing the unique features of each strategy. The comparison allowed the strategies to be grouped into types based on two key criteria: 1) the depth of digital transformation (from a presentation website to integrated platforms with network effects); and 2) the intellectual property management strategy (from traditional protection to using IP as an interface and access code).

Like any case study, this research has certain limitations. The selection of companies from a single sector (architectural software) allows for control of industry-specific factors but simultaneously limits the generalisability of the findings to other creative sectors – such as design, music, film, or digital art. Furthermore, the analysis relies on publicly available data, which do not always reveal the internal logic of strategic decision-making.

Nevertheless, the chosen design ensures the internal validity of the study: the comparability of companies belonging to the same sector, operating in similar markets, and undergoing comparable technological transformations makes it possible to identify robust patterns that are highly likely to be reproduced in other creative sectors undergoing digital transformation.

Results

This section presents the empirical data that confirm the identification of three types of business model transformation among creative enterprises (inertial, hybrid, and platform-based), using companies from the architectural software (AECO) sector as examples. The analysis is based on the official financial reports of Autodesk, Trimble, and Nemetschek Group for the 2023-2025 financial years.

Overall Financial Performance and Trends

Table 1. Key Financial Indicators and Their Relationship to Transformation Type

Indicator	Autodesk (Platform-based)	Trimble (Hybrid)	Nemetschek Group (Inertial/Transitional)
Year	FY2025 (ended 31 Jan 2025)	FY2025 (ended 31 Dec 2025)	FY2024 (ended 31 Dec 2024)
Revenue	\$6.131 billion	\$3.565 billion	€995.6 million
Organic Revenue Growth	+12%	+10%	+13.7%
Non-GAAP Operating Margin	36.4%	27.7%	30.2%
Recurring Revenue Share	>95%	~79%	86.5%
ARR (Annual Recurring Revenue)	N/A	\$2.392 billion	€1.019 billion
ARR Growth	N/A	+14%	+41.9%
Transformation Type	Platform-based	Hybrid	Inertial

Source: [Autodesk <https://investors.autodesk.com>], [Trimble <https://investor.trimble.com>], [Nemetschek Group <https://nemetschek.com>].

All three companies demonstrate sustained revenue growth and improving profitability; however, the key drivers of this growth and the structure of their businesses differ significantly, consistent with their typology (Fig. 1).

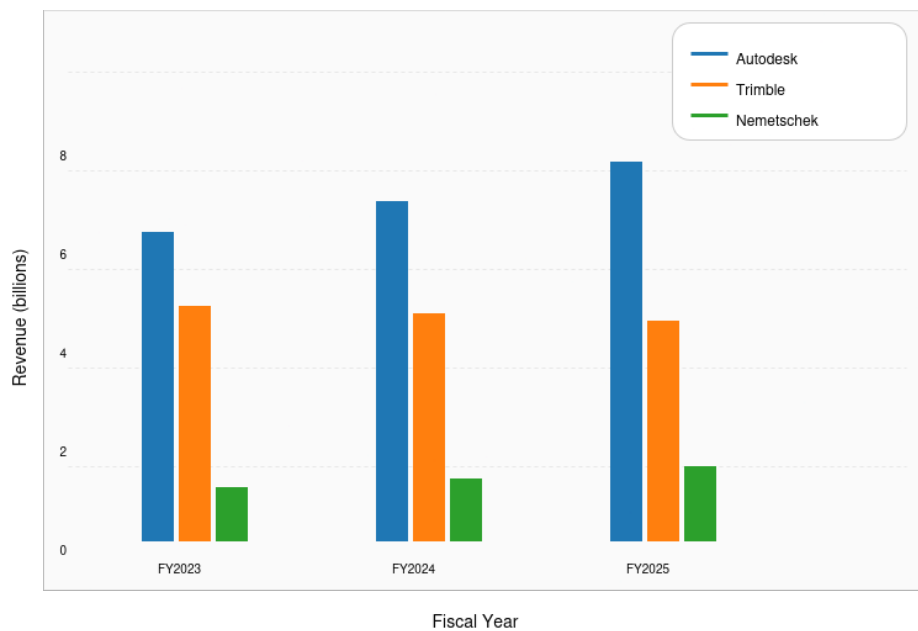


Fig. 1. Annual Revenue Dynamics (in billions of USD/EUR)

Note: Data for Nemetschek are presented in euros, while data for Autodesk and Trimble are in US dollars. For visual clarity, the scale is aligned by trend rather than by absolute currency values [Autodesk <https://investors.autodesk.com>], [Trimble <https://investor.trimble.com>], [Nemetschek Group <https://nemetschek.com>].

Typology of Transformation: Empirical Confirmation

The analysis of strategies, revenue structures, and operational indicators has made it possible to clearly identify the three types of transformation described in the research plan.

Type A: Inertial (exemplified by Nemetschek)

Despite its high growth rates, Nemetschek continues to be in an active phase of business model transformation, which temporarily constrains revenue growth and profitability. The company still relies significantly on distributors and traditional licences, particularly in the Design segment.

Supporting evidence:

- Subscription transition: Revenue from subscriptions and SaaS grew by 88.3% to €567.8 million, but the share of licences remains at 10.1%.
- Channel structure: The company maintains an extensive network of over 80 distributors worldwide, while revenue from the Design segment which is at an earlier stage of transformation grew by only 13.7%, below the group average.
- Profitability: Despite growth, the company's EBITDA margin in 2024 stood at 30.2%, the lowest among the three analysed companies (for their respective reporting periods), reflecting the “dampening effect” of the transition to subscriptions.

Table 2. Revenue Structure of Nemetschek Group by Type and Segment

Indicator	2023	2024	Change
Total Revenue	€851.6 million	€995.6 million	+16.9%
Licenses	€161.1 million	€100.7 million	-37.5%
Subscriptions and SaaS	€301.8 million	€567.8 million	+88.1%
Design Segment Revenue	€432.0 million	€488.8 million	+13.1%
Build Segment Revenue	€265.4 million	€340.7 million	+28.4%

Source: <https://nemetschek.com>

Type B: Hybrid (exemplified by Trimble)

Trimble has successfully completed its transition to a subscription model, which has secured a high share of recurring revenue and accelerated ARR growth. The model remains hybrid due to

the retention of a significant hardware business (Field Systems), but with a clear focus on the service component.

Supporting evidence:

- Transformation model: Since 2020, the company has carried out 23 divestitures and 13 acquisitions, shifting its focus to software and services. The share of recurring revenue grew from 40% in 2020 to 79% in 2025.

- Key metrics: Organic ARR growth reached +14%, while adjusted EBITDA margin reached 29.3%.

- Segmentation: The financial performance of the AECO segment, focused on software and cloud solutions, demonstrates significantly higher profitability (34.2% operating margin) than the hardware-oriented Field Systems segment (31.1%).

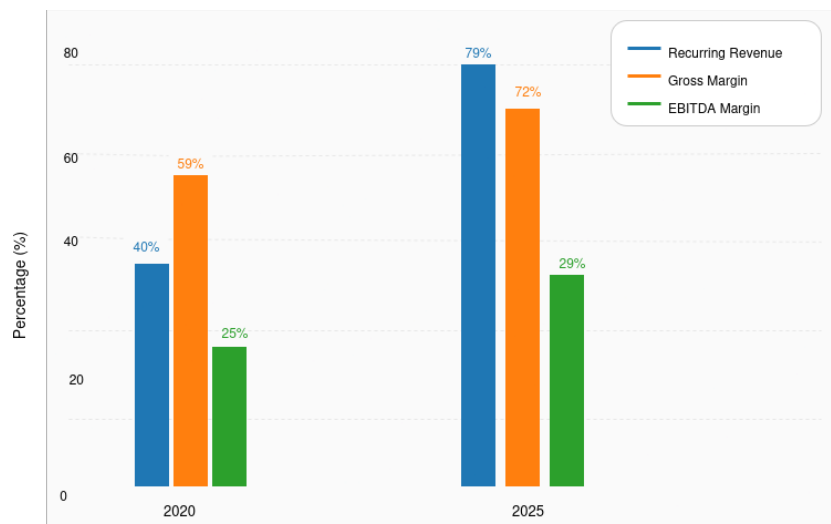


Fig. 2. Trimble's Business Model Transformation Progress (2020–2025)

Source: [Trimble-Q4-25 <https://investor.trimble.com>]

Type C: Platform-based (exemplified by Autodesk)

Autodesk represents the most prominent example of the platform-based model. The company has already completed its transition to subscriptions and is actively developing an ecosystem of cloud platforms (Autodesk Construction Cloud, Fusion, Flow), creating network effects and significantly expanding its addressable market.

Supporting evidence:

- Platform revenue: Revenue from the Make segment (cloud subscriptions for construction and manufacturing) grew by 25% to reach \$654 million.

- Profitability: Despite its massive scale, Autodesk demonstrates the highest Non-GAAP operating margin at 36.4%, a result of its high recurring revenue share and platform economies of scale.

- Strategy: The company is focusing on developing shared platform services (Autodesk AI) and transitioning to direct sales through a new transaction model, allowing it to interact directly with customers and increase NRR (Net Revenue Retention).

Table 3. Autodesk Revenue Structure by Product (Design / Make)

Indicator	FY2024	FY2025	Change
Total Revenue	\$5.497 billion	\$6.131 billion	0,12
Design (mature solutions)	\$4.647 billion	\$5.104 billion	0,1
Make (cloud platforms)	\$523 million	\$654 million	0,25

Source: <https://investors.autodesk.com>

Key Differences in Growth Drivers

Based on the analysis of the reports, key differences in the strategies of the three companies were identified, as presented in Fig. 3.

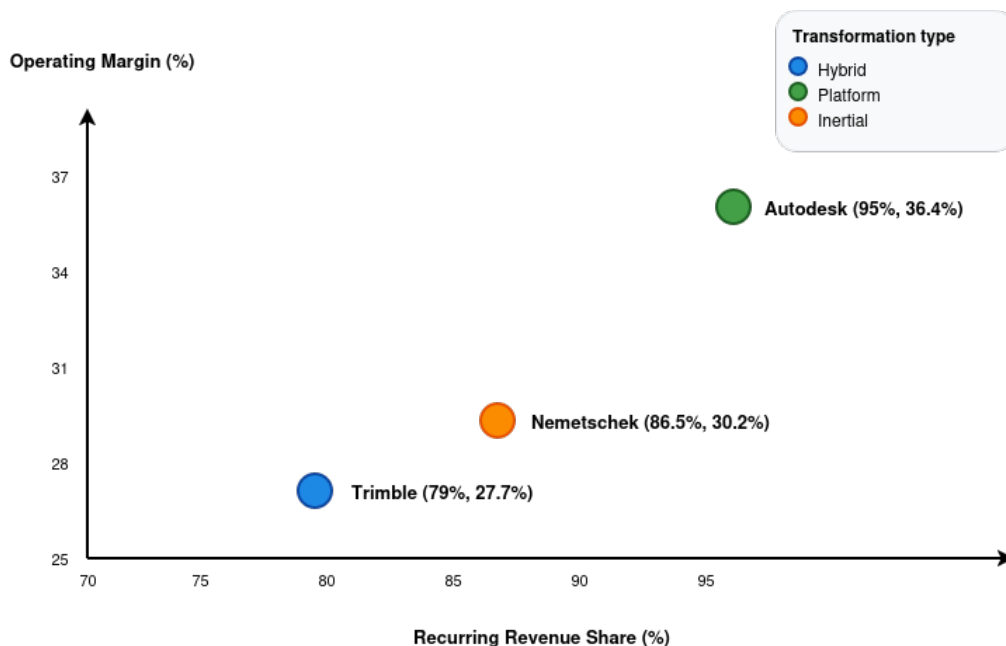


Fig. 3. Operating Margin and Recurring Revenue Share (markers indicate transformation type)

Note: For Nemetschek, data are for FY2024 <https://nemetschek.com>

The findings from the analysis can be summarised in the following main points:

- Confirmation of typology: The empirical data fully confirm the three identified types of transformation. The transition from an inertial to a platform-based model correlates with an increase in recurring revenue share and operating profitability.

- Differences in strategies: Autodesk focuses on creating platform-based ecosystems (Make), Trimble on balancing software and hardware with a growing service component, and Nemetschek on scaling and transitioning to subscriptions in traditional segments (Design).

- The role of IP and digitalisation: In the platform-based model (Autodesk), IP protects not so much the code itself but rather the APIs and algorithms, enabling network effects. In the hybrid model (Trimble), IP serves as a tool for creating integrated solutions (connect and scale), while in the inertial model (Nemetschek), it remains primarily a barrier to copying – as reflected in the lower profitability despite high growth rates.

Discussion

The analysis of three companies in the architectural software sector yields several conclusions that extend beyond the mere description of individual strategies. First and foremost, the results confirm that the transformation of a creative entrepreneur's business model when entering international markets is not reducible to a choice between "openness" and "closedness" of intellectual property. Instead, we are dealing with a simultaneous reconfiguration of two dimensions – legal protection tools and digital customer engagement channels.

In the platform-based model (Autodesk), intellectual property ceases to be predominantly a legal barrier – it becomes an interface through which the ecosystem connects partners and clients. This explains the exceptionally high operating margin (36.4%) alongside a recurring revenue share exceeding 95%. The company is not merely selling access to a product – it is managing the platform upon which value is created.

In the hybrid model (Trimble), IP serves as an instrument for integrating diverse solutions – both software and hardware. The "connect and scale" strategy presupposes that intellectual property

acts as a linking element between different products and markets, enabling the maintenance of high profitability in software segments (34.2%) while simultaneously retaining positions in hardware directions.

In the inertial model (Nemetschek), high growth rates (13.7% organic revenue) do not in themselves guarantee business model transformation. IP remains predominantly a barrier to copying, while digital channels serve as an additional, but not primary, means of customer interaction. This is reflected in lower profitability (30.2%) and significant dependence on distributors.

The most notable finding of the analysis is that intellectual property and digitalisation do not influence transformation separately, but rather through a system of feedback loops. In the platform-based model, digital channels create new risks for IP, yet simultaneously open opportunities for its reinforcement: user behaviour data become not merely a by-product but also an evidentiary basis in disputes. In the inertial model, digitalisation remains an external factor.

A comparison of Nemetschek and Autodesk reveals that the depth of transformation, rather than its speed, determines long-term effectiveness. Nemetschek demonstrates impressive ARR growth (+41.9%) and subscription share, yet retains a traditional IP management structure. Autodesk, despite more modest growth rates, achieves significantly higher profitability. This suggests that it is not enough simply to transition to subscriptions – one must also understand how this new model changes the role of intellectual property.

The study has several limitations. A sample of three companies from a single sector does not allow for broad generalisations across the entire creative economy. The analysis relies on public data, which do not always reveal the internal logic of decision-making.

Nevertheless, the results support several hypotheses: 1) the proposed typology may prove applicable to other creative sectors; 2) the relationship between digitalisation and IP management may be non-linear – there may be threshold levels of digital maturity, beyond which the role of intellectual property undergoes a qualitative change.

For creative entrepreneurs, the findings offer a practical framework for diagnosing their current model. If IP remains merely a barrier to copying, the company is in an inertial phase. If IP becomes a linking element between products, it represents a hybrid model. If IP evolves into an ecosystem interface, the company is moving towards a platform-based model. Each of these phases has its own priorities, and in all cases, transformation is a continuous process of adaptation to changing conditions.

Conclusion

This study has confirmed that the transformation of a creative entrepreneur's business model when entering international markets is not reducible to a simple transition from licences to subscriptions. Rather, it involves a fundamental reconfiguration of how intellectual property functions in the digital environment and how digital channels reshape IP management strategy.

The analysis of three companies (Autodesk, Trimble, and Nemetschek Group) allowed for the identification of three types of transformation. In the platform-based model (Autodesk), IP evolves from a barrier into an interface that generates network effects, enabling a 36.4% operating margin. In the hybrid model (Trimble), IP serves as a linking element between software and hardware solutions. In the inertial model (Nemetschek), high growth rates (13.7%) are accompanied by the retention of a traditional IP management structure and lower profitability (30.2%).

These three types are not static – companies can move from one phase to another, but such a transition requires not merely investment in technology but also a fundamental rethinking of the role of IP under new conditions.

The study refines existing approaches to the internationalisation of creative entrepreneurship. Traditional models developed for industrial companies fail to account for the specificities of creative businesses, where the primary asset is intangible and digital channels fundamentally alter the logic of market entry. The proposed typology enables not only the classification of strategies but also the anticipation of future transformation pathways.

The sample of three companies from a single sector does not permit broad generalisations. The analysis relies on public data. Nevertheless, the findings support several hypotheses: the proposed typology may prove applicable to other creative sectors; and the relationship between digitalisation and IP management may be non-linear.

Future research could expand the sample to include companies from other creative sectors, as well as employ interviews with top management to gain deeper insight into strategic decision-making.

The transformation of a creative entrepreneur's business model is a continuous process of adaptation, in which intellectual property and digitalisation operate as a unified mechanism. Companies that succeed in rethinking the role of IP in the digital environment – transforming it from a barrier into an interface and a source of user engagement data – gain the ability to manage the platform upon which value is created. It is in this, rather than in the speed of growth, that the key to long-term effectiveness in the creative economy lies.

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