

Orange Economy and Sustainable Development: Exploring the Role of Creative Industries in Achieving SDGs

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Abstract

The Orange Economy, comprising cultural and creative industries centered on human imagination, heritage, and intellectual capital, has become a key driver of modern socio-economic progress. This paper investigates how creative industries contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By transforming ideas and cultural assets into economic value, the creative sector offers a low-carbon, knowledge-based alternative to traditional resource-intensive growth.

Through a review of current policy frameworks and sector case studies, this study evaluates the multidimensional impact of creative industries across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Economic findings show that creative activities foster job creation, youth employment, and entrepreneurship, supporting SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). Socially, creative work protects local heritage, advances gender inclusion, and strengthens urban social cohesion, aligning with SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). Environmental benefits also arise because the sector relies heavily on intangible assets rather than heavy physical resources, encouraging sustainable patterns aligned with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

Systemic challenges remain despite these benefits. Creative workers often face job instability, limited credit access, weak intellectual property enforcement, and digital inequality. Addressing these obstacles requires targeted public policies, fair digital regulations, and flexible financial support. In conclusion, integrating the Orange Economy into national sustainability strategies allows policymakers to use human creativity to build resilient, inclusive, and sustainable economic ecosystems.

Keywords: Orange Economy, Cultural and Creative Industries, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sustainable Growth, Intellectual Property, Social Inclusion.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Conceptual Foundations of the Orange Economy

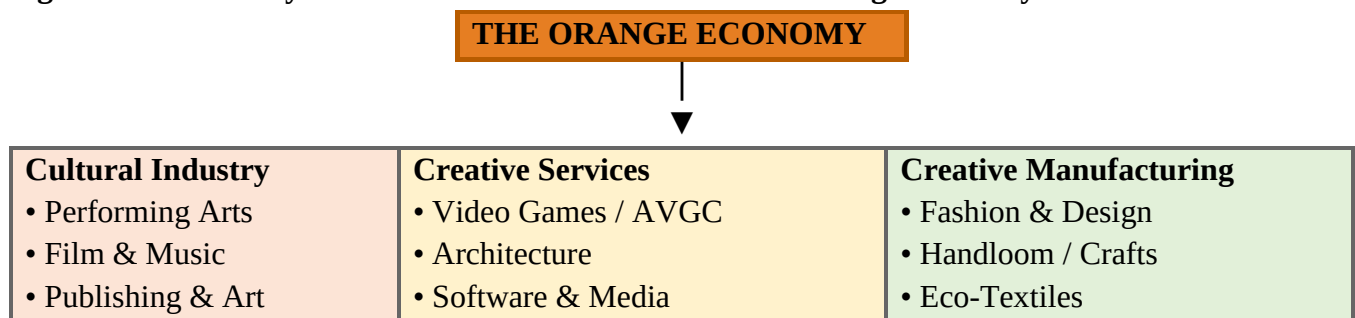
The global economic landscape has undergone a major transformation over recent decades. Production models centered on heavy physical manufacturing and resource extraction are increasingly giving way to knowledge-driven and human-centered economies (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Within this transition, human imagination, cultural expression, and intellectual capital have

emerged as key drivers of national growth and social transformation (Press Information Bureau, 2026; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). This phenomenon is broadly conceptualized as the “Orange Economy”, a term popularized by economists Felipe Buitrago and Iván Duque through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). The colour orange was chosen symbolically because it has historically been associated with culture, leadership, and creative energy (Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

At its foundational level, the Orange Economy encompasses all sectors where the primary input is human creativity and where output generates economic value through intellectual property (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). The term builds upon earlier frameworks developed in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). Notably, the United Kingdom Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) introduced early policy mappings that linked arts, design, and media to economic development (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ost & Saleh, 2021). Shortly after, author John Howkins popularized the term “creative economy”, defining it as an economic structure driven by individual skill, talent, and the commercial exploitation of copyright (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) expanded this definition by emphasizing that creative activities combine artistic expressions with symbolic value, relying heavily on property rights to serve wide consumer markets (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2024).

The scope of the Orange Economy is broad and multifaceted (Ramaswamy et al., 2025). It spans three primary sub-domains: cultural industries, creative manufacturing, and creative services (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). Cultural industries include traditional arts, visual arts, performing arts, literature, publishing, music, museum management, and film production (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Creative manufacturing involves artisanal crafts, eco-friendly textile designs, fashion, and specialized industrial manufacturing that relies on creative aesthetics (Balaji & Mani, 2014; Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). Creative services encompass modern digital sectors such as software development, video game design, advertising, architecture, digital media, interactive media, and animation (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Press Information Bureau, 2026; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

Figure 1.1 Taxonomy and Structural Sub-Domains of the Orange Economy



This model represents a fundamental shift in how societies define economic value (Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Rather than depending solely on physical raw materials or heavy factory machinery, the Orange Economy relies on “mindfactures”, goods and services whose value stems from original ideas, cultural meaning, and intangible assets (Nediyedath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). As global markets adapt to digital tools, the Orange Economy has moved beyond traditional arts to become an essential component of modern technology-driven growth (Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

1.2 Global Economic and Social Landscape of Creative Industries

The macroeconomic weight of the creative industries globally is substantial (Ramaswamy et al., 2025). According to global figures, the Orange Economy generates approximately 2.3 trillion US dollars in annual revenues, accounting for roughly 3.1 percent of total world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Ramaswamy et al., 2025). In terms of labor participation, the sector employs over 48.4 million people worldwide, representing 6.2 percent of total global employment (Ramaswamy et al., 2025). If the global creative sector were treated as a single nation, it would rank among the largest national economies in terms of overall economic output and total workforce size (Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

Table 1.1: Global Impact at a Glance

GLOBAL IMPACT AT A GLANCE	
Global Annual Revenue	\$2.3 Trillion USD
Contribution to Global GDP	3.1%
Global Employment	48.4 million Jobs
Workforce Share	6.2% of global workforce
Global Intangible Asset Valuation	~\$80 trillion USD

Source: (Ramaswamy et al., 2025)

The growth trajectory of creative businesses has frequently surpassed that of conventional economic sectors (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). Empirical studies examining financial balances show that creative sector revenues and profits often grow at higher annual rates than average regional GDPs (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). During major global financial interruptions, including the 2008 financial crisis, creative businesses demonstrated remarkable economic resilience (Borre et al., 2023; Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). Because creative production depends heavily on adaptable human skill rather than rigid supply networks, creative organizations are often able to adjust rapidly during economic downturns (Borre et al., 2023; Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022).

India provides an important case study of a developing nation actively developing its creative frontier (Nediyedath, 2025; Press Information Bureau, 2026). Moving from its historical focus on heavy manufacturing under initiatives like “Make in India”, the country is shifting toward a “Create in India” agenda (Nediyedath, 2025). National policy initiatives, such as the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES), highlight the expanding role of creators, digital artists, game developers, filmmakers, and musicians (Nediyedath, 2025; Press Information Bureau, 2026). Strategic initiatives like the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT) are building dedicated education and skilling pipelines (Press Information Bureau, 2026). These programs aim to prepare two million specialized creative professionals by 2030, connecting local talent to international platforms and contributing to national development goals (Press Information Bureau, 2026; Tomar, 2026).

1.3 Intersection of the Orange Economy and Sustainable Development Goals

The concept of sustainable development has evolved significantly since it was formally defined in the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report as development that meets current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Borre et al., 2023; Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). Early sustainability discussions focused primarily on three main pillars: economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection (Cudny et al., 2025; Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). However, contemporary academic consensus increasingly recognizes culture as the “fourth pillar” of sustainable development

(Cudny et al., 2025; Kačerauskas et al., 2021). Scholars argue that economic metrics and environmental policies cannot succeed without addressing the cultural values, shared meanings, and social identities that shape human behavior (Cudny et al., 2025).

The adoption of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provided an explicit global framework for evaluating how different economic sectors contribute to long-term sustainability (Cudny et al., 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Recognizing the importance of creative industries, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development (Cudny et al., 2025). Creative and cultural industries align directly with multiple Sustainable Development Goals across economic, social, and environmental (Cudny et al., 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

Figure 1.2: Orange Economy & SDG Alignment Matrix

ORANGE ECONOMY & SDG ALIGNMENT MATRIX

ORANGE ECONOMY & SDG ALIGNMENT MATRIX		
Economic Pillar SDG 8: Decent Work SDG 9: Industry & Innovation SDG 1: No Poverty (via livelihoods)	Social Pillar SDG 5: Gender Equality SDG 10: Reduced Inequality SDG 11: Sustainable Cities/Communities	Environmental Pillar SDG 12: Responsible Consumption/Production SDGs 13–15: Climate Action & Ecosystems via Green Media

On the economic front, the Orange Economy contributes directly to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) (Cudny et al., 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). By generating flexible, knowledge-based employment, creative activities provide viable income streams for young people, freelancers, independent artisans, and micro-entrepreneurs (Nediyedath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). The low physical capital requirements for entry in many digital creative disciplines allow communities with limited infrastructure to build viable commercial enterprises (Borre et al., 2023; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). The expansion of creative services fosters digital literacy and drives technological innovation in fields like coding, software architecture, and immersive media (Press Information Bureau, 2026; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

On the social front, the creative economy aligns with SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) (Cudny et al., 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Creative industries often feature higher proportions of female ownership and participation compared to traditional industrial manufacturing sectors (Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Artisanal handicraft production, traditional handlooms, and cultural tourism provide home-based and community-based income opportunities for rural women, strengthening their financial independence (Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022; Nediyedath, 2025). In urban contexts, creative placemaking and culture-led urban regeneration help revitalize declining industrial districts (Cudny et al., 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Converting underused urban spaces into creative hubs, art galleries, film clusters, and public performance centers enhances local social cohesion, preserves cultural heritage, and improves quality of life (Cudny et al., 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

On the environmental front, the Orange Economy offers potential solutions for SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and SDG 15 (Life

on Land) (Cudny et al., 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Because creative products rely heavily on intangible ideas rather than physical resource extraction, their carbon footprint per unit of economic value is often lower than that of heavy manufacturing (Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Furthermore, creative outputs, such as documentary films, public art installations, music, and digital campaigns, serve as powerful media for raising public awareness about climate change, resource conservation, and biodiversity loss (Cudny et al., 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Recent developments in “green filmmaking” and sustainable festival management demonstrate how media production practices can actively reduce waste, lower energy consumption, and model sustainable operational standards (Cudny et al., 2025).

1.4 Key Drivers and Mechanisms of Value Creation

Understanding how the Orange Economy converts human creativity into tangible social and economic development requires examining its primary drivers of value creation (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

Table 1.2: Mechanisms of Value Creation in Creative Industries

VALUE MECHANISM	STRUCTURAL FUNCTION AND ECONOMIC PROCESS	CORE CITATION REFERENCE
Intellectual Property (IP)	Converts intangible ideas into economic assets via copyright, trademarks, and licensing rights.	(Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025)
Digital Tech & Innovation	Lowers distribution costs; enables global reach via streaming, AI, AR/VR, and direct-to-consumer tools.	(Ramaswamy et al., 2025; Vision IAS, 2024)
Cultural Capital & Community	Leverages local heritage, traditional crafts, and indigenous knowledge to build sustainable identity.	(Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022; Cudny et al., 2025)

The central engine of the creative economy is Intellectual Property (IP) (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Intangible assets, which include copyrights, patents, trademarks, design rights, and trade secrets, account for an estimated 80 trillion US dollars globally (Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Within the creative sector, IP legal protections enable creators to turn original expressions into financial assets (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Effective IP frameworks allow artists, writers, game developers, and designers to license their work, secure royalties, attract investment, and establish commercial value (Ramaswamy et al., 2025; Vision IAS, 2024).

A second critical driver is technology integration and digital transformation (Ramaswamy et al., 2025; Vision IAS, 2024). The expansion of high-speed internet, mobile digital infrastructure, streaming platforms, and social media channels has fundamentally altered creative value chains (Ramaswamy et al., 2025; Vision IAS, 2024). Digital tools have lowered production costs and democratized content distribution, allowing creators from marginalized or geographically remote regions to reach global audiences directly (Ramaswamy et al., 2025; Vision IAS, 2024). Emerging technologies are expanding these possibilities further (Ramaswamy et al., 2025). The introduction of artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and blockchain-based smart contracts is transforming how creative assets are built, protected, and monetized (Confederation of Indian Industry, 2026; Ramaswamy

et al., 2025). Blockchain systems, for example, enable transparent rights management and direct peer-to-peer royalty distribution, helping reduce dependence on traditional distribution intermediaries (Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

A third mechanism of value creation is the mobilization of cultural capital and community resilience (Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022; Cudny et al., 2025). Cultural capital refers to inherited crafts, traditional knowledge, oral histories, architectural heritage, and local artistic practices passed down across generations (Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022; Cudny et al., 2025). When structured responsibly through formal institutional support, traditional crafts, such as Kantha embroidery, natural dyeing, and handloom weaving, provide local livelihoods while reinforcing cultural identity and community resilience against socio-economic disruptions (Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022; Nediyeath, 2025). Integrating traditional cultural assets into formal economic structures converts historical heritage into a renewable resource for sustainable growth (Cudny et al., 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

1.5 Systemic Challenges, Policy Gaps, and Critical Debates

Despite its broad potential, the Orange Economy faces persistent structural challenges, institutional gaps, and critical debates (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

Table 1.3: Key Systemic Challenges

CHALLENGE DOMAIN	KEY STRUCTURAL BOTTLENECKS AND POLICY IMPACTS	CORE CITATION REFERENCE
Labor Precarity	Gig work, lack of social security, irregular pay, and informal employment structures.	(Nediyeath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025)
Financial Access	Inability of banks to collateralize intangible IP, leading to credit shortages for creative MSMEs.	(Nediyeath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025)
Data Scarcity	Lack of standard metrics; variable national data hinders evidence-based policy formulation.	(Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025)
Critical Debates	Gentrification risk, cultural commodification, and carbon costs of energy-intensive digital tech/AI.	(Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Manioudis & Angelakis, 2023)

A major obstacle is the precarity of creative labor (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). A large proportion of creative workers operate within the gig economy as freelancers, contract staff, or informal artisans (Nediyeath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). These professionals frequently encounter irregular income, a lack of social safety nets, absent healthcare coverage, and limited pension protections (Nediyeath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Furthermore, traditional commercial banks often struggle to value intangible intellectual assets, creating credit constraints that make it difficult for creative entrepreneurs to secure startup capital or business loans (Nediyeath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

Another major challenge stems from data scarcity and measurement limitations (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Because creative output is widely distributed across formal and informal channels, national statistical offices frequently lack standardized tools to track its precise economic contribution (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Inconsistent definitions of what constitutes a “creative business” lead to significant variance in reported metrics, with creative sector

contributions reported between 0.5 percent and 7.3 percent of GDP depending on the country and measurement methodology (Ramaswamy et al., 2025). This lack of standardized metrics complicates policy design, hinders long-term resource allocation, and makes it difficult to justify public infrastructure investments (Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

Policy and regulatory gaps present further complications (Ramaswamy et al., 2025; Vision IAS, 2024). Copyright legal frameworks in many developing nations remain outdated, failing to protect creators against widespread digital piracy, unauthorized data scraping, and copyright infringement (Ramaswamy et al., 2025; Vision IAS, 2024). In addition, digital divide issues, such as unequal access to high-speed internet, hardware, and specialized software, risk marginalizing rural artisans and creators from lower-income backgrounds, concentrating the benefits of the digital creative economy among urban populations (Nediyedath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

Academic literature also highlights important critical debates surrounding creative growth models (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). Critics point out that treating culture primarily as an economic commodity can lead to cultural over-commercialization, where artistic expressions are simplified to fit market demands rather than preserving their original community values (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). In urban development, culture-led regeneration can inadvertently drive gentrification, raising local property costs and displacing the low-income communities and working artists who established the area's cultural character (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). Finally, the common assumption that creative industries are inherently “environmentally clean” is undergoing closer scrutiny (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). While creative activities generate less physical pollution than heavy manufacturing, modern digital content industries, such as streaming platforms, large-scale data centers, video game processing, and generative AI model training, consume substantial electrical power (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Addressing these environmental impacts requires careful management as the sector expands (Cudny et al., 2025; Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022).

1.6 Problem Statement, Research Rationale, and Objectives

While international organizations and policy literature frequently highlight the potential of the Orange Economy to generate economic growth, empirical and systematic research evaluating its specific contributions across the full matrix of Sustainable Development Goals remains limited (Cudny et al., 2025; Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). Existing research often treats economic growth as an automatic proxy for sustainability (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). However, economic growth alone does not guarantee fair income distribution, decent working conditions, social equity, or environmental protection (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). A comprehensive understanding of how creative industries interact with the economic, social, and environmental pillars of sustainability is essential for sound policy development (Cudny et al., 2025; Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022).

This research addresses these gaps by evaluating the role of creative industries in advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Cudny et al., 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). The primary objectives of this study are:

- **Examine Conceptual Frameworks:** To evaluate the conceptual frameworks defining the Orange Economy and map its core activities against the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Analyze Value Creation Mechanisms:** To analyze the structural mechanisms through which intellectual property, digital technologies, and cultural capital generate economic value, social inclusion, and community resilience.

- **Identify Systemic Obstacles:** To identify systemic challenges, regulatory gaps, labor precarities, and credit constraints that limit the creative sector's potential.
- **Propose Policy Recommendations:** To formulate evidence-based policy recommendations that help governments, industry leaders, and institutions build sustainable creative ecosystems.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of the Creative Economy

The integration of culture, imagination, and economic systems has evolved into a prominent stream within contemporary economic thought (Croitoru, 2012; Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). Early theoretical roots can be traced to Joseph Schumpeter's theory of economic development and "creative destruction", which positions novelty and innovation as the primary catalysts of structural transformation (Croitoru, 2012). Modern scholarship expands Schumpeterian innovation beyond purely technological or industrial inventions to include "mindfactures", intangible products, symbolic meanings, artistic storytelling, and creative services that disrupt traditional production functions (Nediyedath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

Table 2.1: Theoretical Foundations of Creative Economy Research

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	CORE CONCEPTUAL INSIGHTS AND MECHANISM	KEY LITERATURE CITATION
Schumpeterian Innovation	Creative destruction & innovation driven by intangible "mindfactures" over physical goods.	(Croitoru, 2012; Ramaswamy et al., 2025)
Bourdieu's Theory	Conversion of non-monetary cultural/social capital into economic assets by cultural entrepreneurs.	(Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022; Croitoru, 2012)
Florida & Pratt	Human talent, creative hubs, and spatial spillovers driving regional economic revitalization.	(Bertoni et al., 2021; Cudny et al., 2025)

A key foundation of creative economy literature is Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) (Lemaire & ICHEC, 2021). Bourdieu established that value creation extends beyond conventional economic capital to encompass cultural capital (embodied knowledge, skills, and inherited traditions) and social capital (networks and collective identity) (Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022). Cultural entrepreneurs act as intermediaries who convert non-monetary cultural capital into institutionalized economic assets through market mechanisms and intellectual property frameworks (Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

In urban economics and economic geography, Richard Florida's "Creative Class" theory posits that regional growth depends on attracting and retaining creative workers who thrive in environments characterized by technology, talent, and tolerance (Cudny et al., 2025). Parallel research by Andy Pratt emphasizes that creative goods are spatial and social innovations, creating regional clusters that revitalize urban ecosystems and foster localized knowledge spillovers (Bertoni et al., 2021; Cudny et al., 2025).

2.2 Conceptual Evolution and Frameworks

The conceptual development of the creative economy has transitioned through distinct definitions over the past three decades (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). In 1998, the UK Department for Culture, Media and

Sport (DCMS) provided an early mapping framework that defined creative industries as activities rooted in individual creativity, skill, and talent with the potential for wealth creation through intellectual property (Bertoni et al., 2021; Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). John Howkins subsequently popularized the term “Creative Economy”, highlighting copyright, patent, trademark, and design law as the structural foundation that allows ideas to be monetized (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022).

Table 2.2: Conceptual Evolution Timeline

MILESTONE / INSTITUTION	FOCUS PERIOD	CORE DEFINITION AND SCOPE	KEY CITATION REFERENCE
UK DCMS Mappings	1998 / 2001	Individual creativity, skill, and talent driving wealth and job creation through IP.	(Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022)
John Howkins Framework	2001	Intellectual property rights (copyrights, patents, marks) as the engine of creative value.	(Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022)
UNCTAD / UNESCO Frameworks	2004–2024	Macro-classification: Heritage, Arts, Media, Functional Creations, and Digital Services.	(Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2024)
Buitrago & Duque (IDB)	2013 onwards	“Orange Economy” designation; focus on symbolic cultural value chains and sustainable growth.	(Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025)

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and UNESCO expanded this scope into a multi-tiered macro-classification (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). UNCTAD categorizes creative production into four broad domains:

- 1. Heritage:** Traditional cultural expressions, crafts, festivals, and historical sites.
- 2. Arts:** Visual arts (painting, sculpture, photography) and performing arts (theater, live music, dance) (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).
- 3. Media:** Publishing, printed books, television, radio, cinema, and audiovisual recorded content (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).
- 4. Functional Creations:** Architecture, graphic design, fashion, advertising, software, animation, and video games (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

Felipe Buitrago and Iván Duque introduced the term “Orange Economy” through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to summarize all sectors where goods and services carry symbolic value derived from intellectual capital (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). This framework emphasizes that creative activities link artistic production, commercial technology, and social culture into an integrated value chain (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

2.3 Empirical Synthesis: Economic, Social, and Environmental Contributions to SDGs

Table 2.3: Synthesis of Empirical Literature Across Sustainability Dimensions

DIMENSION	TARGET SDGS	PRIMARY EMPIRICAL FINDINGS IN LITERATURE	CITED ACADEMIC LITERATURE
Economic Impact	SDG 8 (Decent Work) SDG 9 (Innovation)	- Generates \$2.3 Trillion globally (3.1% GDP). - Higher revenue growth and crisis resilience vs. traditional sectors. - Drives youth and digital employment in software and media.	(Borre et al., 2023; Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025)
Social Impact	SDG 5 (Gender Eq.) SDG 11 (Cities)	- Panel study of 115 developing countries proves creative exports reduce urban slum incidence. - Traditional craft micro-enterprises empower over 80% rural women artisans.	(Balaji & Mani, 2014; Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022; Nji Nchange & Mignamissi, 2026)
Environmental Impact	SDG12 (Responsible Prod.)	- Knowledge-based alternative to heavy industrial extraction. - Circular natural-fiber craft production and zero-waste slow fashion.	(Balaji & Mani, 2014; Manioudis & Angelakis, 2023; Zbучea, 2022)

2.3.1 Economic Dimension: Job Creation, Diversification, and Resilience (SDG 8 & SDG 9)

Empirical literature validates the macroeconomic importance of the creative sector (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Global estimations place creative industry output at nearly \$2.3 trillion annually, employing more than 48.4 million people worldwide (Ramaswamy et al., 2025). In a longitudinal analysis of creative enterprises in Spain, (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022) demonstrated that Orange Economy firms achieved higher average revenue growth rates and maintained superior profitability over time compared to conventional manufacturing and commercial service sectors. Furthermore, the sector demonstrated high economic resilience during major macroeconomic shocks, such as the 2008 financial crisis (Borre et al., 2023; Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022).

In developing and emerging markets, creative industries support economic diversification by reducing dependence on primary commodities (Ramaswamy et al., 2025; Vision IAS, 2024). National data from India highlights the expanding role of media, entertainment, design, software, and the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, and Comics (AVGC) sectors (Nediyedath, 2025; Press Information Bureau, 2026). Reports indicate that India's formal media and creative content ecosystem reached approximately ₹2.3 trillion (\$28 billion) in 2023, with projections reaching ₹3.1 trillion by 2026 (CII, 2026). When informal cultural production, artisanal handloom, and traditional craft sectors are included, the creative economy contributes an estimated 6% to 8% of total national GDP and 20% of GVA (Confederation of Indian Industry, 2026; Vision IAS, 2024). By generating employment for youth, digital artists, and software

developers, the sector advances SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) (Nediyedath, 2025; Press Information Bureau, 2026; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

2.3.2 Social Dimension: Urban Regeneration, Inclusion, and Gender Empowerment (SDG 5 & SDG 11)

The social contributions of the Orange Economy are documented across both urban and rural settings (Cudny et al., 2025; Nji Nchange & Mignamissi, 2026; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). In a macroeconomic study covering 115 developing countries from 2002 to 2022, (Nji Nchange & Mignamissi, 2026) established an inverse relationship between creative goods exports and urban slum incidence. Their econometric findings demonstrate that expanding cultural production and creative service exports reduces urban poverty, upgrades informal settlements, and improves urban living conditions, directly advancing SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) (Nji Nchange & Mignamissi, 2026).

At the community level, traditional craft industries serve as vital mechanisms for social inclusion and poverty alleviation (Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022; Nediyedath, 2025). Research by (Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022) on traditional Kantha quilting and Madurkathi mat weaving in Eastern India reveals how craft-based micro-enterprises support rural women, marginalized groups, and displaced populations. By converting inherited skills into sustainable household income, these creative craft networks strengthen female financial independence, align with SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and build rural community resilience against environmental and economic disruptions (Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022; Nediyedath, 2025).

2.3.3 Environmental Dimension: Non-Resource-Intensive Growth and Circularity (SDG 12)

Theoretical and empirical literature increasingly highlights the creative economy as a low-carbon model for sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12) (Cudny et al., 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Unlike heavy manufacturing and industrial extraction, creative production generates high economic value per unit of physical input (Manioudis & Angelakis, 2023; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Studies by (Balaji & Mani, 2014; Zbucha, 2022) on traditional crafts and handlooms emphasize their alignment with circular economic principles, slow fashion, natural fiber usage, and local material sourcing.

In modern media, film, and digital design, research by (Cudny et al., 2025) illustrates how cultural campaigns, visual storytelling, and eco-friendly event management raise public awareness regarding climate change and environmental conservation. The expansion of digital creative products offers scalable alternatives to physical resource-intensive manufacturing, enabling low-impact value creation when paired with clean energy systems (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

2.4 Structural Obstacles, Gaps, and Critical Debates in Literature

Table 2.4: Structural Obstacles and Policy Gaps Identified in Literature

OBSTACLE DOMAIN	LITERARY EVIDENCE AND POLICY GAPS	CITED ACADEMIC LITERATURE
Labor Precarity	Irregular income, lack of social safety nets, gig economy conditions for independent creators.	(Nediyedath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025; Tomar, 2026)
Financing Barriers	High bank rejection rates (e.g., PM Vishwakarma 28% sanction rate) due to uncollateralized IP.	(Nediyedath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025)

Data & Enforcement	Inconsistent national metrics; weak copyright enforcement against digital piracy and AI scraping.	(Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Vision IAS, 2024)
Critical Debates	Risk of gentrification, cultural over-commodification, and high energy demand of digital processing/AI.	(Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Manioudis & Angelakis, 2023)

- 1. Labor Precarity and Gig Work:** A large proportion of creative professionals operate as freelancers, gig workers, or informal artisans (Nediyedath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). These workers frequently experience income instability, seasonal fluctuations, an absence of institutional healthcare or pension coverage, and limited legal protections (Nediyedath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025; Tomar, 2026).
- 2. Financing Barriers and IP Valuation:** Commercial financial institutions remain hesitant to accept intangible intellectual assets as loan collateral (Nediyedath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Analysis of micro-finance initiatives in India, such as the PM Vishwakarma scheme, reveals that banks sanctioned only 28% of artisan applications due to strict formal credit history requirements, leaving many creative entrepreneurs under-capitalized (Nediyedath, 2025).
- 3. Data Scarcity and Policy Gaps:** The absence of standardized statistical metrics makes tracking creative economy metrics difficult for national statistical agencies (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Sector contributions to GDP vary widely across national reports, ranging between 0.5% and 7.3%, due to inconsistent activity definitions (Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Outdated copyright laws in many developing nations also fail to protect creators against digital piracy and unauthorized AI training (Ramaswamy et al., 2025; Vision IAS, 2024).
- 4. Critical Debates on Commodification and Footprints:** Critical scholars caution that over-commercializing cultural assets risks stripping artistic practices of their original heritage meanings (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Ramaswamy et al., 2025). Urban studies also note that culture-driven regeneration can cause gentrification, leading to the displacement of lower-income communities and working artists (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022). Additionally, while physical waste is low, digital creative activities, such as high-definition streaming, rendering in AVGC, cloud computing, and AI content generation, require substantial energy, complicating claims of inherent environmental neutrality (Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Manioudis & Angelakis, 2023; Ramaswamy et al., 2025).

3. Systematic Review Methodology

3.1 Methodological Protocol and PRISMA Framework

To rigorously synthesize the existing body of knowledge surrounding the Orange Economy and its multi-dimensional contributions to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this study executed a systematic literature review following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews. The systematic methodology was designed to ensure objectivity, reproducibility, transparency, and empirical rigor in identifying, screening, assessing, and synthesizing relevant peer-reviewed journal articles, policy monographs, international organizational reports, and foundational academic studies.

4. Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Macroeconomic Output, Employment, and Resilience (SDGs 8 & 9)

The systematic analysis yields robust quantitative evidence regarding the macroeconomic scale and growth dynamics of the Orange Economy globally and nationally. At the global scale, the creative economy generates \$2.25 to \$2.3 trillion in annual revenues, representing 3.1% of world GDP, while supporting 48.4 million formal jobs (6.2% of total global employment). Furthermore, global valuation of intangible intellectual assets across creative and knowledge sectors exceeds \$80 trillion USD.

Longitudinal financial data from European enterprise panel studies reveals that creative companies display statistically significant outperformance in revenue growth rates and net margin stability compared to traditional commercial service and manufacturing firms. Crucially, during major macroeconomic contractions, such as the 2008 global financial crisis and subsequent structural shocks, the creative sector exhibited superior labor retention and rapid output. This resilience stems from the sector's reliance on human intellectual capital, flexible digital infrastructure, and low physical inventory overheads.

In national contexts, India's creative economy represents a rapidly expanding frontier. The formal media, entertainment, and digital creative ecosystem reached ₹2.3 trillion (\$28 billion USD) in 2023 and is projected to reach ₹3.1 trillion by 2026. When accounting for informal craft clusters, handlooms, and cultural tourism, the sector contributes nearly 8% of total national employment and 20% of Gross Value Added (GVA). The strategic government pivot toward "Create in India" and initiatives such as WAVES and the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT) aim to train 2 million specialized creative professionals by 2030, directly fulfilling SDG 8 (Decent Work) and SDG 9 (Innovation & Infrastructure).

4.2 Social Inclusion, Urban Renewal, and Poverty Alleviation (SDGs 5, 10 & 11)

The systematic synthesis reveals critical empirical linkages between creative sector expansion and positive social outcomes across developing and urbanizing regions. Macro-econometric panel analysis conducted across 115 developing nations over a 20-year panel period (2002–2022) using Driscoll-Kraay estimation provides empirical proof that increasing the export share of creative goods and services leads to a statistically significant reduction in urban slum incidence. Mediation analysis confirms that creative economy growth reduces urban poverty and slum prevalence primarily through two key mechanisms: reducing income inequality and attracting targeted foreign direct investment into urban infrastructure. This directly substantiates the role of CCIs in achieving SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

At the micro-community level, qualitative and field-survey evidence from traditional craft clusters in Eastern India demonstrates that heritage-based craft production (such as Kantha quilting and Madurkathi mat weaving) functions as a powerful instrument for rural rehabilitation, female economic empowerment, and community disaster resilience. Over 80% of artisans engaged in these traditional craft micro-enterprises are women from socio-economically marginalized households. Converting traditional skills into market-aligned eco-friendly home textiles provides independent income, elevates women's household decision-making authority, and preserves indigenous knowledge systems, directly advancing SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

4.3 Environmental Footprint, Circular Economy, and Resource Lightness (SDG 12)

The review confirms that the Orange Economy offers a highly resource-efficient, low-carbon model of economic growth compared to heavy extractive or physical manufacturing industries. Because value in CCIs is primarily derived from intangible ideas, symbolic meaning, and digital code ("mindfactures"), the material consumption per unit of economic output is fundamentally minimal. Studies on traditional handloom and natural-fiber craft sectors demonstrate strong alignment with circular economy principles,

utilizing locally sourced biodegradable reeds, organic dyes, and recycled textile scraps (slow fashion), thus directly fulfilling SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

Table 4.1: Systematic Mapping of Empirical Results across Sustainability Pillars

PILLAR / DIMENSION	TARGET SDGS	PRIMARY EMPIRICAL FINDINGS & KEY METRICS	CORE CITED LITERATURE
Economic Pillar	SDG 8 (Decent Work) SDG 9 (Innovation)	- Global revenue: \$2.3 Trillion (3.1% global GDP) - Global workforce: 48.4 million (6.2% global labor) - Higher revenue growth & crisis resilience vs. traditional firms India media /content: ₹2.3T (\$28B) rising to ₹3.1T; GVA share ~20%	(Confederation of Indian Industry, 2026; Ferreiro-Seoane et al., 2022; Nediyaedath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025)
Social Pillar	SDG 5 (Gender Eq.) SDG 10 (Reduced Ineq.) SDG 11 (Cities)	- Panel of 115 countries shows creative exports significantly reduce urban slum incidence. - Income inequality & FDI act as key mediation channels. - Traditional craft micro-enterprises support >80% rural women artisans, fostering empowerment.	(Balaji & Mani, 2014; Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022; Cudny et al., 2025; Nji Nchange & Mignamissi, 2026)
Environmental Pillar	SDG 12 (Responsible Prod.) SDGs 13–15 (Climate)	- High value-add per physical resource input (“mindfactures”). - Traditional handlooms/crafts promote circular economy, natural fibers, and zero-waste slow fashion. - Emerging “Green Film/Media” protocols lower production carbon footprint.	(Balaji & Mani, 2014; Manioudis & Angelakis, 2023; Zbucha, 2022)
Governance & Systemic Barriers	Institutional Policy & Financial Systems	- High labor precarity (gig work, lack of social safety nets). - Severe credit access gap: PM Vishwakarma sanctioned only 28% due to uncollateralized IP. - Data scarcity & variable GDP metrics (0.5%–7.3%).	(Confederation of Indian Industry, 2026; Nediyaedath, 2025; Ramaswamy et al., 2025; Tomar, 2026)

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Integration: Reinterpreting Value Creation Beyond Physical Capital

The synthesized findings strongly reinforce the theoretical change in thinking from heavy industrial prod-

uction toward knowledge-based, human-centric development. By integrating Schumpeterian innovation theory with Bourdieu's multi-capital framework, this study demonstrates that the Orange Economy operates as a dynamic transformer of non-monetary cultural capital into formal economic value. Unlike traditional primary commodities or physical manufacturing goods subject to diminishing marginal returns and physical resource depletion, creative products ("mindfactures") experience expanding returns to scale through digital replication and global IP licensing. Furthermore, the spatial clustering of creative talents in urban hubs validates Florida's Creative Class thesis and Pratt's agglomeration models, proving that cultural quarters drive urban economic renewal and social vitality.

5.2 The Triple-Bottom-Line Alignment with the 2030 Agenda

A major contribution of this systematic review is the explicit mapping of the Orange Economy across all three pillars of sustainable development. Economically (SDG 8 & 9), the sector offers high-value employment opportunities for youth and digital entrepreneurs while displaying remarkable resilience during global financial crises. Socially (SDG 5 & 11), the sector addresses structural urban poverty by reducing slum incidence in developing nations and empowering marginalized rural women through decentralized craft production. Environmentally (SDG 12), the sector decouples economic value growth from intensive physical material consumption, offering a viable model for sustainable, low-carbon growth.

5.3 Structural Bottlenecks, Institutional Failures, and Critical Debates

However, the discussion must critically confront severe structural constraints that threaten the long-term sustainability of the creative ecosystem. Chief among these is the precarity of creative labor. Millions of creative workers operate as informal gig labourer's or micro-entrepreneurs without health insurance, retirement security, or contractual protections against unfair exploitation. Furthermore, institutional financial systems remain severely misaligned with the creative economy. Commercial banks' insistence on physical land or brick-and-mortar collateral creates massive credit bottlenecks for creative businesses whose primary valuation lies in intangible IP. As evidence from India's PM Vishwakarma scheme demonstrates, strict traditional credit criteria resulted in a rejection rate of over 70% for artisan loan applications.

Critical debates in academic literature also highlight the risks of cultural over-commodification and gentrification. Converting sacred traditional heritage or community artistic expressions into mass commercial products risks eroding authentic cultural meanings. In urban development, culture-led renewal can unintentionally inflate local property values, driving out the very artists and low-income residents who established the neighbourhood's creative character. Finally, the growing energy footprint of large server networks, cloud computing, high-definition video rendering, and generative AI training challenges the assumption that digital creative activities are inherently pollution-free.

6. Policy, Institutional, & Industry Implications and Future Research Agenda

6.1 Policy and Governance Recommendations

- 1. Intellectual Property Modernization and Enforcement:** Governments must modernize copyright laws to address digital environments, streaming platforms, and generative AI content creation. Establishing centralized, transparent digital IP registries and blockchain-backed royalty tracking will ensure creators receive fair remuneration for their work.
- 2. Formalization of Labor and Social Safety Nets:** Policymakers must extend universal healthcare, pension protections, and unemployment coverage to gig workers, freelancers, and rural craft artisans.

Establishing creative industry trade associations and collective bargaining mechanisms will reduce labor vulnerability.

- 3. Specialized Financial Instruments and IP Collateralization:** Financial regulators and central banks should introduce specialized credit guarantee schemes, IP valuation guidelines, and royalty-based lending models. This will allow creative micro-enterprises to secure commercial loans using verified IP assets as collateral.

6.2 Institutional and Educational Interventions

Higher education institutions and vocational centers must establish specialized skill development pipelines connecting artistic talent with modern technologies. Expanding institutions like the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT) across developing regions will prepare creative professionals for global production pipelines in AVGC, software, eco-textile design, and interactive media.

6.3 Multi-Dimensional Future Research Agenda

To advance scholarly understanding of the Orange Economy, future empirical research should focus on four priority domains:

Domain 1: Econometric Analysis of AI Impact on Creative Labor: Rigorous longitudinal studies are needed to evaluate how generative AI tools affect employment, income distribution, and copyright ownership across creative sub-sectors.

Domain 2: Standardized Satellite Accounting Frameworks: Developing internationally standardized statistical frameworks (like Tourism Satellite Accounts) to accurately capture formal and informal creative contributions to national GDP.

Domain 3: Environmental Life-Cycle Assessment (LCA) of Digital Media: Quantitative assessments evaluating the energy consumption, carbon emissions, and e-waste generated by server infrastructure supporting video games, cloud streaming, and digital content platforms.

Domain 4: Micro-Impact of IP Collateralization on Craft Micro-Enterprises: Empirical field evaluations testing the viability of royalty-based credit models and community-held Geographical Indications (GIs) in improving financial inclusion for traditional rural artisans.

7. Limitations

This study acknowledges several methodological limitations.

- while the systematic search protocol was rigorous, publication bias toward English-language peer-reviewed journals and official multilateral reports may underrepresent localized, non-English studies from developing regions.
- The wide variation in national statistical definitions of creative sub-sectors limits direct quantitative meta-analysis across all 193 UN member states.
- Rapid technological advancements in generative AI and cloud computing mean that empirical findings regarding digital creative value chains will require continuous updating as new market data emerges.

8. Conclusion

This comprehensive research paper and systematic review establishes that the Orange Economy represents a pivotal engine for achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. By transforming human imagination, cultural heritage, and intellectual capital into non-resource-intensive economic value, creative industries offer a viable alternative to traditional extractive growth models. Economically, CCIs generate over \$2.3 trillion in annual revenues, foster high-value employment, and exhibit strong shock

resilience (SDGs 8 & 9). Socially, creative exports directly reduce urban slum incidence, revitalize cities, and empower marginalized rural women through traditional craft micro-enterprises (SDGs 5 & 11). Environmentally, the sector promotes circular economy principles, natural-fiber production, and low-carbon value creation (SDG 12).

Unlocking the full potential of the Orange Economy requires addressing persistent structural obstacles, specifically labor precarity, credit access bottlenecks, data scarcity, and outdated IP enforcement mechanisms. By establishing adaptive IP legal frameworks, extending social security to gig workers, enabling IP-backed commercial credit, and expanding specialized creative education, policymakers can build resilient, inclusive, and highly sustainable creative ecosystems for the 21st century.

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