

POST-PANDEMIC TRANSFORMATION OF THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEM

A TRANSFORMAÇÃO PÓS-PANDÊMICA DA INDÚSTRIA CRIATIVA: OPORTUNIDADES E DESAFIOS PARA O NOVO ECOSSISTEMA ECONÔMICO

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Abstract

The global pandemic has drastically changed the creative industry landscape worldwide, including in Indonesia, by accelerating the digitalization process and driving the emergence of new production and consumption patterns. This transformation has not only created new economic opportunities but also posed complex structural challenges, particularly related to gaps in technology access and the adaptability of industry players. In this context, the creative industry is a strategic sector for national economic recovery and development post-pandemic. This study aims to analyze the opportunities and challenges facing the creative industry post-pandemic and formulate a strategic direction for building a new, inclusive, and sustainable economic ecosystem. The research method used is a qualitative approach, collecting data from various literature, previous studies, and research findings relevant to the topic of creative industry transformation. The collected data was then analyzed descriptively to identify patterns, relationships, and strategies that can be implemented to strengthen the creative economy

Resumo

A pandemia global alterou drasticamente o panorama da indústria criativa em todo o mundo, inclusive na Indonésia, ao acelerar o processo de digitalização e impulsionar o surgimento de novos padrões de produção e consumo. Essa transformação não só criou novas oportunidades econômicas, mas também apresentou desafios estruturais complexos, particularmente relacionados às disparidades no acesso à tecnologia e à capacidade de adaptação dos atores do setor. Nesse contexto, a indústria criativa é um setor estratégico para a recuperação e o desenvolvimento econômico nacional pós-pandemia. Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar as oportunidades e os desafios enfrentados pela indústria criativa após a pandemia e formular uma direção estratégica para a construção de um ecossistema econômico novo, inclusivo e sustentável. O método de pesquisa utilizado é uma abordagem qualitativa, coletando dados de diversas fontes bibliográficas, estudos anteriores e resultados de pesquisas relevantes para o tema da transformação da indústria criativa. Os dados



ecosystem. The results show that the pandemic has been a catalyst for innovation and digitalization in the creative sector, while also demonstrating the importance of cross-sector collaboration in driving sustainable growth. Despite challenges such as the digital divide, limited human resource capacity, and policy barriers, the creative sector still has significant potential to become a key pillar of the national economy. Therefore, strategies to strengthen the new economic ecosystem must focus on synergy between stakeholders, strengthening digital literacy, and developing a resilient, adaptive, and values-based creative economy.

Keywords: Creative Industry. New Economy. Innovation. Post-Pandemic.

coletados foram então analisados descritivamente para identificar padrões, relações e estratégias que possam ser implementadas para fortalecer o ecossistema da economia criativa. Os resultados mostram que a pandemia tem sido um catalisador para a inovação e a digitalização no setor criativo, ao mesmo tempo em que demonstra a importância da colaboração intersetorial para impulsionar o crescimento sustentável. Apesar de desafios como a exclusão digital, a capacidade limitada de recursos humanos e as barreiras políticas, o setor criativo ainda possui um potencial significativo para se tornar um pilar fundamental da economia nacional. Portanto, as estratégias para fortalecer o novo ecossistema econômico devem se concentrar na sinergia entre as partes interessadas, no fortalecimento da alfabetização digital e no desenvolvimento de uma economia criativa resiliente, adaptável e baseada em valores.

Palavras-chave: Indústria Criativa. Nova Economia. Inovação. Pós-Pandemia.

1 INTRODUCTION

The global pandemic has created a significant momentum that has significantly shifted the direction of the creative industry's development. This sector, which previously thrived through social interaction, cultural activities, and experience-based economic activities, has faced significant shocks due to mobility restrictions and drastic changes in consumer consumption patterns. Creative industry players who rely on in-person interactions, such as performing arts, creative tourism, and exhibitions and festivals, have experienced a sharp decline in revenue (Parra-Lopez *et al.*, 2025). However, simultaneously, a new wave of adaptation and innovation has emerged, driving digital transformation across various subsectors. This shift is not only about shifting from physical activities to virtual spaces, but also about the emergence of new ways of creating, distributing, and consuming creative products and services amidst unprecedented uncertainty (Faro *et al.*, 2022).

This transformation has had a profound impact on the structure and dynamics of the creative industry in many countries, including Indonesia. On the one hand, the

pandemic crisis has opened a new awareness of the importance of resilience and flexibility in the creative sector. Many small and medium-sized businesses in the arts, design, culinary arts, and media sectors have found new opportunities through digital platforms, social media, and the ever-expanding e-commerce ecosystem (Fahmi *et al.*, 2023). Meanwhile, significant challenges also arise in the form of disparities in access to technology, limited digital skills, and disparities between creative actors in large cities and rural areas. The pandemic has demonstrated that the sustainability of the creative industry no longer depends solely on individual talent and creativity, but also on the ability to adapt to digital infrastructure and changing global economic patterns (James, 2021).

After passing through the crisis phase, the post-pandemic era presents a new chapter filled with both opportunities and risks for the creative industry. The reopening of economic and social activities does not necessarily return to the way things were before. Society now lives in a more digitally connected ecosystem, where the boundaries between the physical and virtual worlds are increasingly blurred (Lin, 2023). New habits in shopping, working, learning, and interacting have shaped new consumption and production patterns that have direct implications for the sustainability of the creative sector. Creative products are now more accessible globally, but at the same time, competition has become fiercer and demands continuous innovation. The transformation occurring in this sector is an important indicator of how a new economy is being formed through the combination of creativity, technology, and entrepreneurship (Chen, 2022).

Within the context of the national economy, the creative industry plays a role as one of the sectors capable of supporting economic recovery after the pandemic. While traditional sectors experience a slowdown, creativity-based economic activities show great potential in creating new jobs, strengthening export competitiveness, and increasing added value through knowledge- and culture-based products. However, this recovery is not automatic (Che Arshad & Irijanto, 2023). Many industry players are still struggling to reorganize their business models, find adequate access to capital, and build sustainable collaborative networks. The increasingly competitive global economic ecosystem also demands appropriate policy support, particularly in the areas of digital capacity development, intellectual property rights protection, and increased inter-regional connectivity (Burch & Di Bella, 2021).

Beyond economic factors, the post-pandemic transformation has also shifted society's perspective on the value and meaning of creative work itself. Increased awareness of sustainability, inclusivity, and social responsibility is encouraging industry players to develop products that are not only aesthetically or commercially valuable but also reflect humanitarian and environmental values (Leach *et al.*, 2021). This trend is fostering new sub-sectors focused on the circular economy, environmentally friendly production, and community-based social innovation. In the long term, this direction could strengthen the creative industry's position as a key pillar in establishing a new, more resilient, adaptive, and sustainable economic ecosystem (Mansi *et al.*, 2025).

However, these significant opportunities are not free from various structural challenges. The rapid changes driven by digitalization are often not matched by the readiness of human resources, infrastructure, and supportive public policies. Many creative industry players face difficulties in accessing global markets due to technological limitations, low digital literacy, and weak managerial and marketing skills (Purnamasari *et al.*, 2025). Furthermore, overlapping regulations, a lack of synergy between agencies, and minimal financial support add to the complexity of this transformation process. Without integrated action, the gap between adaptive creative actors and those left behind has the potential to widen, hindering the creation of an inclusive and equitable economic ecosystem (Allen *et al.*, 2023).

In this context, the post-pandemic transformation of the creative industry can be understood not only as a process of adapting to technology but also as a broader social and economic movement. Shifting values, collaborative work patterns, and the emergence of cross-sector creative communities are crucial drivers for the formation of a new, more dynamic economic ecosystem. This ecosystem is no longer driven solely by financial capital, but also by social capital, networks, and knowledge, enabling sustainable innovation. The creative industry is now at the forefront of integrating cultural, technological, and economic aspects into a unified whole capable of driving growth in a new era characterized by uncertainty, disruption, and accelerated change.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Creative industry

The development of the creative economy began in the United Kingdom and has since become widely used in developing countries, including Indonesia. The concept of the creative economy was initiated by Tony Blair in 1990, when he was the British Prime Minister. In the 1990s, British cities experienced declining productivity due to the relocation of industrial and manufacturing centers to developing countries (Dellyana *et al.*, 2023). Developing countries were considered an option due to the availability of raw materials, affordable production costs, and services. The creative industry in Indonesia is defined as an industrial activity that begins with the utilization of individual creativity, skills, and talents. The policy governing the creative economy industry is outlined in Presidential Instruction No. 6 of 2009 concerning the Development of the Creative Economy (Ssenyonga, 2021). The creative industry can also be defined as an industry that fosters new ideas, creative human resources, and the potential and talent that are continually being developed to address each task. The creative industry began with the idea of humans as a renewable resource. Unlike industries that rely on physical raw materials, the creative industry relies on creative ideas, talent, and skills (Gustafsson & Lazzaro, 2021).

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the creative industry is:

- a. The cycle of creation, production, and distribution of goods and services that utilizes creativity and intellectual capital as primary inputs;
- b. Part of a range of knowledge-based activities, focused on the arts, and with the potential to generate income from trade and intellectual property rights;
- c. Consists of tangible products and intangible intellectual or artistic services with creative content, economic value, and target markets;
- d. Cross-sectoral in nature, encompassing arts, services, and industry;
- e. Part of a new dynamic sector in the world of commerce (Curry, 2025).

The concept of the creative industry contributes to the economy, particularly its impact on unemployment, regional development, and urban dynamics. Innovation within

a company can be categorized as a creative industry. Studies on the role of the creative industry in contributing to innovation within the broader economy demonstrate that input from the creative industry can be used as a catalyst for innovation in other industries (Kalfas *et al.*, 2024).

Factors behind the rapid growth of the creative industry include the following:

a. Youth Creativity

Behind the creative industry, there are undoubtedly players at play. And it turns out that most of these creative industry players are young people. Young people possess the greatest creative potential. There are numerous examples of young people maximizing their creative potential to produce profitable economic products (Chalmers *et al.*, 2022).

b. Technological Advances

The young people who create this profitable creative economy thrive in the 21st century. As we know, the 21st century is filled with diverse technological advances. This technological sophistication clearly complements and supports youth creativity. It's no wonder, then, that computer- and internet-based creative industries are now springing up in this country (Marmolejo & Groccia, 2022).

c. Easy Access to Communication

With communication, it's possible to showcase work to the public quickly and effectively.

d. Increasing Social Media Users

With the increasing growth of social media, the creative industry has significantly benefited. Seeing the increasing and addictive trend of social media users, creative industry players will thrive.

e. The Personal Life Side

Creativity emerges from a life of hardship. This forces a person to think and expend effort to escape that life. When someone is forced to think hard, various creative ideas emerge.

3 METHOD

This research will be conducted using a qualitative approach to deeply understand the dynamics of post-pandemic creative industry transformation within the context of the

formation of a new economic ecosystem. This approach was chosen because it can explore the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of creative industry players in facing complex changes. Research data will be obtained from various relevant sources, such as previous research results and academic publications discussing the adaptation of the creative sector after the pandemic. Thus, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the transformation process that has occurred and the factors influencing its development direction. After all data has been collected, the analysis process will be carried out systematically by processing the data. Thematic analysis will be used to identify key patterns emerging from various data sources, both textual and empirical. This stage aims to identify the relationship between changes in creative industry behavior, the role of digital technology, and the dynamics of economic policies that shape the new direction of the creative industry post-pandemic. By processing the data in depth and in layers, the research results are expected to contribute scientifically to understanding the opportunities and challenges facing the creative industry in creating a new economic ecosystem that is more adaptive, sustainable, and highly competitive (Ardyan *et al.*, 2023).

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The changing landscape of the creative industry after the pandemic

The global pandemic has been a turning point that has drastically changed the landscape of the creative industry worldwide, including in Indonesia. When social restrictions were imposed to suppress the spread of the virus, creative sectors that previously relied on in-person interactions experienced a sudden stagnation. Activities such as music concerts, art exhibitions, film productions, and cultural events were forced to stop or change formats. However, behind these limitations, a significant push for innovation emerged, as creative actors began to seek new alternatives to continue producing and interacting with audiences. This shift marked the emergence of a different pattern of creative production and consumption than before—from physical activities to digital spaces. This change did not occur gradually, but rather rapidly and

comprehensively, driven by the crisis that demanded instant adaptation to technology (Wohl, 2022).

This shift in consumption patterns is clearly evident in society's increasing reliance on digital media as the primary means of accessing entertainment, education, and creative information. People who were previously accustomed to enjoying art in person have shifted to virtual formats such as online concerts, digital galleries, or streaming platforms. Creative actors, on the other hand, have responded to this shift by changing the way they create and distribute their products. Works that previously relied on physical presence are now produced with the user's digital experience in mind. Interactive content production, live broadcasts, and virtual collaborations are becoming new strategies for maintaining audience engagement. This shift not only creates new forms of consumption but also changes the economic logic of the creative industry, where the value of a work no longer lies solely in its physical object but also in the digital experience it delivers to consumers (Podara *et al.*, 2021).

Along with changes in consumer behavior, various new business models based on online platforms have emerged, becoming the backbone of the creative sector's sustainability during the crisis. Businesses that previously relied on physical markets, such as art stores, design studios, or performance stages, are now shifting their activities to digital platforms. E-commerce, social media, and streaming services have become primary channels for reaching a wider market without geographical boundaries. This shift has given rise to a new, more flexible business ecosystem open to cross-disciplinary collaboration. Many creatives are beginning to optimize technology to integrate production, marketing, and distribution processes through online networks. However, this shift also presents new challenges, such as the need for enhanced digital competency, data management, and the ability to adapt to rapidly changing algorithms and market trends.

The adaptation of creative industry players to the post-pandemic situation is a crucial indicator of the sector's resilience. They are not only required to adapt their products to market needs but also to understand fundamental changes in consumer behavior. The pandemic has created a more value-conscious consumer, more selective in choosing products, and a greater appreciation for the uniqueness and originality of works (Agarwal *et al.*, 2023). This has encouraged creatives to develop marketing strategies based on narrative, experience, and identity. Some of them even took advantage of the

opportunity to expand their audience reach globally through digital promotion. This adaptation marked a paradigm shift from mass production to a more personal, collaborative, and emotionally charged production.

The acceleration of digital transformation is a key driver of structural change in the creative industry. The once-linear traditional value chain is shifting into a more open and connected ecosystem. Digitalization enables creative processes to be carried out simultaneously across multiple locations, connecting producers, designers, distributors, and consumers within a single collaborative network. The distribution of creative works no longer relies on physical spaces like stores, galleries, or cinemas, but rather on digital systems capable of reaching cross-border markets. This opens up significant opportunities for small creative actors to compete with larger players, but also intensifies global competition. Amidst this ease of access, the need to maintain the sustainability of works through copyright protection, data security, and efficient digital asset management has emerged. This transformation is rapidly shifting the industry's dynamics, from a labor-intensive sector to a knowledge- and technology-intensive one (Nam *et al.*, 2023).

However, despite these opportunities, the pandemic's long-term impact on traditional creative subsectors cannot be ignored. Many subsectors have lost momentum due to limited adaptation to technology, particularly those reliant on hands-on experiences such as theater, crafts, and folk performing arts. The decline in economic activity in these sectors has resulted in many creative workers losing their livelihoods and making it difficult to return to previous levels of productivity (Snowball & Gouws, 2023). As the economy begins to recover, most traditional subsectors face the challenge of finding new forms of sustainability that fit the digital context. They are required not only to maintain cultural and heritage values but also to adapt them to new formats relevant to the digital generation. This situation demonstrates that the transformation of the creative industry is not a uniform process, but rather a complex shift that creates new gaps between those who adapt and those who lag behind.

4.2 Digitalization and innovation in the creative ecosystem

Digitalization has become a major driving force reshaping the direction of creative industry development post-pandemic. As the world faces physical and social restrictions,

digital technology has emerged as a bridge, enabling creative activities to continue in new formats. Production processes previously bound by time and space can now be conducted virtually, expanding the possibilities for cross-disciplinary collaboration in the creative sector. Artists, designers, musicians, writers, and technology developers can work together without having to be in the same location (Bodolica & Kasih, 2021). Online collaborative platforms, digital workspaces, and cloud-based applications open up opportunities for creatives to innovate more quickly, efficiently, and in an integrated manner. This type of collaboration enriches the creative process by combining diverse skills and perspectives, resulting in work that is more adaptive to market demands and technological developments. This transformation is not only changing the way we work but also changing the way we think about value creation in the creative industry.

The use of social media, e-commerce, and digital content platforms is further strengthening technology's position as a primary means of marketing and distributing creative products. Social media is now more than just a communication tool; it has evolved into a dynamic economic space, where creatives can build personal brands, reach global audiences, and create loyal communities of supporters. Through platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and digital marketplaces, creative industry players have the opportunity to monetize their work directly without relying on traditional intermediaries. Business models based on digital interaction also enable two-way communication between creators and consumers, creating more personal and in-depth relationships. Distribution patterns have become more democratic, as individuals can now publish and market their work at relatively low costs. However, this ease of access also presents new challenges in the form of intense competition, where the speed of adaptation to digital trends and algorithms is a determining factor for success (Guo *et al.*, 2021).

Digital change has also had a significant impact on work patterns in the creative industry. Hybrid work systems that combine online and offline activities are now the new norm across various sectors. Many creative studios, agencies, and media companies are implementing flexible working hours and locations as a strategy to maintain productivity and work-life balance. For creative workers, this system opens up creative freedom, allowing them to explore ideas without being tied to a rigid organizational structure. However, this flexibility also requires a high level of discipline, time management skills, and mastery of remote communication technology. Furthermore, a new need has emerged

for digital collaborative spaces that can accommodate real-time brainstorming, discussions, and content creation. In this context, creative productivity is no longer measured by physical working hours, but by the ability to generate value through ideas, innovations, and works that are relevant to the needs of the digital market.

Digitalization has also given rise to new forms of innovation that are redefining the meaning of creative experiences in the modern era. The digital experience economy, such as virtual performances, online concerts, interactive exhibitions, and the use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies, is a phenomenon that is expanding the boundaries of creativity. Creative products are no longer limited to physical objects, but encompass emotional experiences that can be experienced through digital devices. Interactivity is a key element that strengthens audience engagement, creating a more intense connection between the work and its audience. Such innovations not only expand market reach but also change the way economic value is created in the creative sector. Industry players are now competing to create unique digital experiences, combining art, technology, and narrative to capture the attention of a generation growing up in a digital environment. In the long term, this innovation has the potential to create a new economic ecosystem rooted in digital experiences, interactions, and engagement (Gohoungodji & Amara, 2023).

While digitalization opens up boundless creative space, the massive influx of technology also poses serious challenges to the originality, quality, and cultural value of creative works. The ease of producing and distributing content has left the digital market saturated with various forms of work, often homogenous and quickly replaced by new trends. This raises concerns about the erosion of authenticity and local cultural identity, which have long been the driving force behind the creative industry. Amidst the flood of information and content, maintaining uniqueness and artistic integrity is becoming an increasingly complex challenge. Furthermore, the quality of work is often compromised by the demands of production speed and platform algorithms that prioritize popularity over substance. Creative actors are required to balance the need to remain relevant to digital trends and the effort to maintain the character and cultural values inherent in their work.

The ongoing digital transformation also requires the creative ecosystem to adapt to a new value system based on data, interactivity, and public participation. Creative

works are no longer merely end products but are part of an ever-evolving social conversation. Industry players are challenged not only to produce compelling works but also to build meaningful and inclusive experiences for audiences (Panori *et al.*, 2021). Innovation in the digital era requires a balance between technology and humanity, between efficiency and artistic expression, and between globalization and the preservation of local culture. Thus, digitalization is not just about transforming tools and media, but rather about a paradigm shift in creating sustainable creative value. The future creative ecosystem will depend on the ability of industry players to utilize technology wisely, maintain their identity, and continue to innovate in the face of never-ending change.

4.3 New economic opportunities in the creative industry post-pandemic

The post-pandemic period has opened a new chapter in the growth of the creative economy, marked by the emergence of various new economic opportunities. Changes in consumer behavior, the widespread adoption of technology, and the formation of global digital networks have created space for creative actors to expand their market reach to unprecedented levels. Through online platforms and digital economic ecosystems, creative works can now transcend geographic boundaries and reach international audiences without the need for extensive physical infrastructure (Shipway *et al.*, 2023). This market expansion process not only creates broader sales opportunities but also strengthens the position of local creative actors in the global economic value chain. Industries such as graphic design, music, animation, and handicrafts can now compete in the international market through digital integration and cross-platform marketing. This phenomenon confirms that post-pandemic globalization is no longer dominated solely by large corporations, but also by independent creative actors capable of leveraging technology to penetrate global markets.

In addition to global expansion, significant opportunities also arise from the growing public interest in local creative products that imbue them with cultural identity. The pandemic has prompted collective reflection on meaning, authenticity, and sustainability, leading to a growing appreciation for products with local value and unique character. Products that highlight stories, traditions, or cultural symbols now have a

unique appeal in both domestic and international markets. This shift paves the way for the rise of a creative economy based on local wisdom, which is not solely profit-oriented but also strengthens the nation's cultural image. Creative industry players are beginning to combine traditional values with modern touches to create products relevant to global trends, such as sustainable fashion, contemporary ethnic designs, and innovatively packaged culinary specialties. In this context, culture becomes an invaluable economic resource, and local creative products represent national identity amidst the currents of digital globalization.

Along with the increasing demand for creative products and the digitalization of the industry, diverse new job opportunities are opening up across various creative subsectors. The growing demand for visual content, digital marketing, animation, and user experience (UX/UI) design has created a new job ecosystem based on creative skills and technology. Many new professions are emerging, such as digital content creators, virtual designers, creative application developers, and social media-based brand strategy consultants (Khlystova & Kalyuzhnova, 2023). These jobs are not only growing in large cities but are also reaching rural areas through remote work and online collaborative systems. This phenomenon opens up economic opportunities for the younger generation to become directly involved in a dynamic, innovation-driven industry. At the same time, the growth of the creative workforce is also driving increased demand for digital-based education and training, strengthening the human resource base in this sector.

The post-pandemic transformation has also created opportunities for strategic collaboration between creative industry players and the technology sector, financial institutions, and other businesses. This collaboration has created new synergies in product development, financing, and market expansion. Many technology companies are beginning to look to the creative industry as a partner in creating innovative solutions based on data, artificial intelligence, and visual technology (Anderson *et al.*, 2021). Meanwhile, financial institutions are starting to open special financing schemes for the creative sector, recognizing its significant potential for creating economic value. This type of collaboration not only expands access to capital for creative actors but also strengthens their position within a more formal and sustainable business ecosystem. These cross-sector partnerships are a crucial foundation for building an inclusive creative

economy, where ideas, technology, and capital are interconnected to generate impactful innovation.

In the context of national economic recovery, the creative industry plays a crucial role as a driver of new growth based on innovation and added value. While conventional sectors experienced a slowdown due to the pandemic, the creative industry demonstrated strong resilience and adaptability. Through product diversification, the adoption of digital technology, and the creation of new business models, this sector has successfully revitalized economic activity across all levels of society. The creative industry contributes significantly to job creation, increases income, and stimulates the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. Furthermore, the economic value generated is not only financial, but also social and cultural, as creative works can build solidarity, identity, and collective optimism amidst uncertain times.

New economic opportunities arising from the post-pandemic transformation of the creative industry are also paving the way for a more inclusive and sustainable economic ecosystem. The shift in market structure, now dominated by technology, is enabling equal opportunities for small businesses, women, and local creative communities to actively participate in economic activities. Digital inclusion is a key factor in expanding access to markets, financing, and training, thus driving more equitable economic growth (Castro & Moreira, 2024). Furthermore, the integration of creativity, technology, and entrepreneurship strengthens the role of the creative industry as a catalyst in accelerating the transformation of the national economy toward a greener, smarter, and knowledge-based economy. In the long term, these new economic opportunities will shape a more dynamic Indonesian economy, where creativity is a key resource in facing global challenges.

Thus, the post-pandemic era can be seen not merely as a period of recovery but also as a strategic momentum to build a stronger and more competitive future for the creative industry. The combination of local cultural potential, technological innovation, and global networks provides the foundation for the creation of a new economic ecosystem rooted in creativity and sustainability. Existing challenges, such as the digital divide and limited policy support, can be overcome through collaboration and targeted development strategies. In this context, the creative industry is not only a productive

economic sector but also a symbol of social and cultural revival, marking the birth of a new era of a more open, competitive, and values-based post-pandemic economy.

4.4 Structural challenges and gaps in transformation

While the post-pandemic transformation of the creative industry has opened up many new opportunities, it also presents complex and profound structural challenges. One of the most fundamental issues is the ongoing unequal access to digital technology and infrastructure across Indonesia. Although digitalization is the backbone of the growth of the modern creative industry, not all creative actors have equal access to this technology. In large cities, businesses can easily utilize high-speed internet networks, advanced software, and adequate digital ecosystem support. Conversely, in rural and underdeveloped areas, infrastructure limitations such as slow internet access, high costs of technological devices, and minimal technical support pose significant obstacles to maximizing local creative potential. This situation has created a widening digital divide between urban and rural creative actors, ultimately impacting equality in accessing economic opportunities in the digital era (Nipo *et al.*, 2024).

In addition to technological access, limited managerial skills, digital literacy, and business skills are also major obstacles to the transformation of the creative industry. Many creative actors possess great ideas and potential, but struggle to manage their businesses professionally. Weaknesses in financial planning, marketing strategies, and human resource management make it difficult for them to survive amidst increasingly fierce global competition. Furthermore, low digital literacy prevents some creative actors from leveraging technology to increase their business efficiency and reach. Inability to use digital platforms, analyze market data, or manage intellectual property rights means much of the economic potential is underutilized. Consequently, innovation, which should be the creative industry's primary strength, is hampered by a lack of human resource preparedness to meet the demands of dynamic and sustainable digital transformation (Ollerenshaw *et al.*, 2021).

Another equally significant issue is the bureaucratic barriers and overlapping regulations that continue to hamper the development of the creative sector. In practice, many creative industry players face difficulties navigating conflicting regulations across

government agencies. Lengthy and unintegrated licensing processes often hinder innovation and creative production. Furthermore, weak cross-sectoral policy support hinders optimal synergy between businesses, educational institutions, and the government. The creative industry is multidimensional and requires coordination across sectors such as culture, tourism, economics, technology, and education. Without inclusive and adaptive policies, creative actors will continue to face difficulties in developing their businesses, particularly when navigating administrative complexities that do not always favor the needs of the creative sector. These structural barriers not only slow growth but also undermine Indonesia's competitiveness in the global creative economy ecosystem.

Furthermore, the issue of financial sustainability is a major challenge faced by creative industry players, particularly micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Most creative actors still rely on personal funding or limited capital, making it difficult to expand their businesses or invest in new product development. Limited access to formal financing institutions is caused by several factors, such as a lack of asset collateral, a lack of documented financial track records, and financial institutions' limited understanding of the characteristics of the creative industry (Endris & Kassegn, 2022). As a result, many ideas and innovations fail to materialize due to capital constraints. Meanwhile, government support in the form of fiscal incentives or creative funding programs remains uneven and often fails to reach small-scale entrepreneurs, who are the backbone of the industry. These financial challenges are further complicated by market uncertainty and rapidly changing trends, forcing creative entrepreneurs to continuously innovate with limited resources.

Structural challenges also arise in the form of the risk of marginalization of small creative actors due to the dominance of large platforms and digital corporations. The digital ecosystem, which initially promised democratization of market access, is now exhibiting new inequalities, where small actors struggle to compete with larger entities with stronger capital, technology, and distribution networks. Global digital platforms often establish algorithms and policies that favor large producers, making it difficult for independent creative works to gain adequate visibility. In many cases, the economic value generated by small creators is absorbed by technology companies that control the content distribution and monetization systems. This creates income inequality and threatens the sustainability of independent creative actors, who play a crucial role in maintaining

cultural diversity and local innovation. If not addressed, this structural inequality could lead to the homogenization of the creative industry and the loss of the rich cultural expressions that characterize this sector.

These challenges demonstrate that the transformation of the creative industry cannot be achieved solely by relying on market forces or individual capabilities but requires comprehensive systemic support. The government, educational institutions, and the private sector must play an active role in creating an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable ecosystem. Investment in digital infrastructure, human resource capacity building, and innovation-friendly policy reforms are crucial steps to address existing gaps (Lerro *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, a protective mechanism is needed for small creative actors to prevent them from being marginalized in global competition, which is increasingly centered on technological power and large capital. With targeted, collaborative efforts, these structural challenges can be transformed into opportunities to strengthen the foundations of a national creative industry that is adaptive, competitive, and capable of serving as a key pillar in knowledge-based economic development in the post-pandemic era.

4.5 Strategic directions for strengthening the new economic ecosystem

The strategic direction for strengthening the new economic ecosystem in the post-pandemic creative industry context requires strong synergy between the government, the private sector, and the creative community. This cross-sector collaboration is key to creating a solid foundation for sustainable and inclusive growth in the creative industry. The government has a strategic role as a facilitator and regulator capable of creating a supportive policy environment for innovation, while the private sector can act as a key driver by providing investment, technology, and market networks (Feng & Yang, 2024). Meanwhile, the creative community serves as a source of ideas, innovation, and social energy that maintains the sustainability of local cultural values and creativity. The synergy between these three elements can strengthen a connected and mutually reinforcing creative ecosystem, ensuring that economic transformation is not merely short-term but also forms a new structure resilient to future external shocks.

Within this framework, developing public policies that encourage innovation, investment, and inclusivity is a strategic step that cannot be ignored. The government needs to create policies that support the development of the creative sector through fiscal incentives, intellectual property rights protection, and easy access to financing. Furthermore, regulations that adapt to digital technology developments must be formulated to encourage the emergence of new business models without limiting the scope for creative actors to express themselves. Policies designed with a collaborative approach between the government, academics, and the creative community will ensure that decisions are truly relevant to the needs of the industry on the ground. Furthermore, support for investment in digital infrastructure, business incubators, and creative innovation centers will accelerate the industry's transformation toward a more competitive future. With progressive, innovation-focused policies, the creative industry can grow into a leading sector supporting the national economy in the new economic era (Ahmed *et al.*, 2022).

In addition to policy support and investment, improving human resource capacity is a fundamental factor in building a competitive, creative economy ecosystem. Rapid digital transformation demands that industry players possess new competencies, including digital literacy, data analysis skills, and cross-disciplinary collaborative skills. Therefore, digital creativity-based education and training need to be strengthened through collaboration between educational institutions, the government, and the industrial sector. An educational model that integrates elements of art, technology, and entrepreneurship will produce a creative generation capable not only of innovation but also of strong managerial and business skills. Furthermore, capacity development should not be limited to the younger generation but should also encompass creative actors with long-standing experience in the industry to enable them to adapt to technological changes. Through continuous improvement in the quality of human resources, the creative ecosystem will have a solid foundation of knowledge and skills to face the dynamics of the global market.

In the local context, strengthening creative networks and communities is a crucial step in solidifying the foundations for sustainable creative economic growth. Creative communities play a strategic role as a forum for the exchange of ideas, cross-sector collaboration, and the incubation of community-based innovations. By strengthening these networks, creative actors can share resources, expand market networks, and foster

community-based economic solidarity (Manioudis & Angelakis, 2023). Local governments and the private sector can support these efforts by establishing creative centers, coworking spaces, and cultural festivals that serve as interaction spaces for industry players. The existence of a dynamic local ecosystem will accelerate the creative regeneration process while strengthening regional competitiveness on the national and international stage. In the long term, a strong creative community will not only be a driving force for the economy but also a guardian of the cultural values and identity that characterize the nation.

The next strategy that needs to be a primary focus is building a new economic ecosystem that is resilient, values-based, and adaptive to global change. Creative economic resilience cannot be built solely by relying on technological innovation; it must also be grounded in social, cultural, and sustainable values. This values-based approach positions creativity as a strategic resource that not only generates economic benefits but also strengthens social cohesion and environmental balance. Therefore, strategies for strengthening the new economic ecosystem must include the development of sustainable business models, the application of circular economy principles, and the utilization of green technology in creative production and distribution. Resilience is also determined by the ecosystem's ability to adapt to global changes such as technological disruption, the climate crisis, and shifting consumption patterns. An adaptive ecosystem is one capable of collective learning, continuous innovation, and integration of local values into the global flow of the creative economy.

This strategic direction serves not only as a roadmap for post-pandemic creative economic development but also as a foundation for establishing a new economic ecosystem that is more inclusive, innovative, and sustainable. The success of the creative industry transformation will depend on the extent to which policies, collaboration, and human resource development can be balanced and mutually supportive (Yin *et al.*, 2021). Synergy between stakeholders is a crucial element in ensuring that this transformation not only generates economic growth but also strengthens the nation's cultural competitiveness and identity amidst global trends. By directing its strategy toward strengthening structures, capacities, and values, Indonesia has a significant opportunity to position the creative industry as a key force in building a resilient, equitable, and human-inventive future economy.

5 CONCLUSION

The post-pandemic transformation of the creative industry has become a crucial momentum in shaping a new direction for national and global economic development. The pandemic has not only changed the way people interact and produce but has also accelerated digitalization, fundamentally impacting the entire creative industry value chain. On the one hand, this change has opened up significant opportunities for innovation, global market expansion, and cross-sector collaboration. However, on the other hand, this process has also exposed structural challenges such as disparities in access to technology, limited human resource capacity, and weak integrated policy support. These dynamics demonstrate that the transformation of the creative industry is not an automatic process but requires strategic planning and systemic support to deliver inclusive and sustainable benefits. Success in optimizing the new economic potential emerging from the creative sector depends on the ability to build a collaborative, resilient, and value-based ecosystem. The government, private sector, and creative communities need to work in mutually reinforcing synergy, prioritizing innovation, inclusivity, and strengthening human resource capacity based on digital creativity. Furthermore, it is crucial to ensure that the development of the creative economy is oriented not only toward growth but also toward cultural, social, and environmental sustainability. By strengthening policies that support investment, expanding access to technology, and protecting small creative actors from unfair market domination, the creative industry can become a key pillar in accelerating national economic recovery while building a strong cultural identity on the global stage.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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