

CHOOSE A NEW PALETTE FOR INDIA'S CREATIVE ECONOMY

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'The creative economy is one of the youngest and fastest-growing sectors, with unique challenges that often go unnoticed by public and private investors' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

Digital platforms and technology have enabled Indian artists and artisans to reach wider audiences. However, they face challenges that are related to economic sustainability, market access, the digital divide, crime in the art world and preservation. A collaborative model promoting cultural economy can help encourage India's soft power by creating an ecosystem of innovative technology-based start-ups, providing guidance, technical support, infrastructure, access to investors, and networking opportunities.

The creative economy is one of the youngest and fastest-growing sectors, with unique challenges that often go unnoticed by public and private investors. There is now growing recognition of the economic importance of the arts sector as it helps in the creation of jobs, economic growth, tourism, exports, and overall societal development.

Recognising the economic importance of culture, the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT 2022) was held to address contemporary issues in multicultural societies. The goal was to share a vision for the future of cultural policies and to reaffirm the international community's commitment to leveraging culture's transformative power for sustainable development.

Online platforms, social media, and digital content creation enable artists, writers, film-makers, musicians, and other creatives to engage with audiences, and monetise their talents. While Indian artists and artisans play a vital role in preserving traditional art forms and creating contemporary artworks, they face challenges that are related to economic sustainability, market access, and the preservation of traditional art forms in a rapidly changing society. Government support, cultural institutions, and initiatives provide financial assistance, training programmes, and opportunities for artists to exhibit their work. However, more efforts are needed to promote contemporary artists as brands and ensure equal representation and financial assistance.

There are challenges in the selection of artists for financial assistance in organising cultural events. Lack of transparency in the selection process creates inequality in representation. There

is no systematic or rotational mechanism in place to provide this assistance, and the selection process is often random or based on subjective criteria. So, talented artists, particularly those based outside the city, are unable to gain from sponsored platforms. Additionally, unlike in other countries, there are no serious efforts by private or public institutions to promote contemporary artists as brands. Artists and artisans with creative ideas require a market, market research, business facilitation, and a platform.

Crime in the art world includes art theft, copyright infringement, forgery, fraud, and illicit trafficking. Addressing these crimes requires increased security measures, international cooperation, public awareness, and advanced technology for authentication and tracking. Tackling crime in the art world will help foster a healthy creative economy. Artworks depicting or exploring criminal activities, as well as criminal activities within the art industry, pose significant challenges. There is no institutional infrastructure, expertise and technology to verify the original artwork. The gap is leading to injustice towards genuine artists.

These offences affect cultural heritage and cause financial harm and erode public trust. Exploitation of Indian artists, unaccounted money preserved through artworks, and the dissemination of disinformation about cultural history through various media only compound the issue. Solutions include increased security measures, international cooperation, public awareness, and advanced technology for authentication. Regular audits of acquired artworks can enhance trust and preserve a collection's integrity. An institutional record of incoming and outgoing artworks with a verified identification mark is required.

Having a collaborative model promoting the cultural economy is an effective solution to address the challenges faced by the creative economy and promote the economic contribution of culture.

To promote economic growth, a solution can be to encourage India's soft power by having a capacity-building centre; this should help create an ecosystem of innovative technology-based start-ups in the arts and crafts sector, providing guidance, technical support, infrastructure, access to investors, and networking opportunities.

The needs of artists must be bridged through training, professional development, market access, and participation in larger communities and networks. A facilitation centre would help foster knowledge sharing, economic empowerment, and sustainable livelihood solutions for artists and artisans. Data analytics should be used to foster creative ecosystems that contribute to a sustainable world. The government along with private players can empower artists, help bridge industry gaps, and contribute to the overall development of the creative economy by providing support, resources, and opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Additionally, existing institutions should address the various needs of artists, such as training, professional development, material support, access to markets, public validation, and participation in larger communities and networks.

A facilitation mechanism should operate by focusing on fostering knowledge sharing, networking, and economic empowerment for individual artists and creative entrepreneurs by offering business training, incubating innovative projects, and connecting them with global marketing platforms, tools, and practices. The centre should also be a platform to provide sustainable livelihood solutions for artists and artisans through participatory models, leveraging the latest ICT tools to enhance their participation in the business ecosystem. It is also time for new data that shed light on emerging trends at a global level as well as putting forward policy recommendations to foster creative ecosystems that contribute to a sustainable world.

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Finally, the economic and cultural significance of art, culture, and the creative economy in India, while addressing challenges and proposing solutions, should support the growth and development of artists and artisans as a whole.

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