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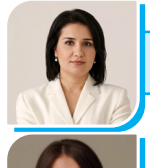
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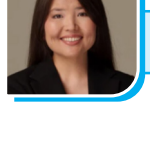
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FINANCIAL MECHANISMS FOR CREATIVE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT IN EMERGING ECONOMIES: EVIDENCE AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This article examines the financial mechanisms supporting creative sector development in emerging economies and derives policy implications for Uzbekistan. The study combines comparative institutional analysis with secondary statistical analysis based on data from UNCTAD, the OECD, the ADB, the World Bank, and official statistical sources in Uzbekistan. Global evidence indicates a structural shift towards creative services, whose exports reached USD 1.7 trillion in 2024, alongside the continued development of financing mechanisms adapted to the specific characteristics of intangible assets, project-based revenue structures, and information asymmetries. For Uzbekistan, comprehensive historical statistical series covering the entire creative economy are still being developed; therefore, selected activity-level investment indicators are employed as transparent proxy measures. The analysis identifies substantial growth accompanied by fluctuations in capital investment in creativity, arts, and entertainment, together with broader opportunities for further expanding access to finance for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The study proposes a stage-sensitive financing architecture that combines grants, guarantees, tailored bank lending, equity financing, intellectual-property-based finance, and export support. Its scientific contribution lies in developing a policy-oriented financing matrix that links financial instruments to project maturity and asset structure within the context of an emerging economy.

Keywords. creative economy, creative industries, financing mechanisms, emerging economies, access to finance, intangible assets, blended finance, Uzbekistan.

Аннотация. В статье исследуются финансовые механизмы, способствующие развитию креативного сектора в развивающихся экономиках, и формулируются практические выводы для Узбекистана. Методология исследования сочетает сравнительный институциональный анализ и анализ вторичных статистических данных UNCTAD, OECD, ADB, Всемирного банка и официальных статистических источников Узбекистана. Глобальные данные свидетельствуют о структурном сдвиге в сторону креативных услуг, экспорт которых в 2024 году достиг 1,7 трлн долл. США, наряду с дальнейшим развитием механизмов финансирования, адаптированных к особенностям нематериальных активов, проектной структуре доходов и информационной асимметрии. В Узбекистане комплексные ретроспективные статистические ряды, охватывающие креативную экономику в целом, находятся в процессе дальнейшего формирования, поэтому в исследовании в качестве прозрачных прокси-показателей используются отдельные показатели инвестиционной активности по соответствующим видам деятельности. Результаты анализа свидетельствуют о существенном росте, сопровождаемом колебаниями капитальных инвестиций в сфере творчества, искусства и развлечений, а также о наличии дополнительных возможностей для расширения доступа микро-, малых и средних предприятий (ММСП) к финансированию. В исследовании предлагается поэтапная архитектура финансирования, объединяющая гранты, гарантии, специализированное банковское кредитование, долевое финансирование, инструменты финансирования на основе интеллектуальной собственности и экспортную поддержку. Научный вклад исследования заключается в разработке ориентированной на практическое применение матрицы финансирования, связывающей финансовые инструменты со стадией зрелости проекта и структурой активов в условиях развивающейся экономики.

Ключевые слова. креативная экономика, креативные индустрии, механизмы финансирования, развивающиеся экономики, доступ к финансированию, нематериальные активы, смешанное финансирование, Узбекистан.

INTRODUCTION

The creative economy is playing an increasingly important role in international trade, innovation, and employment. According to UNCTAD, global exports of creative services reached USD 1.7 trillion in 2024, more than double their 2015 level, while exports of creative goods amounted to USD 713 billion. At the same time, further opportunities remain to expand access to finance, particularly because many creative enterprises are small, operate on a project basis, and rely substantially on intangible assets that require specialised approaches to valuation by conventional financial institutions [11-12].

Financing the creative sector, therefore, extends beyond simply increasing the volume of credit. Effective financing mechanisms need to reflect the characteristics of project-based cash flows, intellectual-property-based value, and the different stages of enterprise development. These considerations are particularly relevant to emerging economies, where financial markets and specialised risk-sharing instruments continue to evolve [10, 13].

Uzbekistan provides a timely and relevant case for examining these developments. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On the Creative Economy” (No. ZRU-970, 2024) established a dedicated legal framework for the sector, while Presidential Resolution No. PP-64 (2026) established targets for 2030, including increasing the creative economy’s contribution to 5% of GDP (UZS 145 trillion), raising creative-industry exports to more than USD 1 billion, and expanding employment in the sector to 500,000 jobs [1-2].

Against this background, this article identifies financial mechanisms suitable for supporting creative sector development in emerging economies and derives policy implications for Uzbekistan. Its scientific contribution lies in developing a stage-sensitive financing matrix that links financial instruments to enterprise maturity, cash-flow predictability, and the role of intangible assets.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature increasingly conceptualises creative-sector finance as an ecosystem comprising public support, bank lending, guarantees, equity financing, venture capital, crowdfunding, and intellectual-property-based finance. The OECD and UNESCO emphasise that the selection of appropriate financial instruments should reflect the specific characteristics of creative enterprises, the broader economic and cultural value they generate, and their stage of development, rather than relying on a single financing channel [10, 13].

A central issue identified in the literature concerns the alignment between the asset structure of creative enterprises and conventional credit-assessment practices. Creative businesses frequently generate value through copyright, design, software, brands, and other intangible assets, whereas conventional lending practices have traditionally placed greater emphasis on physical collateral and established historical cash flows. In this context, WIPO highlights intellectual property (IP) valuation and IP-backed finance as mechanisms with considerable potential to broaden access to capital for creative enterprises.

The existing literature consequently identifies an important area for further research in the context of Uzbekistan. International studies provide a substantial conceptual and empirical foundation for understanding the distinctive financing characteristics of creative enterprises; however, country-specific evidence on how different financial instruments can be effectively sequenced within an emerging financial system remains comparatively limited. This study contributes to addressing this research area by integrating international evidence with Uzbekistan’s institutional and statistical context and by developing a financing framework adapted to different stages of enterprise development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs comparative institutional analysis, descriptive statistical analysis, and policy mapping to examine financial mechanisms supporting creative sector development. The empirical and institutional evidence is drawn from UNCTAD, the OECD, UNESCO, WIPO, the ADB, the World Bank, the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and data published by the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan. International indicators are used for comparative benchmarking, while national indicators are employed to assess financing conditions and sector-related investment dynamics in Uzbekistan [1–14].

An important methodological consideration concerns the comparability and coverage of the available data. As Uzbekistan’s dedicated statistical framework for the creative economy has been established relatively recently and continues to develop, historical activity-level series provide partial rather than comprehensive coverage of the creative sector as a whole. Accordingly, selected statistical series are employed as proxy indicators for specific dimensions of creative-sector development, with their scope and interpretation explicitly defined. This approach ensures transparency in the use of available data while providing an appropriate empirical basis for assessing sector-related investment and financing dynamics.

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Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used to a limited extent (approximately 10%) to support the technical processing, linguistic refinement, and systematic organization of the research materials. The comparative institutional analysis, descriptive statistical analysis, policy mapping, interpretation of empirical evidence, and formulation of the study's scientific conclusions and policy recommendations were independently conducted and validated by the author.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Global evidence indicates substantial market opportunities associated with the continued expansion of the creative economy. Global exports of creative services reached USD 1.7 trillion in 2024, while exports of creative goods amounted to USD 713 billion. Creative services have expanded at a faster pace, reflecting the growing role of software, audiovisual services, advertising, design, and other digitally deliverable creative activities in international trade [11, 12] (Table 1).

Table 1
Selected global creative-economy indicators

Indicator	2022	2024	Interpretation
Creative services exports	USD 1.4 tn	USD 1.7 tn	Strong expansion of tradable knowledge-intensive output
Creative goods exports	USD 713 bn	USD 709 bn	Broadly stable compared with services
Creative services share of total services exports	19%	20%	Rising structural importance in services trade
Developing economies' share of creative services exports	20%*	—	Opportunity is expanding but participation remains uneven

Note: *2022 figure. Sources: UNCTAD Creative Economy Outlook 2024 and UNCTAD Data Hub [11-12].

Uzbekistan's institutional framework for the creative economy has developed substantially following the adoption of the Law "On the Creative Economy" in 2024. The development measures introduced in 2026 established quantitative targets for 2030 and provided for the further development of support infrastructure, thereby increasing the relevance of financing mechanisms capable of supporting creative enterprises through successive stages of development, from early-stage experimentation to commercial scaling and export expansion [1-3].

The broader financial environment also presents considerable opportunities for further expanding access to finance. World Bank estimates indicate an MSME financing gap of approximately USD 6–7 billion in Uzbekistan and highlight the potential for further development of equity and venture-capital financing channels [14]. Given that creative enterprises are predominantly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and frequently derive a substantial share of their value from intangible assets, the continued diversification of financing instruments is particularly relevant to the development of the creative sector.

Official statistics provide useful indicators for assessing selected dimensions of investment activity associated with the creative economy. Table 2 presents investment data for selected activities related to particular segments of the creative economy. These activity categories represent specific components rather than the creative sector in its entirety and are therefore analysed separately rather than aggregated into a single measure of total creative-sector investment (Table 2).

Table 2
Investment in fixed capital in selected activities in Uzbekistan, 2022–2025 (UZS million)

Activity	2022	2023	2024	2025
Creative, arts and entertainment	57,032.5	186,486.6	441,335.6	216,037.0
Publishing	43,325.3	42,082.1	79,229.8	6,222.6
Programme production and broadcasting	102,516.0	78,993.5	58,050.0	194,775.6

Source: National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, SIAT [7-8]. These categories are partial proxies and must not be summed as a measure of the entire creative economy.

Investment in creative, arts, and entertainment activities increased substantially from UZS 57.0 billion in 2022 to UZS 441.3 billion in 2024, before adjusting to UZS 216.0 billion in 2025. These year-to-year fluctuations indicate that financing trends are more appropriately assessed over multiple periods rather than inferred from a single year of substantial growth. They also highlight the relevance of a diversified financing framework that complements conventional fixed-asset lending with financial instruments adapted to the specific characteristics of creative enterprises [7-8].

The evidence supports a differentiated financing architecture tailored to the various stages of enterprise and project development rather than a universal credit product. Financing requirements evolve as a creative project progresses from creation and validation to commercialisation, scaling, and export expansion. Accordingly, Table 3 maps appropriate financial instruments to these stages and to the underlying financing needs they are designed to address (Table 3).

Table 3
Proposed financing matrix for the creative sector

Stage / profile	Main constraint	Priority instruments	Risk-sharing mechanism	Expected policy effect
Idea / pre-revenue	No collateral; uncertain demand	Micro-grants, competitions, incubator finance, reward crowdfunding	Public co-financing; milestone disbursement	More experimentation and formalisation
Early commercialisation	Irregular cash flow; limited credit history	Soft loans, microcredit, revenue-based finance, matching grants	Partial credit guarantee	Bridge from grant dependence to market finance
Growth / scaling	Need for working and growth capital	Tailored bank lending, leasing, venture/equity, co-investment	Portfolio guarantees; public-private funds	Scale viable firms and job creation
IP-intensive / export-ready	Intangible value not recognised as collateral	IP-backed lending, receivables finance, export credit, equity	Valuation standards; guarantee on IP-related exposure	Monetise intangible assets and expand exports
Cultural/public-value projects	Commercial return insufficient for social value	Grants, sponsorship, social orders, PPP/ blended finance	Public first-loss or co-funding where justified	Preserve public value while crowding in private resources

Source: author's synthesis based on OECD, UNESCO, WIPO, ADB and Uzbekistan's current institutional framework [3, 4, 7–9, 11].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis identifies five key policy priorities for further strengthening the financing framework of the creative sector: (1) differentiating financial products according to the stage of enterprise development; (2) introducing partial credit-guarantee mechanisms for viable enterprises whose asset structures may not fully correspond to conventional physical-collateral requirements; (3) incorporating cash-flow characteristics and intellectual-property-related information into credit-assessment practices; (4) expanding equity, quasi-equity, and co-investment channels for enterprises with strong scaling potential; and (5) aligning export finance and insurance instruments with Uzbekistan's 2030 creative-industry export target. The implementation of these measures can be further supported by the continued development of sector classification systems and more comprehensive enterprise-level statistics [2, 14].

The principal scientific contribution of this study is the proposed stage-sensitive financing matrix, which provides a structured framework for matching financial instruments with enterprise maturity, risk profiles, and asset structures. Rather than focusing exclusively on the overall volume of finance required by the creative sector, this approach emphasises the selection of financial instruments appropriate to the specific stage and characteristics of each enterprise. In the context of Uzbekistan, the proposed framework provides a practical basis for building on the country's evolving institutional foundation and supporting the further development of a diversified and sustainable creative-finance ecosystem.

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Recommendations

1. Develop stage-specific financing instruments for creative enterprises. Financial institutions and relevant support organisations should differentiate financing mechanisms according to the development stage of creative enterprises. Grants and seed financing can support early-stage projects, while tailored bank lending, equity, quasi-equity, and co-investment instruments can facilitate commercialisation and subsequent scaling.

2. Expand credit-guarantee mechanisms for intangible-asset-intensive creative enterprises. Partial credit guarantees could be further developed to facilitate access to bank financing for commercially viable creative enterprises whose asset structures may not fully correspond to conventional physical-collateral requirements. Credit assessment could also incorporate cash-flow potential, intellectual property, contractual revenues, and other indicators reflecting the economic value of creative businesses.

3. Strengthen equity and intellectual-property-based financing mechanisms. The further development of venture capital, co-investment, and IP-based financing instruments would contribute to diversifying the sources of capital available to creative enterprises. Establishing transparent approaches to the valuation of intellectual property could also facilitate the gradual integration of intangible assets into financing decisions.

4. Integrate creative-sector financing with export-support mechanisms. Export finance, insurance, and market-entry support could be more closely aligned with Uzbekistan's 2030 creative-industry export objectives. Priority could be given to creative enterprises with strong export potential in digitally deliverable services and other internationally scalable activities, thereby supporting their integration into global creative markets.

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