

ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF THEMATIC CREATIVE ECONOMY SECTORS TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH AND COMMUNITY WELFARE IN SURAKARTA CITY

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Abstract: This study explore the development potential of thematic creative economy sectors in Surakarta, including batik, handicrafts, culinary products, and design, to support economic growth and enhance community welfare. The research is motivated by the transition from a resource-based economy to one driven by creativity, innovation, and knowledge. As a city with a strong cultural identity and rich artistic heritage, Surakarta has significant opportunities to strengthen the competitiveness of its creative industries. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis, SWOT analysis, and the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) to identify development priorities and formulate strategic recommendations. The study examines the characteristics and potential of creative economy subsectors, identifies challenges in developing thematic creative economy zones, and proposes an integrated and sustainable development framework. The findings provide insights for policymakers and stakeholders in designing effective development strategies. These strategies are expected to enhance regional competitiveness, strengthen local cultural identity, create employment opportunities, and promote inclusive and sustainable economic development in Surakarta.

Keywords: *Creative District, Creative Economy, Surakarta*

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1. Introduction

The creative economy in Indonesia has seen significant growth. This is evidenced by the fact that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of Indonesia's creative economy has consistently outpaced national economic growth over the past 3 years (Zaki, 2025), as shown in Figure 1. This is one of the strategic sectors supporting both national and regional economic growth.

Indonesia's creative economy has experienced significant growth. This is reflected in the fact that the growth in the creative economy's contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has consistently outpaced the national economic growth rate over the past three years (Zaki, 2025), as illustrated in Figure 1. Consequently, the creative economy has become one of the strategic sectors contributing to economic growth at both the national and regional levels.

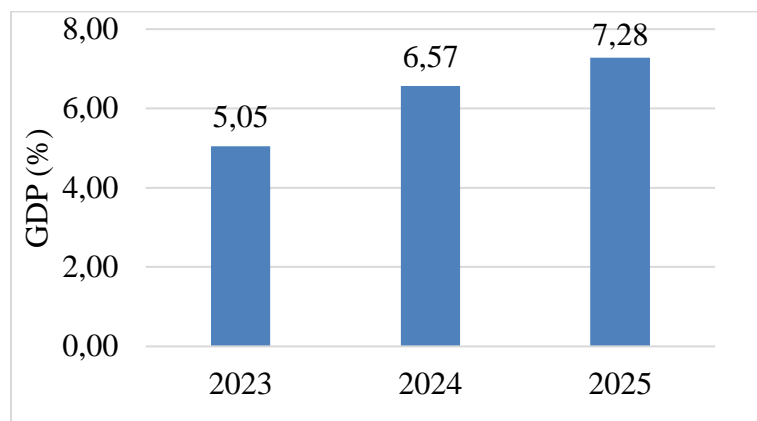


Figure 1. GDP of the Creative Economy Over the Past 3 Years
Source: Kementerian Ekonomi Kreatif RI

Figure 1 above not only shows data on GDP growth but also illustrates that the creative economy can tangibly drive economic growth in Indonesia. The main sub-sectors dominating the creative economy's contribution are culinary, fashion, and crafts (Handayani et al., 2020), which account for 41.69%, 18.15%, and 15.70% of the total creative economy GDP (Purwati, 2025). This significant potential has prompted the government to set a target for the creative economy sector's contribution to GDP to reach 8.37% by 2029 (Purwati, 2025).

The creative economy does not focus solely on production and trade, but also emphasizes creativity (Canon et al., 2025; Hikmah et al., 2024), innovation (Maier et al., 2018), culture (Pracihara et al., 2019), and the use of technology to generate economic value-added (Bujur & Avsilcai, 2016; Earnshaw, 2017). The existence of the creative economy sector can open up new business opportunities, create jobs, increase community income (Gemala et al., 2021), and strengthen local cultural identity. These conditions indicate that the creative economy sector plays a vital role in sustainable development.

Surakarta City is one of the regions with great potential to become a hub for the creative economy. Surakarta boasts a rich cultural heritage and deeply rooted craft traditions, and is competitive at both the national and international levels. Various creative economy subsectors are growing and developing in Surakarta, particularly the batik, crafts, culinary, and design sectors. These four sub-sectors possess distinct characteristics and serve as the identity of the region's creative economy, thereby attracting the interest of both local residents and (Purwani et al., 2022). This appeal must be supported by high-quality service to ensure consumers have a positive experience and are encouraged to return (Herwiyanto et al., 2025).

The four creative economy sectors of Surakarta City mentioned above have deep historical and cultural roots. Laweyan Batik Village, which has been in operation since the 16th century, is one of the oldest batik centers in Indonesia and serves as an icon of Surakarta's cultural heritage-based creative economy (Feritrianti & Yuliastuti, 2024). Additionally, the craft sub sector has flourished through various handmade products rooted in local art and culture that command high market value. The selection of the craft and folk arts sector as a creative field has come to represent the cultural values of Surakarta (Fristo, 2023). The government supports Surakarta's designation as a creative city through its designation in 2019 as a creative city in the field of folk arts, specifically performing arts, following a pilot assessment under the Self-Assessment of Creative Regencies and Cities (Atmaja & Swasto, 2023)..

The culinary and design subsectors have also experienced significant growth, driven by increasing consumer demand for distinctive and innovative products. The design sector has expanded rapidly due to advancements in digital technology and the creativity of young people in producing various forms of visual content, promotional materials, and other design products (Ametordzi & Olalere, 2024; Yuan & Liu, 2024). The growth of the creative economy sector is recognized for its potential to generate positive impacts on local economic development (Samosir, 2016; Intapan et al., 2025; Gutierrez-posada et al., 2023). In Surakarta, creative economy activities contribute to strengthening the local economy. The presence of batik centers, culinary clusters, and creative communities throughout the city demonstrates the substantial potential of the creative economy as a key driver of local economic growth.

Despite its considerable potential, the development of the creative economy sector in Surakarta continues to encounter several challenges. These challenges include limited access to business capital, inadequate digital marketing capabilities, intensifying market competition, and insufficient collaboration among government institutions, business actors, and local communities. In addition, the ongoing digital transformation and changing consumer preferences require creative economy stakeholders to continuously adapt and innovate in order to remain competitive and sustain their growth in an increasingly globalized market environment (Gao, 2025; Yang et al., 2024). Based on these conditions, this study contributes by presenting an analysis of the potential, challenges, and strategies for developing the creative economy in Surakarta City. Furthermore, this study also formulates strategic recommendations that can be used as a basis for policymaking and regional development planning.

Previous studies have emphasized the important contribution of the creative economy to regional economic development through value creation, job generation, and the improvement of regional competitiveness. However, most existing research has concentrated on assessing the potential of the creative economy (Figueiredo et al., 2019), analyzing its contribution to economic performance (Kalfas et al., 2024), or investigating broad factors affecting its growth and development. Comparatively, limited attention has been given to the development of integrated creative economy zones that combine multiple creative subsectors, particularly in regions with strong cultural assets and substantial economic potential, such as Surakarta.

The future research on the sustainable development of the creative economy in Surakarta is warranted. The novelty of this research lies in the analysis of creative economic development based on integration across cultural and creative sub-sectors in Surakarta City to strengthen sustainable regional economic growth. This study aims to analyze the development potential of key thematic creative economy subsectors, namely batik, crafts, culinary arts, and design, as drivers of economic growth. The results are expected to offer useful insights for the formulation of regional creative economy development policies, enhance the competitiveness of creative industries, and support sustainable improvements in community welfare.

2. Research Method

This study was conducted in Surakarta City due to its substantial potential in the creative economy sector. The city contains several major creative economy centers, including batik clusters, culinary hubs, and other creative industry development areas located throughout Surakarta. Both primary and secondary data were utilized in this research. Primary data were collected through direct interviews and field observations, whereas secondary data were obtained from various sources, including literature reviews, data published by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the Department of Industry and Trade (Disperindag), scientific journals, books, and other relevant publications.

The study applied descriptive analysis, SWOT analysis, and the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) as its analytical methods. SWOT analysis was used to evaluate the internal and external conditions influencing the development of creative economy zones by identifying their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Jatmiko et al., 2022; Kovalchuk et al., 2024).. The findings from this analysis provided the foundation for developing appropriate strategic recommendations. In addition, AHP was employed as a decision-making tool to establish strategic priorities and evaluate the relative significance of factors affecting area development (Wu et al., 2017; Sun et al., 2013), enabling the formulation of more systematic and objective development recommendations

3. Results and Discussion

Potential and Characteristics Analysis of the Creative Economy

Surakarta City has a strong creative economic potential, particularly in the batik, crafts, culinary, and design subsectors, which are rooted in local cultural heritage. These cultural strengths serve as strategic resources that provide a distinctive identity while enhancing the region's competitiveness. Research findings indicate that the batik subsector is the primary icon of Surakarta's creative economy, characterized by high cultural value and competitiveness. Additionally, the crafts sub sector possesses strong artistic value as it relies on local skills and wisdom, although it still faces limitations in production capacity. In the culinary sub sector, the diversity of local specialty foods serves as a tourist attraction capable of boosting community economic activity. Meanwhile, the design sub sector demonstrates significant growth through the utilization of creativity and technology to produce innovative and value-added products.

The creative economy sector in Surakarta is characterized by three key features. First, its development is strongly rooted in local culture and traditional knowledge, which serve as valuable foundations for the creation of distinctive and competitive products and services. Second, the sector is largely driven by micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which contribute significantly to employment generation and the expansion of local economic activities. Third, Surakarta demonstrates considerable potential for establishing thematic creative economy clusters by concentrating business activities within leading subsectors, including batik, handicrafts, culinary industries, and design.

Pningrum (2021) shows that Surakarta's culinary specialties, such as "nasi liwet", "gudeg solo", "serabi", and "karak bratan", are vacuum-packed to facilitate shipments from Surakarta and beyond Java. In the design subsector, "batik" and "keris" products have national and international demand. These characteristics suggest that the creative economy has substantial potential to support regional economic growth and promote local development.

Infrastructure and Support Analysis

Infrastructure and institutional support constitute essential components in fostering the development of the creative economy in Surakarta. The availability of adequate infrastructure, such as transportation systems, public facilities, and creative spaces, is vital for supporting production, distribution, marketing activities, and collaboration among creative economy stakeholders. In addition, government support and access to financing play a critical role in building a robust and sustainable creative economy ecosystem.

Based on questionnaire responses and interviews conducted with stakeholders in the creative sector, the existing infrastructure in Surakarta is generally perceived as being supportive of creative economy development. But the distribution of infrastructure remains

uneven across different areas. Certain locations are equipped with relatively comprehensive facilities and demonstrate stronger development, whereas other areas continue to experience limitations in supporting infrastructure. So disparities emerge in business growth opportunities and access to facilities that support creative economic activities.

Infrastructure development in Surakarta, particularly in outlying areas like Kadipiro, is geared toward improving facilities and services to support economic growth. This includes meeting minimum infrastructure service standards, which indirectly benefits the creative economy by improving accessibility and the availability of utilities (Yuliani & Kautsary, 2020).

From an institutional perspective, the government has implemented various support initiatives, including training programs, product promotion activities, and the provision of facilities for creative entrepreneurs. However, respondents indicated that these forms of support require further enhancement, particularly through the formulation of more integrated policies, the strengthening of business assistance programs, and the widening of access to financing opportunities. Such measures are considered essential for improving the capacity and competitiveness of creative economy actors in an increasingly dynamic business environment.

In addition, access to financial resources remains a significant obstacle for many business actors, especially micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). This challenge is influenced by several factors, including limited collateral assets, inadequate business legality, and insufficient knowledge of available financing schemes. As a result, many enterprises face constraints in increasing production capacity, developing innovative products, and expanding their market reach.

These findings indicate that the advancement of the creative economy is influenced not only by the availability of local resources and the innovative capabilities of business actors, but also by the effectiveness of the supporting ecosystem. Adequate infrastructure, favorable government policies, and equal access to financing are crucial elements in promoting the sustainable development of the creative economy sector. Therefore, stronger cooperation among government agencies, business communities, financial institutions, academic institutions, and other relevant stakeholders is necessary to create a conducive environment for creative economy growth. Such collaboration can enhance regional competitiveness, encourage sustainable economic development, and increase the contribution of the creative economy to improving community welfare.

Barrier and Problem Analysis

According to the findings from the questionnaires and interviews, the development of the creative economy sector in Surakarta continues to encounter several challenges. One of the key issues is the limited effectiveness of marketing practices, as many business owners still depend on traditional marketing approaches and have not yet fully adopted digital technologies in their operations. Many creative economy industries in Surakarta suffer from limited digital literacy, hampering the adoption of digital marketing technologies such as e-commerce and social media (Anindita et al., 2025). Consequently, their ability to expand market reach and enhance product competitiveness remains constrained.

Furthermore, the level of collaboration among creative economy actors is relatively low, reducing opportunities for network development, knowledge exchange, innovation, and business efficiency improvement. Human resource constraints also represent a major challenge, particularly in areas related to business management, product development, and the application of digital technologies. In addition, insufficient digital literacy limits the ability of entrepreneurs to optimize business performance and access wider market opportunities.

These findings suggest that the development of the creative economy in Surakarta is influenced by both structural and cultural constraints. Accordingly, comprehensive strategic initiatives are required to improve the quality of human resources, reinforce collaboration among creative economy stakeholders, and promote broader utilization of digital technologies. Such efforts are essential to strengthen the sector's competitiveness, enhance its capacity to adapt to changing conditions, and ensure its long-term sustainability.

Analysis of the Development of Thematic Creative Economy Zones

Research findings suggest that the establishment of thematic creative economy zones in Surakarta has considerable potential as a strategic approach to strengthening the competitiveness of the creative economy sector. The concentration of leading subsectors, including batik, crafts, culinary products, and design, within designated areas can help create a distinctive regional identity while enhancing the city's attractiveness as a tourism destination. Such an arrangement enables visitors to access and experience a variety of creative activities more conveniently, which may contribute to higher tourist arrivals and generate positive impacts on local economic development. This empowers local artisans and encourages the development of the creative industry. Innovations in motifs, production methods, and marketing further enhance the economic and cultural value of batik (Harsanto et al., 2026).

Additionally, the implementation of the clustering concept is considered capable of improving the efficiency and competitiveness of business operators. Proximity allows for collaboration, information exchange, and the shared utilization of resources and market networks. This can reduce production and distribution costs while fostering sustainable innovation.

The development of creative districts also has the potential to generate broader economic impacts through job creation, increased community income, and the strengthening of local economic activity. This finding aligns with the theory of economic clustering, which states that the concentration of interconnected businesses within a given area can enhance productivity, innovation, and the region's competitive advantage (Rastvortseva & Cherepovskaya, 2024). Therefore, the successful development of thematic creative economic districts requires infrastructure support, conducive policies, and synergy among stakeholders to drive sustainable economic growth.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis was used to identify internal and external factors influencing the development of the creative economy in Surakarta. The results of the analysis indicate that Surakarta's main strengths lie in its rich local culture, the diversity of its creative subsectors, and the city's identity as a cultural hub. These strengths serve as crucial assets in developing thematic creative economy zones that possess high tourist appeal and economic value. Surakarta is a city with a rich cultural heritage and strong traditions. Various festivals and cultural activities, such as "Sekaten" (Hati et al., 2026) and "Grebeg Suro" (Mukarromah et al., 2024), exemplify the city's identity.

However, the development of the creative economy still faces several weaknesses, including limited human resources, low utilization of digital technology, and limited access to capital. These conditions can hinder improvements in productivity, innovation, and the competitiveness of creative entrepreneurs. From an external perspective, there are various opportunities that can be leveraged, such as the growing global trend in the creative economy, government support through various development programs, and the significant potential for

cultural tourism that Surakarta possesses. These opportunities can drive market expansion and strengthen the position of the creative economy as a driver of regional economic growth.

The creative economy sector also faces a number of challenges, such as competition from products outside the region, rapidly changing consumer preferences, and technological disruption. Therefore, development strategies focused on innovation, strengthening human resource capacity, and accelerating digital transformation are needed so that the creative economy in Surakarta can grow sustainably and remain highly competitive.

Model for the Development of Creative Economy Zones

Based on the study findings, the proposed model for developing creative economy zones in Surakarta adopts an integrated thematic approach through a clustering framework. Under this model, major creative subsectors, including batik, handicrafts, culinary arts, and design, are concentrated within a designated zone to improve efficiency, foster collaboration, stimulate innovation, and enhance regional economic competitiveness. Surakarta integrates the creative industry with the tourism sector, particularly through initiatives like the Laweyan Tourism Village and Kampoeng Jayengan. These areas focus on crafts, cultural heritage, and creative tourism to boost local economic development and community welfare (Setyaningsih et al., 2024).

The implementation of thematic zones is further supported by the establishment and strengthening of creative hubs that function as centers for collaboration, business incubation, and innovation among creative economy stakeholders. In addition, the digital transformation of SMEs represents a crucial element of the model, enabling wider market access, greater operational efficiency, and improved competitiveness through the adoption of digital technologies.

The effectiveness of this development model depends on collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including government institutions, academic organizations, business actors, financial institutions, and creative communities. Such collaboration is essential for supporting policy implementation, innovation activities, financing opportunities, and the expansion of business networks. Moreover, continuous efforts to enhance human resource capacity through training and mentoring programs are required to strengthen managerial skills, encourage innovation, and improve adaptation to technological change.

The proposed model is expected to promote the development of an integrated, innovative, and sustainable creative economy ecosystem. By strengthening thematic zones, accelerating digitalization, fostering stakeholder collaboration, and improving human resource capabilities, the creative economy in Surakarta can achieve greater competitiveness and contribute more significantly to economic growth and community welfare.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Surakarta possesses substantial potential for creative economy development, particularly within the batik, handicraft, culinary, and design subsectors, which are closely linked to the city's rich cultural heritage. This potential represents an important resource for strengthening regional competitiveness, increasing tourism attractiveness, and supporting economic growth and community welfare.

Despite these advantages, the development of the creative economy continues to face several constraints, including limitations in human resources, access to financing, product marketing, and the adoption of digital technologies. Consequently, more coordinated and

comprehensive efforts are required to enhance the capabilities of business actors and broaden market opportunities.

The study further reveals that the establishment of thematic creative economy zones through a clustering approach can serve as an effective strategy for improving competitiveness, reinforcing regional identity, and stimulating local economic development. A development framework that combines thematic zones, SME digitalization, strengthened creative hubs, and collaboration among government institutions, academia, and business actors provides a relevant pathway for fostering a sustainable creative economy ecosystem in Surakarta.

This study limitation is focused on four leading creative economic subsectors in Surakarta City and did not quantitatively measure the impact of the proposed model on regional economic indicators. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the model to other creative economic subsectors, conduct empirical tests on the proposed model's effectiveness, and more complexity measure its contribution to economic growth, employment, and improved community welfare.

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