



The Publishing Sub-Sector's Role in the Creative Economy: Boosting GDP and Business Growth in Sukoharjo, Indonesia

Tri Nur Wahyudi^{1*}, Muzakar Isa², Kussudyarsana³

¹Accounting Education Study Program, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia; ^{2,3}Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia.

Abstract

This study examines the strategic role of the publishing sector within the creative economy of Sukoharjo Regency, focusing on its contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) and employment generation from 2019 to 2023. Employing a descriptive qualitative methodology, the research utilized secondary data obtained from official government sources and applied thematic analysis to identify patterns and trends in the sector's economic impact. The findings reveal that the publishing sub-sector makes a positive and significant contribution to the regional GDP while serving as a meaningful source of employment opportunities for local residents. However, the analysis also identifies several critical constraints limiting the sector's growth potential, including limited access to capital financing, insufficient human resource capacity and skills development, and intense competitive pressure from global digital publishing platforms. These challenges hinder the sector's ability to maximize its economic potential and sustainability within the broader creative economy framework. The research suggests that enhancing the competitiveness and long-term viability of the publishing sector requires targeted policy interventions specifically designed to address capital accessibility issues, comprehensive human resource development programs to build industry-specific capabilities, and strengthened collaborative frameworks among key stakeholders including government agencies, educational institutions, and private sector entities. Such strategic approaches would enable the publishing sector to more effectively fulfill its potential as a driver of regional economic development and employment creation in Sukoharjo Regency.

Keywords: *Creative economy, employment generation, GDP contribution, publishing sector, policy intervention*

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*Correspondence:

Tri Nur Wahyudi

tnw122@ums.ac.id

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and the development of information technology, the creative economy has become an important driver of national and global economic growth (Ummah, 2019). The creative economy includes various industrial sectors based on creativity, innovation, and intellectual added value. It makes a significant contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) and job creation (Lestari & Mun'im, 2022). Indonesia's creative economy growth can be seen through several indicators, including increased GDP contributions, job creation, and creative product exports. According to the Creative Economy Agency (Bekraf), the creative economy will contribute approximately 7.8% to the national GDP in 2023, amounting to IDR 1,300 trillion (Wisnubroto, 2023). Additionally, this sector has succeeded in employing more than 22 million people, primarily young individuals with high skill levels and innovative ideas (BPS, 2024). One sub-sector with great potential in the creative economy is publishing. As part of the creative industry, publishing supports the dissemination of information and knowledge and is a source of income for many businesses, especially at the regional level.

Sukoharjo Regency, one of the regions with the fastest economic growth in Central Java, has great potential for developing the publishing sub-sector. The presence of numerous publishing businesses, ranging from large to small, demonstrates the sector's high level of competitiveness. Publishing in Sukoharjo is not limited to books, but also includes other print media, such as magazines, brochures, and other creative documents. Given this potential, the publishing sub-sector plays an important role in promoting creative economic growth in the area (BPS-Sukoharjo, 2024).

The publishing sub-sector's contribution to Sukoharjo Regency's GDP can be seen in the increased number of businesses operating in this field and the added value generated. Data shows that the publishing industry contributes to economic growth directly and indirectly through its impact on other sectors, such as education, tourism, and culture. This confirms that the publishing sub-sector is closely related to various aspects of regional development (Wahyuningsih & Satriani, 2019).

Apart from its contribution to the GDP, the publishing sector also creates jobs in Sukoharjo Regency. As the industry continues to grow, more job opportunities are opening up for creative and skilled workers, such as writers, editors, graphic designers, and marketing staff. Additionally, the publishing industry provides opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to collaborate and grow together in the creative economy. Thus, publishing can be a driving force in reducing the area's unemployment rate.

However, despite its great potential, the publishing sub-sector in Sukoharjo Regency faces various challenges. The main obstacles that need to be overcome are competition with digital-based publishing, limited access to modern technology, and low public literacy regarding local publishing products. Therefore, support from various parties, including the government, academia, and businesses, is needed to develop the publishing sector so that it can contribute more to the GDP and employment in Sukoharjo Regency. The aim of this research is to analyze the publishing sub-sector's contribution, role, potential, challenges, and strategic recommendations to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Sukoharjo Regency from 2019 to 2023.

While scholarly discussions on Indonesia's creative economy have increased substantially in recent years, the majority of existing studies remain oriented toward national economic indicators or concentrate on prominent sub-sectors, such as culinary arts, fashion, and digital industries. Research examining the creative economy at the regional level, particularly the publishing sector, remains limited and lacks analytical depth. Existing literature largely overlooks how the publishing sub-sector influences regional economic output and labor absorption within a specific local context. Additionally, incorporating formal economic theory to explain employment patterns in creative industries at the regional level remains underdeveloped.

This study addresses these limitations with three objectives: first, evaluating the publishing sub-sector's contribution to Sukoharjo Regency's GRDP growth from 2019 to 2023; second, assessing its role in generating employment within the local creative economy; and third, identifying economic and policy-related factors accounting for growth variations across years.

This study's key contributions lie in its localized empirical focus on Sukoharjo Regency, its integrated examination of GRDP and employment indicators at the sub-sector level, and its application of Keynesian employment theory as an analytical lens for interpreting job creation. Combining descriptive economic assessment with qualitative thematic analysis provides context-sensitive evidence that advances creative economy literature and offers policy-relevant insights for regional economic planning and creative industry development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The creative economy is rooted in the broad theory of knowledge- and innovation-based economic development. This theory emphasizes human creativity, skills, and intellectual capital as the primary sources of value creation in modern economies. According to contemporary scholars, economic growth is increasingly driven by intangible assets, such as ideas, creativity, and innovation, rather than by traditional production factors (Florida, 2014; John Howkins, 2001; Suci, 2018; UNCTAD, 2019; Zheng & Su, 2023). Within this framework, the creative economy is an economic system in which creativity and innovation are strategic resources that enhance productivity, competitiveness, and sustainable growth (Comunian & England, 2019; Gozali et al., 2024; Stanić, 2017).

Recent studies conceptualize the creative economy as the integration of culture, technology, and entrepreneurship. This integration generates economic value while fostering social inclusion and cultural diversity (Chen & Tseng, 2021; Fahmi, F. Z. & Koster, 2017; Newbigini, 2010; Rodriguez-Insuasti et al., 2022). Empirical evidence shows that creative industries, such as publishing, design, fashion, digital content, and media, contribute significantly to GDP growth, job creation, and export performance in both developed and developing economies (Bakhshi, 2020; Gasparin & Quinn, 2021; Stuart Cunningham, 2015; Syafitri & Nisa, 2024). These findings reinforce the relevance of creative economy theory in explaining regional economic transformation driven by content-based and knowledge-intensive industries (Cicerone et al., 2021).

From a strategic management perspective, innovation theory strengthens the creative economy's conceptual foundation. Scholars emphasize that management and ecosystem innovations play a more decisive role than product innovation alone in sustaining competitive advantage within creative industries (Adner, 2006, 2017; Granstrand & Holgersson, 2020; Hamel & Breen, 2018; Khosravi et al., 2019). Creative industries operate within complex ecosystems that involve government institutions, creative communities, educational institutions, and digital platforms. These ecosystems collectively shape innovation capacity and market performance (Comunian & England, 2019; Isaksen & Martin, 2018; Susila et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, the creative economy framework has been adopted through the identification of 17 sub-sectors, such as publishing, advertising, design, crafts, fashion, film and animation, digital applications, music, and performing arts. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf, 2021) defines the creative economy as an economic sector that relies on creativity, skills, and talent to generate prosperity and employment opportunities. Recent national and regional studies confirm that creative sub-sectors contribute positively to regional GDP, particularly through micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and local content industries (Gozali et al., 2024; Ikpe et al., 2024; Nugroho, 2023; Wahyuningsih & Satriani, 2019; Wajdi et al., 2023).

Specifically, the publishing sub-sector plays a strategic role as a knowledge-intensive industry with strong backward and forward linkages to education, culture, tourism, and digital services. Studies indicate that publishing activities generate multiplier effects by supporting literacy development, cultural production, and creative employment. These activities also contribute to regional income formation (Birskinshaw, 2006; BPS-Sukoharjo, 2024; Ghazi & Goede, 2019; Ikpe et al., 2024; Isa, M., Nurohman, Y. A., & Qurniawati, R. S., 2024). From a macroeconomic perspective, this role aligns with Keynesian employment theory, which emphasizes job creation as a key mechanism for stimulating economic growth and regional development (Gunawan, 2024; Kristantyo Wisnubroto, 2023; Rumerung et al., 2024).

Overall, the literature suggests that the creative economy, particularly the publishing sub-sector, functions as both an engine of economic growth and a driver of social development and employment creation. Integrating innovation, creative economy, and employment theories, this study positions the publishing sub-sector as a strategic component of regional economic development. This provides a strong theoretical foundation for analyzing its contribution to GDP and job creation at the local level.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach supported by secondary statistical data to analyze the publishing sub-sector's contribution to the gross regional domestic product (GRDP) and employment in Sukoharjo Regency from 2019 to 2023. This approach allows for an in-depth interpretation of sectoral dynamics, trends, and structural changes within the local creative economy.

Thematic analysis was operationalized through a systematic coding process. The data were first categorized into four main themes: (1) GRDP contribution, (2) employment absorption, (3) growth trends and fluctuations, and (4) institutional and policy-related factors. Each theme was then refined into sub-themes, including digital adaptation, the impact of the pandemic, sectoral linkages, and labor intensity. This coding framework allowed the researchers to identify recurring patterns and relationships over time and across indicators.

To enhance analytical rigor, the study employed a qualitative content analysis and trend mapping framework. Year-to-year changes in GRDP and employment indicators were interpreted alongside contextual economic events, such as the recovery period from the COVID-19 pandemic and regional economic policies.

Data validation was conducted through multiple steps beyond basic triangulation. First, source triangulation was applied by cross-referencing data from BPS Sukoharjo, national BPS publications, and Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy reports. Second, temporal validation was conducted by examining the consistency of trends across the five-year observation period. Third, theoretical validation was achieved by aligning the empirical findings with Keynesian employment theory and creative economy frameworks to ensure interpretive coherence (Creswell, 2018).

Each indicator used in this study draws on specific official datasets. GRDP growth by industry classification was obtained from BPS Sukoharjo's GRDP by Business Field reports, and employment distribution data were derived from BPS labor force and creative economy sector statistics. This indicator-level specification ensures the analysis is transparent and replicable.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 RESULTS

To improve clarity and understanding of the data, this study supplements tabular analysis with visual representations. Bar charts illustrate GRDP growth trends, and line graphs depict employment distribution patterns across the publishing sub-sector from 2019 to 2023.

4.1.1 Contribution of the publishing sub-sector to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Sukoharjo Regency

The research results indicate that the publishing sub-sector makes a substantial contribution to the GDP of Sukoharjo Regency. During the 2019–2023 period, the sector experienced an average annual growth rate of 3.7%. The growth of the gross regional domestic product (GRDP) of Sukoharjo Regency from 2019 to 2023 is shown in detail in the following figure.

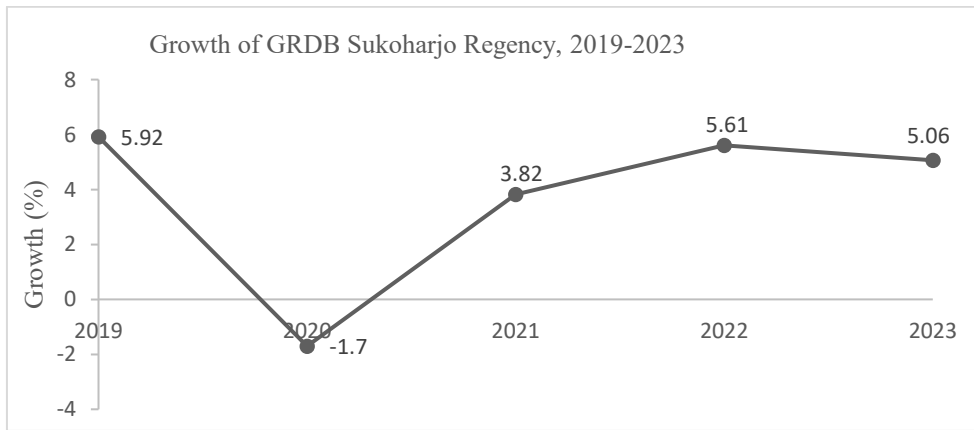


Figure 1. Growth in Gross Regional Domestic Product of Sukoharjo Regency, 2019-2023.

Source: BPS-Sukoharjo, 2024 (processed).

Figure 1 shows that Sukoharjo Regency experienced fluctuating gross regional domestic product (GRDP) growth during the 2019–2023 period. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, the regional economy recorded a robust growth rate of 5.92% in 2019. However, economic activity contracted sharply in 2020 to –1.70%, reflecting widespread disruption caused by mobility restrictions, declining consumption, and reduced production across sectors. This downturn mirrors the broader regional and national economic slowdown during the pandemic.

After the contraction, Sukoharjo Regency began to recover, with its GRDP growing 3.82% in 2021 and accelerating to 5.61% in 2022. Though growth moderated slightly to 5.06% in 2023, the overall trajectory indicates economic stabilization and resilience. This recovery context is crucial for interpreting the performance of the creative economy and the publishing sub-sector, which benefited from renewed demand, eased restrictions, and the normalization of economic activities.

Meanwhile, the gross regional domestic income per capita of the Sukoharjo district is shown in Rupiah in the following figure:

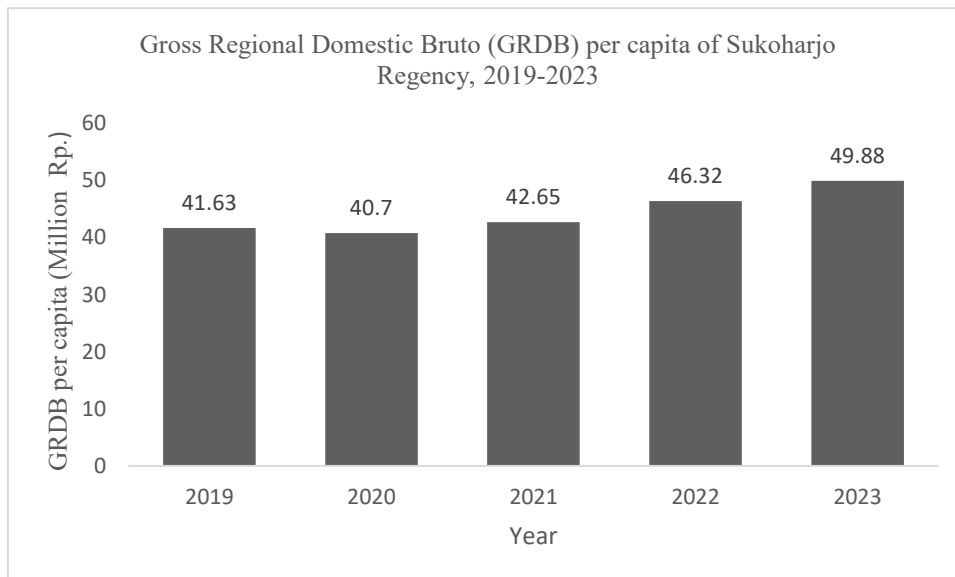


Figure 2. Growth in Gross Regional Domestic Product Per Capita (Rupiah) of Sukoharjo Regency, 2019-2023. Source: BPS-Sukoharjo, 2024 (processed).

Figure 2 shows changes in GRDP per capita in Sukoharjo Regency, offering insight into average income levels and economic well-being. GRDP per capita was IDR 41.63 million in 2019, declining to IDR 40.70 million in 2020. This indicates

reduced household income during the pandemic. This decline reflects weakened purchasing power and limited economic opportunities during periods of restricted economic activity.

Following the pandemic, GRDP per capita exhibited a steady upward trajectory, reaching IDR 42.65 million in 2021, IDR 46.32 million in 2022, and ultimately IDR 49.88 million in 2023. This sustained increase suggests that economic recovery translated into improved income distribution and productivity gains. The upward trend also suggests that value-added sectors, including creative industries such as publishing, have strengthened household income and supported inclusive regional economic growth.

The research results indicate that the publishing sub-sector substantially contributes to Sukoharjo Regency's GDP. From 2019 to 2023, the sector experienced an average annual growth rate of 6.6%. The growth of Sukoharjo Regency's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) from 2019 to 2023 is detailed in the following table:

TABLE 1 | GRDP growth from the publishing sub-sector in 2019-2023

Publishing Sub-sector	Business Field /Industry	2019	2020	2021	2022*	2023**
	(1)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(6)
Book, brochure, leaflet, magazine, newspaper, journal, and electronic publishing activities (video, film, music, multimedia)	Information and Communication	10,33	25,75	9,64	2,10	11,24
Advertising services in newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio	Business Activities	9,32	-1,67	3,35	4,48	6,55
Writing workshop and writer training services	Education	8,07	-2,64	1,49	2,38	5,70
Publishing consultant	Other Services Activities	9,18	-3,01	1,10	14,13	7,82
Average GDP growth from the publishing sub-sector		10,71	4,61	3,90	5,77	7,83
Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDB)		5,92	-1,70	3,82	5,61	5,06

Source: BPS-Sukoharjo, 2024 (processed)

Table 1 shows that the publishing sub-sector has varied growth patterns in different business fields. The information and communication category had the strongest performance, peaking at 25.75% growth in 2020. This was followed by positive growth of 9.64% in 2021 and 11.24% in 2023. This trend underscores the growing significance of digital publishing and multimedia activities, especially during times of heightened demand for digital content.

Other business fields showed more moderate but stable growth. Advertising-related business activities declined to -1.67% in 2020, but then recovered to 6.55% in 2023. Meanwhile, education-based publishing services rebounded from -2.64% in 2020 to 5.70% in 2023. Overall, the publishing sub-sector's average growth increased from 4.61% in 2020 to 7.83% in 2023, surpassing the general GRDP growth rate (5.06%) in the same year. These results suggest that the publishing sub-sector is a dynamic component of the local creative economy with strong recovery potential.

4.1.2 The Role of the Publishing Sub-Sector in Creating Jobs in Sukoharjo Regency

The publishing sub-sector in Sukoharjo Regency plays an important role in creating jobs for the local community. Based on the obtained data, this industry can absorb workers in various fields, from production to distribution. Jobs such as writing, editing, graphic design, and marketing are great opportunities offered by this sector. Details can be seen in the following table:

TABLE 2 | Distribution of publishing sub-sectors in business fields0 Industry 2019-2023

Publishing Sub-sector	Business Field /Industry	2019	2020	2021	2022*	2023**
	(1)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(6)
Book, brochure, leaflet, magazine, newspaper, journal, and electronic publishing activities (video, film, music, multimedia)	Information and Communication	4,77	6,03	6,26	5,84	5,98
Advertising services in newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio	Business Activities	0,43	0,44	0,43	0,43	0,44
Writing workshop and writer training services	Education	4,54	4,52	4,38	4,12	4,04
Publishing consultant	Other Services Activities	1,45	1,43	1,38	1,50	1,56
Total percentage of the Publishing Sub-sector in the creative economy business sector		11,19	12,43	12,45	11,89	12,02

Source: BPS-Sukoharjo, 2024 (processed)

As shown in Table 4, the publishing sub-sector has consistently contributed to employment creation in Sukoharjo Regency. The information and communication category absorbed the largest share of labor, growing from 4.77% in 2019 to 5.98% in 2023. This reflects the sustained demand for creative and digital publishing skills. This indicates the labor-intensive nature of content production and distribution activities within the publishing industry.

Meanwhile, employment levels in education-related publishing services remained relatively stable, though they gradually declined from 4.54% in 2019 to 4.04% in 2023. This suggests improvements in efficiency or a shift toward digital formats. Overall, the publishing sub-sector's total employment absorption increased from 11.19% in 2019 to 12.02% in 2023. From a Keynesian perspective, this trend highlights the importance of demand recovery and sectoral investment in creating jobs, especially in creative industries that adapt quickly to changes in consumption patterns.

4.2 DISCUSSION

From 2019 to 2023, the publishing sub-sector in Sukoharjo Regency made a significant contribution to the regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The publishing sector has acted as a catalyst for local economic growth by fostering creativity, generating added economic value, and supporting the broader creative economy ecosystem. The consistent positive trend in GDP contribution reflects the growing demand for publishing services and products, which is driven by advancements in digital technology and the increasing relevance of local creative content (Lestari & Mun'im, 2022; Gunawan, 2024).

One key driver of this growth is local publishers' ability to adapt to market demands by integrating technology into their operations. Digital platforms enable publishers to reach broader audiences, reducing production and distribution costs while enhancing market accessibility. This adaptability has strengthened the economic viability and resilience of the publishing sub-sector against external shocks, such as the effects of the 2020 pandemic on many traditional industries (Kilu et al., 2023; Purnomo et al., 2021).

Despite its achievements, the sub-sector faces challenges that could hinder its full potential. Limited access to financing and skilled human resources is a persistent issue that impacts publishers' ability to scale operations and innovate. Additionally, competition from global digital platforms poses a significant threat, particularly to smaller publishers who are struggling to maintain market relevance (Gozali et al., 2024).

The publishing sub-sector's role in job creation is evident not only in quantity but also in quality of workforce produced.

Many industry players involve local workers with skills that suit market needs (Ummah, 2019). Thus, the publishing industry contributes to increasing the competency of the workforce in Sukoharjo Regency through workplace training and learning. Furthermore, the publishing industry provides opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow. Many SMEs partner with publishers to provide support services, such as printing, distribution, and promotion. This collaboration creates additional jobs and increases the sustainability of small businesses in the region (Rosyadi et al., 2022).

However, the main challenge to job creation in this sector is limited access to modern technology and competition from digital platforms. Some traditional businesses have difficulty adapting to digital trends, which results in limited job opportunities in certain sectors. Therefore, government and related institution intervention is needed to provide technology training and financing access to support digital transformation in Sukoharjo Regency's publishing industry.

The employment trends observed in Sukoharjo's publishing sector align with Keynesian employment theory, which emphasizes the role of aggregate demand and sectoral investment in job creation. Accelerated growth periods, particularly post-2021, can be attributed to increased demand for digital content, government stimulus programs, and post-pandemic economic recovery policies. Conversely, slower growth periods reflect reduced demand and limited access to capital. These findings suggest that targeted policy interventions, such as incentives for the creative industries, digital skills training, and access to financing, can strengthen the employment multiplier effect of the publishing sub-sector.

5. CONCLUSION

In the era of globalization and advancements in information technology, the creative economy particularly the publishing subsector in Sukoharjo Regency plays a vital role in regional economic development. Local potential, combined with digital innovation, opens up significant opportunities for fostering the creativity of the local community. This not only boosts the productivity of the creative industry but also expands market access more broadly and efficiently. Beyond economic aspects, the publishing sub-sector also contributes to cultural preservation and the strengthening of regional identity. The creative products produced reflect the region's unique character while creating new job opportunities. Thus, the development of this sub-sector is expected to support economic sustainability while preserving Sukoharjo Regency's cultural heritage in a harmonious and sustainable manner.

6. LIMITATION AND IMPLICATION

Limitations: This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the analysis relies heavily on secondary data, which may not capture recent developments or nuanced aspects of the publishing sector in Sukoharjo Regency. Second, the study's focus on the period from 2019 to 2023 may limit the generalizability of the findings to other timeframes or regions. Third, the study lacks an extensive quantitative analysis, which could have provided more precise measurements of the sub-sector's contribution to GDP and job creation. Finally, challenges in accessing comprehensive data from small-scale publishers and informal sectors may result in an incomplete representation of the sector's overall impact.

Implications: The findings of this study provide valuable insights for policymakers, business leaders, and stakeholders in the creative economy. For example, policymakers can use these results to design targeted interventions aimed at addressing challenges such as limited access to capital and skilled human resources. For business actors, the study emphasizes the importance of leveraging digital technology and local creativity to increase competitiveness and market reach. Furthermore, the research underscores the necessity of fostering collaboration among the government, the private sector, and creative communities to strengthen the publishing sub-sector as a key driver of local economic development. Lastly, this study lays the groundwork for future research, encouraging a more comprehensive, quantitative exploration of the publishing sector's role in the creative economy.

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