

Thematic Evolution of The Creative Economy in Scientific Publications: A Bibliometric Study

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the thematic evolution of creative economy research through a bibliometric analysis of scientific publications. Using data retrieved from a major academic database and analyzed with bibliometric mapping tools, the study identifies the intellectual structure, key themes, and emerging trends within the field. The findings reveal that the literature is anchored around core concepts such as creative economy, creative industries, innovation, and economic development, reflecting a strong integration with knowledge-based and innovation-driven perspectives. Over time, the thematic focus has shifted from cultural policy and urban development toward digital transformation, with increasing attention to topics such as the digital economy, artificial intelligence, and platform-based business models. The results also highlight the growing importance of ecosystem thinking, where the creative economy is understood as a system of interconnected actors and value creation processes. This study contributes by providing a comprehensive mapping of the field's development and offering insights into future research directions, particularly in relation to digitalization and interdisciplinary integration within the creative economy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The creative economy has emerged as a significant paradigm in contemporary economic development, integrating creativity, knowledge, and technology into value creation processes. Over the past few decades, this concept has gained global recognition as economies shift from traditional industrial models toward knowledge-based systems. The creative economy encompasses a wide array of sectors, including arts, culture, design, media,

and digital industries, all of which rely heavily on intellectual capital and innovation. Its importance lies not only in economic growth but also in its contribution to social inclusion, cultural diversity, and sustainable development. According to [1], the creative economy is considered a driving force behind national economies, fostering employment, entrepreneurship, and international trade through creative industries.

Historically, the concept of the creative economy originated from discussions on cultural industries and creative industries

in the late twentieth century. The term gained prominence through policy frameworks and international organizations such as UNCTAD, which emphasized the role of creativity as a key driver of economic development. The creative economy is characterized by its reliance on intangible assets such as ideas, talent, and intellectual property, distinguishing it from traditional resource-based economies. As noted in the creative economy represents a synthesis of economic, cultural, and technological dimensions, making it a multidisciplinary field that requires diverse analytical approaches. This multidimensionality has encouraged scholars from various disciplines to explore its implications for development, innovation, and policy-making [2], [3].

In recent years, the expansion of digital technologies has further accelerated the growth of the creative economy, transforming how creative goods and services are produced, distributed, and consumed. Digitalization has enabled new forms of creativity, such as digital content creation, virtual platforms, and creative entrepreneurship, thereby expanding the scope of the creative economy. Research indicates that innovation, entrepreneurship, and digital ecosystems are central themes in this domain, reflecting a shift from traditional cultural industries to more technologically driven creative sectors. This transformation highlights the dynamic nature of the creative economy, which continuously evolves in response to technological advancements and global market changes [4].

The growing academic interest in the creative economy has led to a substantial increase in scientific publications across various disciplines. Scholars have investigated topics such as creative industries, creative cities, cultural policy, and creative entrepreneurship, resulting in a diverse and fragmented body of literature. Bibliometric studies have identified key themes such as human capital, business models, cultural industries, and innovation as central to the field. However, the interdisciplinary nature of the creative economy has also created

challenges in understanding its intellectual structure, as research is dispersed across multiple domains with varying theoretical frameworks and methodologies.

Given the rapid expansion of literature in this field, there is a growing need to systematically analyze and map its thematic evolution. Bibliometric analysis provides a powerful methodological approach to examine the development of scientific knowledge by identifying patterns, trends, and relationships within academic publications. It enables researchers to uncover the intellectual structure of a field, track the emergence of key themes, and identify research gaps. As highlighted by bibliometric techniques allow for the visualization of knowledge networks and the evaluation of research performance, making them particularly suitable for studying the evolution of complex and multidisciplinary topics such as the creative economy.

Despite the increasing volume of research on the creative economy, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the thematic evolution of this field over time. Existing studies have often focused on specific aspects, such as creative industries or regional development, without providing an integrated view of how research themes have emerged, developed, and interconnected across different periods. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary and fragmented nature of the literature complicates efforts to identify dominant research trends and future directions. As noted in prior studies, the predominance of qualitative approaches and limited quantitative analyses have also hindered the systematic mapping of the field. Consequently, there is a need for a bibliometric study that examines the thematic evolution of the creative economy to provide a clearer and more structured understanding of its intellectual development. This study aims to analyze the thematic evolution of the creative economy in scientific publications using a bibliometric approach

2. METHODS

This study employs a bibliometric analysis approach to systematically examine the thematic evolution of the creative economy in scientific publications. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method used to evaluate and map the structure, patterns, and trends of academic literature within a specific field. The data for this study were collected from the Scopus database, which is widely recognized for its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals and high-quality metadata. The search query was constructed using relevant keywords such as “creative economy,” “creative industries,” and “cultural

economy,” applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords. To ensure data relevance and consistency, the inclusion criteria were limited to journal articles published in English, within a specified time frame (e.g., 2000–2025), and belonging to subject areas related to business, management, economics, and social sciences. The initial search results were then refined through a screening process to remove duplicates, irrelevant records, and incomplete metadata, resulting in a final dataset suitable for analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Network Visualization

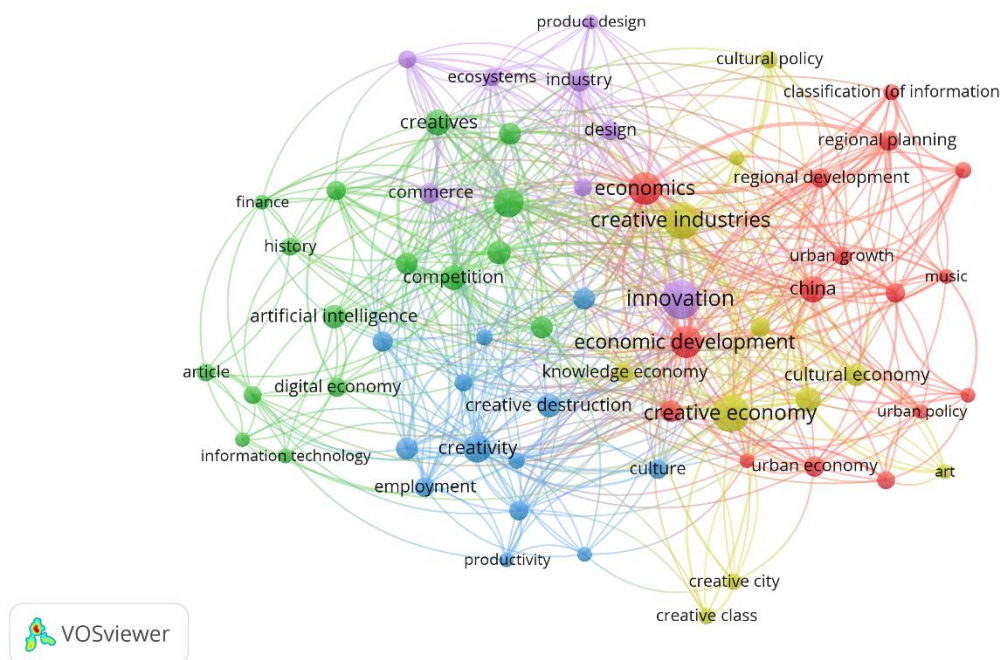


Figure 1. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 1 reveals that research on the creative economy is structured around several interconnected thematic clusters, with innovation, creative industries, and economic development emerging as central nodes. These terms occupy a bridging position, indicating that the creative economy literature is not isolated but strongly integrated with broader economic and innovation discourses. The density of connections around these

nodes suggests that scholars frequently position the creative economy as a driver of growth, competitiveness, and structural transformation.

The red cluster appears to emphasize a regional and policy-oriented perspective, with keywords such as regional development, urban growth, urban policy, and China. This indicates a strong stream of research examining the role of the creative economy in

Figure 2 shows the temporal evolution of research themes in the creative economy, where colors transition from dark blue (earlier years) to yellow (more recent years). Early studies (around 2016–2017) are dominated by foundational concepts such as creative economy, cultural economy, urban economy, and regional development. These themes indicate that initial research was strongly rooted in spatial and policy-oriented perspectives, emphasizing how creative industries contribute to urban growth, regional planning, and cultural development.

As the field evolves into the middle period (2017–2019), the focus shifts toward innovation and economic integration, highlighted by terms such as innovation, economic development, knowledge economy, and creative industries. During this phase, the creative economy is increasingly framed within broader economic systems, linking creativity with productivity, competitiveness,

and structural transformation. This suggests a conceptual transition from viewing the creative economy as a cultural sector toward positioning it as a driver of innovation-led growth.

In the most recent period (2019–2020), newer themes emerge in yellow tones, including artificial intelligence, digital economy, competition, and commerce. This indicates a strong movement toward digitalization and technology-driven creativity, where the creative economy intersects with platform-based business models and advanced technologies. The appearance of these themes signals that current research is no longer limited to cultural or policy discussions but is expanding into digital ecosystems, highlighting the growing importance of technology, data, and market dynamics in shaping the future of the creative economy.

Table 1. The Most Impactful Literatures

Citations	Authors and year	Title
574	[5]	A Culture of Growth: The Origins of the Modern Economy
390	[6]	Rules of the game: The place of institutions in regional economic change
245	[7]	Transformative services and transformation design
214	[8]	Four models of the creative industries
173	[9]	Regenerative development and design: A framework for evolving sustainability
162	[10]	The evolution of the global digital platform economy: 1971–2021
145	[11]	Developed democracies versus emerging autocracies: arts, democracy, and innovation in Quadruple Helix innovation systems
135	[12]	Urban design: Requiem for an era - Review and critique of the last 50 years
106	[13]	The image of the creative city, eight years later: Turin, urban branding and the economic crisis taboo
102	[14]	Creative industries and economic evolution

Source: Scopus, 2026

creativity is not treated as an isolated sectoral activity but as a strategic resource that shapes economic trajectories.

At the same time, the cluster and overlay analyses demonstrate a clear thematic shift over time. Earlier studies were largely oriented toward cultural policy, urban development, and regional planning, reflecting an initial concern with how creative industries contribute to place-based development and city competitiveness. However, more recent themes—such as digital economy, artificial intelligence, commerce, and competition—signal a transition toward a technology-driven understanding of the creative economy. This shift indicates that the field is increasingly influenced by digital transformation, where creative production and distribution are mediated by platforms, data, and algorithmic systems. As a result, the creative economy is no longer confined to traditional cultural sectors but is expanding into digitally enabled ecosystems.

The presence of themes related to employment, productivity, and creative destruction further highlights the micro-level implications of this transformation. These findings suggest that the literature is also engaging with the role of human capital and labor dynamics in creative industries. Creativity is increasingly positioned as a form of productive capability that contributes to economic renewal, consistent with Schumpeterian perspectives on innovation. At the same time, the emergence of digital and AI-related topics raises questions about the future of creative work, including issues of job displacement, skill transformation, and the reconfiguration of creative labor in platform-based environments.

Another important insight is the growing integration of ecosystem and systemic perspectives, as reflected in themes such as creative class, ecosystems, and design. This indicates that the field is moving toward a more holistic understanding of the creative economy, where value creation is seen as the result of interactions among multiple actors,

including governments, firms, communities, and digital platforms. The increasing relevance of these themes suggests that the creative economy is being conceptualized not only as a sector but as a complex adaptive system. This shift opens opportunities to connect the literature with broader theoretical frameworks, such as innovation ecosystems and entrepreneurial ecosystems, thereby strengthening its analytical depth.

The results point to a thematic evolution characterized by a transition from cultural and policy-oriented foundations toward a more integrated, innovation-driven, and digitally mediated paradigm. This evolution reflects broader changes in the global economy, where creativity, technology, and entrepreneurship are becoming increasingly intertwined. The study contributes by demonstrating how these shifts are reflected in the structure of scientific publications, while also highlighting emerging directions for future research. In particular, the growing prominence of digital and technological themes suggests that future studies should pay closer attention to platform governance, data-driven creativity, and the socio-economic implications of technological disruption within the creative economy.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the evolution of creative economy research has moved from its early emphasis on cultural policy, urban development, and regional perspectives toward a more integrated framework centered on innovation, economic development, and digital transformation. The bibliometric evidence shows that core themes such as creative industries and innovation remain dominant, while newer topics like digital economy and artificial intelligence are increasingly shaping the research landscape. This shift reflects a broader reorientation of the creative economy as a dynamic, technology-driven system embedded within the knowledge economy.

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