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# CREATIVE INDUSTRY ECOSYSTEM ON THE COLOMBIAN-VENEZUELAN BORDER<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

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In today's world, globalization has brought about profound alterations in society and changes in our behavior. Thanks to technological advances, connectivity is part of today's lifestyle. This transformation gives a new general standard of cultural consumption worldwide and how creative and cultural products and services are created, produced, distributed and marketed. In this context, the growing prominence of the 21st century recognizes that creativity and human talent, beyond traditional factors such as labor and capital, have become instruments of promotion and development. The metropolitan area of Cúcuta, where the research takes place, is a border area whose economy has traditionally depended on the political and economic ups and downs between Colombia and Venezuela and shares a great culture, values, history and traditions between the two countries. For this reason, developing the creative economy in the border region is fundamental to creating economic development opportunities and preserving the culture and social identity. This research aims to characterize the Colombian-Venezuelan border's creative industry using the qualitative and documentary methodology, with an exploratory scope. The main results indicate that 1,545 companies are registered in the region and develop diverse activities such as software development, publications, news, music, plastic arts, conservation of historical sites, etc. The type of organization is microenterprises and family businesses with home-grown capital.

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## INTRODUCTION

The term creative economy first emerged as the study of the relationship between creativity and the economy (Howkins, 2001). According to Florida (2002), the creative economy includes people in the fields of science and engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music and entertainment, whose function is to create new ideas, technologies and creative content and thus generate economic value to the environment where they are located, through creativity.

The development of the creative economy is intended to generate economic and financial dividends. It also helps to create culture and identity of the country or region and promotes community participation in the social and cultural improvement of its inhabitants.

On the other hand, the Colombian-Venezuelan border zone, especially in Norte de Santander, has depended on trade flows with Venezuela and is affected or favored depending on the ups and downs of political relations between the two countries. The metropolitan area's economy is primarily commercial, except for some sectors such as ceramics, mining, agriculture, and small-scale commercial, religious, and historical tourism.

With the closure of the border in 2015 and the economic, political and social crisis in Venezuela, most of these sectors have been harmed, especially those related to trade and tourism, as Venezuelans eventually go on to make purchases of essential goods, but not on a large scale as they once did.

To solve these problems, the local, regional and national governments have been creating strategies to diversify the economy and eliminate dependence on the Venezuelan buyer. Among these initiatives is the creation and development of the creative industry as part of the orange economy promoted by the national government for economic reactivation and diversification.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Unesco (2013), the creative economy is one of the fastest growing sectors in terms of income generation, job creation and contribution to the growth of the world economy. It also generates non-monetary value that favors the achievement of inclusive and people-centered sustainable development.

The creative economy is also known as the orange economy because the color orange is associated with culture, creativity and identity. According to Buitrago and Duque (2013), the Orange Economy is the set of activities that, in a chained manner, allow ideas to be transformed into cultural goods and services, whose value is determined by their intellectual property content.

For Newbigin (2010), the creative economy encompasses activities that transform ideas into goods and services subject to intellectual property and whose main inputs are human talent and skills. It also includes subsectors that develop in artistic activities and local crafts, museums, traditions, cultural heritage, design, fashion, software, theater, music, marketing and advertising, among others; each encompasses key elements for the economic development of the population. This sector contributes significantly to nations' gross domestic product (GDP), stimulates innovation, fosters development and contributes to the transfer of knowledge in various sectors (Skills for the Creative Economy Report, 2019).

Although the activities linked to the creative economy have been developed for a long time, its great impulse was given under the conceptualization made by John Howkins at the beginning of the 21st century. Since then, the creative economy has been growing and increasingly takes significant participation within the economies of countries and territories (Throsby, 2008), being an engine for the generation of employment, increased production and the development of human capital (Corfo, 2014). The creative economy is based on the existing relationship between economic and cultural values (OEC, n.d.). However, during the last decade, the spectrum of creative activities has expanded, making its

definition and measurement more complex, although similarities are observed among the different authors. An example of this is the Inter-American Development Bank, which established three major categories similar to those Throsby (2008) worked on in his concentric circles of cultural industries. In this way, the IDB (2017) establishes Art and Heritage, Cultural Industries and Functional Creations as the three umbrellas that analyze the creative economy sector. With them, the set of activities that transform ideas into goods and services and base their value on intellectual property, innovation and creativity is established.

In the Colombian case, there is a conjunctural situation that has promoted public and private interest in the sector; however, it is undeniable that the sector has problems that must be observed and analyzed, such as the case of the formalization of economic activities linked to the sector and its development potential for different territories. As previously mentioned, the creative economy has been analyzed nationally. However, at the international level, it is observed that this type of dynamics can, and should, be analyzed at the territorial scale (OECD, 2017).

At the same time, some situations affect the correct measurement and implementation of initiatives to improve conditions in the sector. One of the main situations is the latent informality of creative activities. As ECLAC - OEI emphasizes, “in addition to the usual difficulties and complexities involved in measuring productive activities in the cultural sector and measuring their economic contribution... it is necessary to consider the possible underestimates that in this type of productive activities there may be due to the different levels of formality” (2014: 129). In this way, the relevance of the creative economy and the analysis that should contemplate other issues than those that are generally quantified can be observed, making it necessary to establish guidelines that contribute to the problem's solution.

Ortega (2010) shows a global comparative analysis of the cultural sector, recognizing the importance of “the conversion and transmission of information into knowledge.” With this, decision-making and the formulation, operation and evaluation of policies have a meaning when observing indicators nurtured through information collection.

In this way, under two conceptual lines that mix the creative economy's historical development and the sector's future prospects. First, for several years, conceptualizations have been linked to art, heritage and cultural industries. It is taken as a starting point that the concept of a creative economy encompasses both creative goods and creative services (UNCTAD, 2018). The former are made up of crafts, audiovisual products, design, digital manufacturing, new media, performing arts, advertising and visual arts; while the latter encompasses public opinion services, research and development services, and personal, cultural and recreational services, among others (UNCTAD, 2018). On the other hand, the accelerated growth of the participation of creative industries in the development of goods and services (driven by access to information and the digital revolution) in multiple sectors of the economy favors the consolidation of these as a potential engine of development for the territories; this in contrast to the low participation that creative industries currently have in Latin American economies (IDB, 2017).

For their part, the new subsectors are represented by various activities such as functional developments and the meeting of digital platforms with the social sciences and humanities. This intersection is a discipline that has been defined as digital humanities in the last three decades. According to Rojas (2013), the digital humanities “function as an umbrella concept that shelters different methodologies and objects of study” but include, among other research and creative practices, programming, textual analysis, data visualization, electronic literature and new media.

These disciplines, crossed by digital development, have been included in the framework of a line of creative industries called Digital Creative Industries. According to Kulesz (2016), in the framework of the Intergovernmental Committee on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultures of Unesco, “these industries reflect the influence of digital technologies in the creation and development of new cultural expressions, transform the notion of intellectual property, originate new connections between creators and consumers, and redefine the boundaries of artistic creation, as well as its distribution and adoption models in society,” and adds that in Latin America a “compilation of statistics is necessary to reach a deep understanding of these processes.”

## METHODOLOGY

The first part of the research was carried out employing a documentary review, emphasizing documents on the sector at the regional level, while the primary sources were qualitative with an exploratory scope. Its approach is non-experimental with field design. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person. The key informants were taken incidentally and consisted of six interviews with executives of creative and cultural companies.

Six initial categories were proposed for the analysis and discussion, per Cáceres (2003), as follows: 1) Industry Characteristics; 2) Formalization and Legality; 3) Organizational Structure; 4) Mission Purpose; 5) Origin and Financing; and 6) Obstacles and Strategies.

## RESULTS

**Industry Characteristics.** According to the Cúcuta Chamber of Commerce, 1,545 companies are duly registered. 545 companies, whose activities are related to the manufacture of musical instruments; manufacture of games, toys and puzzles; book publishing; publishing of newspapers, magazines and other periodicals; publishing of software programs; production of motion pictures, videos, advertisements and television commercials; exhibition of motion pictures and videos; sound recording and music editing; programming and transmission in the radio broadcasting service; television programming and transmission; consulting and administration of computer applications and infrastructure; web portal design; news agencies; photography; cultural teaching, literary creation, musical creation, theatrical creation, audiovisual creation, plastic and visual arts, theater, live music shows, library and archive management; museum administration, conservation of historic buildings and sites; conservation of botanical gardens, zoos and nature reserves; amusement park and theme park activities; and production of copies from original recordings (Cúcuta Chamber of Commerce, 2022).

Most creative industry organizations are microenterprises and have an average of 2.4 workers, which means that they generate employment for about 3,800 people and an annual operating income of about US\$30,000.

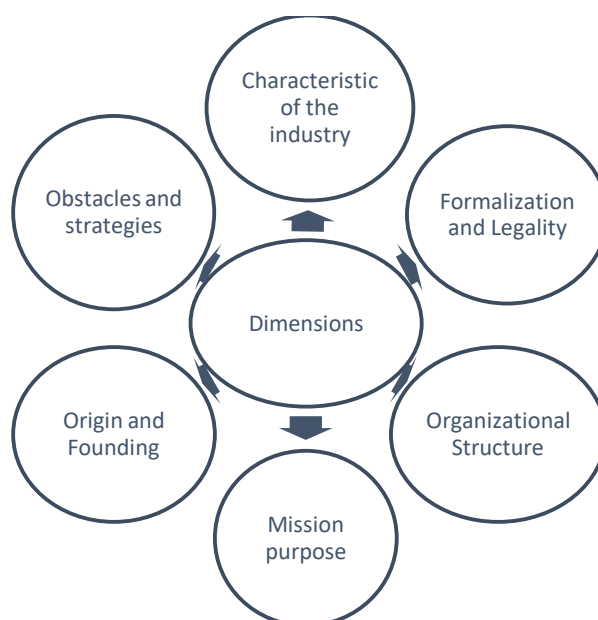


Figure 1. Study categories

Source: Authors

**Formalization and legality.** Regarding this dimension, it was found that there are several national, regional and local regulations that seek to encourage, promote and facilitate the creation of creative

industry ventures. The most important is the Orange Law or Law 1834 of 2017, which seeks to develop, promote, encourage, incentivize and protect the creative industry and facilitate the participation of public and private, social, trade union and associative actors in the cultural and creative sector. Furthermore, within the framework of the strategic policy, perspectives are identified, known as the 7i, which is intended to promote creativity, talent and culture and refer to the search for strengthening and adaptation of 1) information, 2) institutions, 3) industry, 4) infrastructure, 5) integration, 6) inclusion and 7) inspiration.

This law will allow the government to create lines of credit and technical cooperation through Findeter for the construction of cultural and creative infrastructure in the territorial entities, for which it will work with the Ministry of Culture in the construction of agendas of “creative municipalities, cities and regions” throughout the country. It also provides tools to promote culture and create cultural enterprises through education.

Another essential regulation that refers to the sector is the National Development Plan (PND) 2018-2022, which has sections dedicated to the creative economy, trying to give access to all Colombians to national culture, encourage the artistic and creative talent of young people and prepare them for the challenges of the Knowledge Era. To this end, it seeks to create an appropriate environment for the integral development of culture and the arts, guaranteeing the population the exercise of their cultural rights, participation in artistic experiences; the management of cultural infrastructure; strategies to create, produce and consume cultural goods and services and the implementation of a program for the circulation of goods, services and products of creative origin.

To achieve this vision, the PND sets out objectives such as 1) strengthening the articulation between the different levels of government for the design and implementation of policies with a territorial approach; 2) increasing and qualifying the institutional supply of cultural goods and services; and 3) protecting and safeguarding the Nation's cultural memory and heritage.

The PND in the section “Colombia orange, seeks the development of artistic, creative and technology-based entrepreneurship for the creation of new industries”, the creative economy is exalted as a powerful tool to achieve greater equity through the promotion of artistic and creative talent and entrepreneurship in cultural and creative industries. In addition, a strategy focused on the 7i of the Orange Law is proposed (generation of information, strengthening of the institutional environment, development of creative industries, generation of infrastructure based on the agendas of creative cities and regions and the development of the Orange Development Areas (ADN), integration of the orange economy with international markets and other productive sectors based on the generation of “orange added value,” the inclusion of human capital, and the promotion of intellectual property as a support for creative inspiration.

At the local level, there have also been some advances in regulatory issues that promote the development of the creative industry and establish the conditions for entrepreneurs to promote their initiatives. In this sense, the Municipal Council of the city of Cúcuta approved Agreement 009, whose main objective is to promote and develop initiatives related to creative economic activities. The regulation is aligned with national legislation, especially the Orange Law, and seeks to implement strategies related to research, strengthening the role of industries, infrastructure development, market integration, social inclusion and incentives for those who create or sponsor creative activities.

The responsibility for implementing this agreement lies with the Orange Municipal Council (CMN), the Secretariat of Social Development, the Secretariat of Culture and Tourism, the Secretariat of Education, the Secretariat of ICTs, the Municipal Institute of Recreation and Sports, the Cúcuta Technological Center, the Bank of Progress, among others, who will have the duty to carry out actions aimed at implementing, monitoring and verifying the development policies of the orange sector.

**Organizational Structure.** For this dimension, it was found that most of the enterprises are micro and family businesses that generate employment for about 3,800 people, each with an average of 2.4 workers. The largest companies have 560 employees related to amusement park activities, theme parks, and film and video exhibitions.

Larger companies have a division of labor, clearly assigned responsibilities, investment plans and strategic platform, while in small companies, each worker performs various functions from productive

to administrative; they lack financial leverage, and many of them are not strategically oriented, although their entrepreneurs believe they have clear orientation and core activities of the organization. On the other hand, most small companies have some advantages such as the connection between team members, the visibility of their leaders, greater control in operations, decisions and passion for what they do.

**Mission Purpose.** For this dimension, it was identified that 78% of the creative industries are engaged in editing and publishing magazines and newspapers; film and video exhibition; radio broadcasting; consulting and management of computer logistics; advertising, photography, musical shows and theme park attractions; these companies generate 86% of the sector's employment (Cúcuta Chamber of Commerce, 2022).

On a smaller scale are other companies whose main activity is the creation of web portals, information services, software editing, music editing and recording, television programming and broadcasting, fine arts, etc.

**Origin and financing.** Regarding the origin of the resources by nationality, it was found that 33 companies are owned by Venezuelan entrepreneurs, with one or two workers and approximately 53 thousand dollars in current assets. The remaining companies have capital of Colombian origin. Almost all the enterprises initially have their investment with which they have been able to consolidate and as they grow, they seek financial leverage, especially from banks.

However, entrepreneurs report difficulty accessing external financial resources due to the demanding collateral required by banks and the cost and commitment involved. Therefore, entrepreneurs believe that the government should promote more accessible lines of credit to enable growth and development, as indicated in the regulations related to the orange economy.

In that sense, DANE (2021) considers that the main source of resources for the creation of the orange business in Colombia came in 67.4% from personal savings, 9.9% from family loans, 7.5% from bank loans, 1.1% from lenders, only 0.2% from seed capital from promotion programs and the remaining 12.3% did not require financing, so the situation in the metropolitan area of Cúcuta is similar to the rest of the country.

**Challenges and strategies.** Some challenges that arise in the sector can be classified into axes of intervention as follows: 1) Allocation of operational resources; 2) Administrative and managerial assistance for the entrepreneurship of the creative economy; 3) Updating of regulatory legislation for the orange economy, especially in the border area where this research is being developed; and 4) Appropriation of culture, entrepreneurship and the creative mentality of business people and government.

Each of the axes requires financial, technological, human resources and competitive support that are transversal to the development of the industry but at the same time are very specialized. Therefore, the support of various state entities and private companies such as Artesanías de Colombia, SENA, Ministry of Culture, INNpulsas, Red de Economía Naranja, universities, research centers, chambers of commerce and economic associations is required so that together they can create an ecosystem that facilitates entrepreneurship and business consolidation.

A significant challenge for the sector is opening the Colombian-Venezuelan border, which has been closed for about seven years. This may present some opportunities, such as the arrival of Venezuelan businessmen, or the opening of the Venezuelan market for the industry's services. However, there may also be threats, such as capital or companies on the Venezuelan side becoming competition for the sector and undermining the income and financial stability of the city's creative enterprises.

Another challenge that the creative industry has to face refers to the change of policies of the new government (2022-2026), which has announced that the support to the orange economy will not be the same because it has not produced the expected results, and therefore requires transformations and adjustments. Therefore, entrepreneurs in the sector have some uncertainty in this regard since it is unknown what the main legislative changes will be and how they will affect the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Finally, entrepreneurs recognize that digital technologies are disruptively changing the creative economy. Technology offers not only new tools to transform ideas into products but also new channels to disseminate them. Therefore, to maximize the creative economy's potential, it is essential to provide the resources to try to ensure that the 7i has an adequate development and allows the growth and consolidation of the sector.

## CONCLUSIONS

The creative industry is one of the main engines of development of modern society, so governments around the world are trying to create the necessary conditions for entrepreneurship, development and growth. In the Colombian case, several policies have been designed to provide infrastructure, information and articulation between the various public and private actors to facilitate the emergence of organizations producing innovative and creative services. At the regional level (Colombian-Venezuelan border), the same has been done to facilitate entrepreneurship and the emergence of creative enterprises and maintain, protect and facilitate knowledge of the regional culture and identity.

There is a large number of organizations, especially microenterprises and family businesses in this part of the country, engaged in various creative activities such as software production, information dissemination, news, radio broadcasting, design, cultural heritage conservation, etc., which have emerged from small private capital ventures and, as they grow, are financially leveraged with bank loans. Most of the companies have capital of Colombian origin, but there are also ventures by Venezuelans who have migrated to this region.

The main challenges facing the industry have to do with obtaining operational resources; administrative and managerial assistance for the companies; issuance of regulations that facilitate the establishment and emergence of creative companies; and the appropriation of culture, entrepreneurship and the creative mentality of businessmen and government, that is, the articulation of efforts of various public and private entities that contribute to generate the necessary conditions for the creation of value in this sector to become a reality.

The dynamism and relevance of the creative economy in the world generate significant opportunities for the diversification of creative goods in all links of the value chain, which constitutes an economical alternative for the border and an opportunity to appropriate the culture, identity and historical richness that the region has and that is shared between the two countries. Although entrepreneurs and businessmen encounter difficulties developing their industries, their creative capacity continues to find ways to overcome them, creating increasingly concrete solutions to their problems.

It is essential to continue working to consolidate the creative or orange economy in the region, as it contributes an opportunity for economic growth, inclusive development and innovation, an important source of job creation for young people and a way to promote the culture and identity of the border.

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