



**Creative industries: a case study of Isfahan, Iran**

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## Creative industries: a case study of Isfahan, Iran

### Abstract

**Purpose-** Our aim is to contribute critically to understanding the structure of creative industries in Isfahan.

**Design/methodology/approach-** We first gather needed information about the case study, then analyze the data according to three measures of gross value added, employment, and the dynamics of business for each sector of creative industries, and in the next step also a SWOT analysis is created.

**Findings-** Results indicate that creative industries are medium-sized domestic enterprises which are comparatively weak in productivity in some sectors.

**Originality/value-** This paper illustrates the model of creative industries assessment for Isfahan city and finally provides a good understanding of the concept of the creative industries as a key element of the creative city.

**Keywords** creative economy; creative industry; creative city; Isfahan

**Paper type** Case study

### 1. Introduction

Cities in various parts of the world started diligently investing in cultural facilities and supporting young talent with a belief that this must be the right way to make their cities more competitive (Musterd and Gritsai, 2012). It may be defined as a policy that aims to generate new growth through economic operations that promote creativity, knowledge concurrence, and advanced scientific technology based on creating a new market and new jobs (Peck, 2012). Economy concept has been derived from the innovation concept, combined with creativity from creative industries (Moore, 2014). In order to make the potential of innovation thrive however, social, cultural as well as institutional innovations are necessary (Puchta et al., 2010). The cross-cutting nature of the creative economy means that policy development for the creative and knowledge-intensive industries must be formulated on a coordinated multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary basis (Musterd and Kovács, 2013).

In the modern economy, the prerequisite for personal and family prosperity is to hold a creativity-intensive skill or job, preferably one in a trade industry (Martin et al., 2015). The creative economy comprises all those sectors in modern capitalism that caters to consumer demands for amusement, self-affirmation, and social display which will depend progressively more on the generation of knowledge through innovation and creativity (Gibson, 2012).

Creative industries encourage economic growth, increase the employment rate, strengthen the social incorporation, and improve the economic dynamism. Furthermore, they offer insights into important changes in the global economy and in particular how individuals and organization innovate to drive that change (Jones et al., 2016). Therefore, many countries strategically try to support their economy's move forward to a creative economy where the creative industries play an important role (Lafzi Ghazi and Goede, 2017).

In this paper, we first present a discussion of a theoretical framework on the creative industries and on the case of Isfahan. This is followed by a section in which the framework is applied to evaluate the potential of Isfahan. Then the case of Isfahan is analyzed. The paper concludes with general recommendations and overall remarks for all involved in creative industries especially urban planners.

## 2. Creative Industries

The term “creative industries” first originated in the mid-to-late 1990s and was originally used to define all industries based on creativity that generate intellectual property; the definition of creative industries has been generally widened to include any industries with particular artistic and cultural elements since 2002 (Henry and de Bruin 2011). Policy makers and practitioners often consider sectors such as advertising, architecture, art and antiques, computer games, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, music, performing arts, publishing, software, TV and radio as identified creative industries (Lange et al., 2008). Increased involvement of the creative industry and urban innovation go hand-in-hand: innovative urban areas attract creative people, and creative industries help spur on new urban innovations (Tähtinen et al., 2016; Boix et al., 2014).

Creative industries are likely to concentrate in large urban regions, where innovation and cross-fertilization of ideas can take place with the support of talent pooling and relatedness among niche producers (Fahmi et al., 2016). The best and brightest creative talents have the power to drive the new economy; they create unique and highly profitable products and services. When they have access to the right conditions, environments, and opportunities, they will thrive, generate new products and services, and boost innovation (Prawata, 2015; Keane, 2013). The creative industries represent the overlap area between culture, technology, and commerce, involving the supply of services represented by a substantial element of artistic and intellectual activities associated with an important role in social and human development (Gregory, 2016). Creative industries are grounded in personal ideas, talent, experience, work and wealth (Daubaraitė and Startienė, 2015) which allow firms to respond to opportunities and, adapt, grow and compete in this changing world (Porfirio et al., 2016). Creative industries are not only strategically significant engines of economic growth, job creation, social cohesion innovation and economic development of regions and countries (Oakley, 2006; Kolenda and Yang Liu, 2012; Jesus and Kamlot, 2017), but also support innovation in other industries by providing various creative inputs and human capital, which are the critical elements to generate innovation spillover to other sectors (Bae and Yoo, 2015).

While there is a handful of studies focusing on culture as an influential factor in the development of a creative economy (Comunian, 2011; Greffe, 2016), others emphasize on the important role of creativity, skill and talent on regional and transnational economic development (Rozentale and Lavanga, 2014; Lee, 2015; Begum and Anjum, 2017). More recently, analysts have extended such theories by stressing on the significant role of creative industries in large parts of the world concerning both employment and revenues. In other words, creative industries represent a changeable notion for describing a rising economic sector, the dynamics of industrial collaboration as well as the changing landscape of the employment market (Hyz and Karamanis, 2016; Gong and Hassink, 2017). It is widely assumed therefore that creative workers contribute strongly to the economic and social vitality of contemporary postindustrial cities (Shutters et al., 2015; Batabyal and Beladi, 2016).

Most of the contributions in this special issue compass the themes of creativity and enterprise, and how they relate to particular regions, and highlight the need to explore the creative industries and their potential detachment from the city concept. In fact, the creative industries serve to organize, manage and reward creativity and creative work in the normal course of cultural and creative production (Duff and Sumartojo, 2017).

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Considering the above, the creative industry itself is a significant strategic topic because its dynamic nature has shown not only a remarkable growth itself during last decades, but as well its implementation is contributing to boost other industries in this turbulent competitive world. It is obvious that these industries continue to go through structural changes that urge firms to adapt and transform their business in response to the dynamic nature of trade environment. As researchers deal with definitions and innovation metrics, there is general agreement that economic urgency has forced economies and industries to become more creative to grow in order to survive the vagaries of global competition and downturns.

### 3. Methodology

The first step in developing a framework is to identify which factors influence the successful establishment of creative industries. The creative industries have significant potential for wider-scale development, since they produce tangible goods or intangible services able to generate revenues through trade and intellectual property rights. The sector encompasses the cycles of creation, production and distribution, of goods and services that have creative content, cultural and economic value and market objectives. In this regard, the creative industries have been classified by UNCTAD (2013) as including creative goods and services related to cultural heritage, to the arts, to the media and to functional creations, with subsectors identified in each of these categories, as shown in figure 1 below.

At present, the statistics for cultural industries have not been harmonized in a systematic manner, and there is no unique statistical methodology. Three main measures have been recognized as being the most important for measuring the economic contribution of cultural and creative industries to economic development – gross value added, employment, and the dynamics of business in cultural industries (UNESCO, 2009). Therefore, the research is based on interviews with the representatives of different sectors carried out in June and July 2018, statistical data gathered with the help of Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI) database about creative industries. The gathered data was analyzed using SWOT methodology. This method provides further indication of the city's ability and capacity to support the attraction, retention and expansion of business investment across traditional and emerging industries. The goal of this paper is to evaluate the case of Isfahan by applying this approach. We first gather needed information about the case study and then analyze the data according to these factors for each sector.

### 4. Isfahan

Isfahan is located about 340 km south of Tehran (figure 2), equidistant from the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea. It sits on both the east-west and north-south trade routes which traverse the country. It has an estimated population of 2 million habitants. It has twice been the capital city of Persia, during the Parthian Empire and again in the sixteenth century Safavid dynasty (Babaie, 2008). It has been designated by UNESCO as a world heritage site (Vadiati and Kashkooli, 2011).

The life of Isfahan, situated in the middle of the Iranian Plateau, is completely tied to the Zayandehroud River which has distinctive capabilities, in terms of tourism, including beach sports, ecotourism, and historical tourism capable of attracting numerous domestic, and foreign tourists when planned properly (Yazdanpanah et al., 2016).

#### 4.1. Heritage

The most of Isfahan's habitants are multi-cultural, belletrist and artist. Traditional economy of Isfahan is based on handicrafts such as carpet weaving, silk weaving, engraving, carving, needlework, brocade, inlay, filigree, miniatures, pottery, enamel, metal, tattoo turquoise, silver making, tile making and Ghalamkari (Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, 2016). Moreover, one of the finest and most beautiful Persian carpets are woven in Isfahan that could make their way to European, especially British museums and personal collections as a result of industrial and technological advances and familiarizing European artists with the eastern art (Hejazi et al. 2006).

A glance at the Islamic monuments of Isfahan, however, the Islamic site of Friday Mosque of Isfahan is one of the oldest mosque structures within the Iranian peripheries and the first example of a four-ivan mosque which became the archetype of Iranian mosques (Darooqeh, 2014). Moreover, Natural History, Contemporary Arts, Education and Training are some of the famous examples of museums in Isfahan (Isfahan Municipal Report, 2016).

Festivals are displays of social and cultural identity which therefore reinforce the connections and shared values within a community (Comunian, 2016). Nowadays, a multitude of festivities are celebrated officially and semi-officially in Iran. The ancient festival of Norouz is celebrated every year by Iranians. 'Nowruz Bazaar' is a cultural show which represents the cultural market, Marionette theatre, and "Hajji Firuz" performance is a fictional character in Iranian folklore who appears in the streets by the beginning of Nowruz. This event is held in Isfahan like other cities of Iran annually (Intini, 2015).

Beside cultural festivals, there are some other special events in Isfahan. Sheikh-Bahai Technopreneurship festival is one of the good examples which has been held annually and supporting by UNESCO since 2005. This Festival is an event not only for Iranian entrepreneurs and investors, but also for international companies who are seeking to find opportunities in different field in Iran (SHTF, 2016).

#### 4.2. Arts

The cardinal values of the art have been transposed towards other economic sectors of a creative city (Ratiu, 2013). "Artists" have always been seen as a crucial part of the ecosystem of the cultural and creative sectors (O'Connor and Xin, 2015). Isfahan has many historical places such as two famous bridges, Siosepol and Khajoo Bridge, the monument of Menarjonban, Ali Qapu palace, Chehel Sotoun palace, Hasht Behesht Palace, Vank Church, Sheikh Lotfollah mosque, Old Qaisarieh Bazaar and natural scenery such as its main river Zayandehrood (Hanzaee, 2011).

Of all of the art forms, music has suffered the most repression and censorship in the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to the tenets of the Cultural Revolution, dance was perverse, immoral and a sin. The most important dance institutions, The National Ballet Company and The Mahalli Troupe of Folk, were dissolved during last decades. Despite its prohibition, dancing occurs at private gatherings such as weddings and parties, and according to one source, even at the few underground dance clubs in big cities like Isfahan (Youssefzadeh, 2008). Lots of theatre and music performances are held annually but they could only attract domestic tourism (Pourafkari, 2009).



### 4.3. Media

The entrepreneurial-artistic formula for the creative city focuses on labor market (artists, craft-workers and artisans) and the production process especially in creative media (Doyle, 2015). The media industries are the key drivers and accelerators of a global culturalization of economies (Salman et al., 2011). The print media which was always a one-way mass communication has given way for the new media to flourish which allows the people to act as both the transmitters as well as the producers (Maxim, 2014; Rajendran and Thesinghraj, 2014). So writers, publishers and distributors need to adapt their business strategies to this new environment.

Iranian cinema is lauded around the globe for its visually sensuous exploration of emotional and poetic topics and its esoteric political allegories (Siavoshi, 1997). Although the government tried to impose more limitation on movies, but there are many directors who were raised during last decade and represented needs and taste of modern middle class (Bahar, 2010). One of the best examples of such directors is Asghar Farhadi. He is the first Iranian Oscar winning director who was born in Isfahan. Fortunately, the presence of Iranian films in prestigious international festivals such as the Cannes Film Festival, the Venice Film Festival, and the Berlin Film Festival attracted world attention to Iranian masterpieces in recent years (Khalaji et al., 2011).

### 4.4. Functional creation

The creative industries and tourism are two sectors which affect each other and can be synergy if managed properly (Waitt and Gibson, 2014; Ardhal, et al., 2016). Isfahan yearly hosts many of domestic and foreign tourists; however, Iran is not included in the first fifty countries of the world regarding the arrival of foreign tourists (Ashrafi and Eslamian, 2015). Zali et al. (2014) on their survey conclude that Isfahan's visitors preferred heritage constructions more than components of handicraft arts and people lifestyles. Despite various cultural, historical, religious and eco-tourism attractions, this province does not have a competent status in the world in terms of incomes obtained from tourism (Kabiri and Abadi, 2014; khozani et al., 2015).

The successful adoption of ICT in developing economy is an essential component of its ability to make a significant contribution and is necessary for its growth (Lee, 2014; Afolayan et al., 2015). The result of a study on Isfahan indicates that using ICT has a considerable positive effect on human resource productivity of Mobarekeh steel complex (Allameh et al., 2010).

Creative industries are driving economic growth globally and providing the impetus for businesses and organizations to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society dominated by technological breakthroughs (Núñez-Pomar et al., 2016; Fleischmann et al., 2017). Urban creative clusters are currently a major focus of attention, as their prominent position in both local political and academic circles makes evident (Heebels and Aalst, 2010). The largest numbers of industrial workshops in the country after Tehran are located in Isfahan and it ranks first in the country in terms of industrial cities in Iran. "Isfahan Science and Technology Corridor" was established in Isfahan considering urban planning and environmental factors (Sheikh-Zeinoddin et al., 2013). Modern technological infrastructure is essential for future city to be economically successful (Snieska and Zykiene, 2014). In fact, the role of IT is considered to be the key driver for development of creative industries in the future (Sung, 2015). Ten percent of R&D units in Iran are located in Isfahan. This means that this province is the second largest province in Iran in terms of R&D centers. Seventy percent of these units belong to private and 11.6% to NGOs (Yazdianpour et al., 2007).

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3 One of the main resources stressed in the creative industries paradigm is human capital  
4 (Towse, 2010). Cretella and Buenger (2016) conclude that cities have to develop the kind of  
5 environment positively evaluated by creative people. Creative industries rely on creative  
6 individuals who are often considered to have unique talent and creative processes that are  
7 mysterious if not inexplicable to outsiders (Dörny et al., 2016). In other words, creative workers  
8 have become catalysts of change and innovation, invention, and even new markets (Ren and Sun,  
9 2012).

11 As Chart 1 shows, most of the citizens work in services and industry areas respectively,  
12 while agriculture has the fewest employees (approximately 12%). This means that most activities  
13 in Isfahan are related to business and urban services.

14 Chart 2 illustrates the amount of export in Isfahan in 2016. According to this pie chart, oil  
15 products account for 31% of export in Isfahan, and this figure is very similar for iron & steel, at  
16 28%. Isfahan is famous for its valuable carpets and handicrafts; however, the proportion of  
17 export for carpet is only 15%. Ceramic, dairy products and decorative stones account for overall  
18 10% of total export. The other sectors (plastic, glass and cereals) are much smaller (less than  
19 3%).

21 Creative service industries offer services that increase a region's capacity to generate and  
22 combine new ideas, resulting in an increased production of innovations which raise productivity  
23 (Boix-Domenech and Soler-Marco, 2015). Creative firms locate their businesses primarily in  
24 lively inner-city environments (Dörny et al., 2016). Bazaars in Isfahan belong to the Urban  
25 Bazaar category which covered public passageway which is surrounded by shops and stores in  
26 two sides. It was, therefore, a place for shopping, walking, social dialog, and cultural interaction  
27 of people so that it could be deemed as the most important and influential public space for  
28 delivering creative services (Mehdipour and Rashidinia, 2013). However, there is not a well-  
29 established fashion industry in Iran. Many fashion designers, tailors, and seamstresses have no  
30 professional training or education and are mostly self-taught in terms of technical and creative  
31 aspects of the industry; and it is not possible to have a career as a fashion designer like in  
32 Western countries (Ghayournejadian, 2012). On the other hand, game industry has become one  
33 of the main lines of development in IT for Iran whose advancement will eventually lead to  
34 economic growth, creation of jobs and more employment opportunities. The national plan for  
35 computer games in Iran is to boost the market for the Iranian games industry, which was drafted  
36 by the country's High Council for cyberspace and endorsed by the President in 2015 (Iran  
37 Computer and Video Games Foundation, 2016). Nevertheless, videogame is an infant industry  
38 which needs more support to be exposed at international level. Moreover, the level of innovation  
39 in the software industry in Iran is lower than the global medium. Software companies in Iran are  
40 often formed in the category of small companies with a limited number of technical human  
41 resources and then the projects will change to a product and sell it to the public, so the product is  
42 produced without necessary standards (Khaksar, 2015).

## 48 **5. Presentation of creative industries**

49 The research analyses industries, workers, and sales in the creative sector in 2016 by  
50 using the Statistical Centre of Iran (SCI) database. This study classifies creative industries based  
51 on previous research (UNCTAD, 2013) as the following: art, design, film & video, architecture  
52 & cultural heritage, software & games, advertising, publishing, and R&D.

54 Looking at each field within creative industries in 2016, art industries represent the  
55 highest share of the whole number of creative industries (37.5%), and architecture & cultural  
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heritage, is second in terms of percentage with 30.5%. The next industries include R&D (22.8%), advertising (3.8%), and publishing (2%). Art and architecture industries share 68% and are higher than half of all the creative industries. These, therefore, are the main industries in the Isfahan (see Table 1).

In addition, art industries have the highest proportion of creative industries, whereas R&D industries have the highest proportion of workers at 33%, which is one third of all creative industries. Also, R&D industries show the highest sales (40.5%) in all creative industries, but art industries have 23.4 of sales share, which is approximately half of the proportion in the number of art industries (Chart 3). Architecture & cultural heritage is third ranked in the sales proportion even though it is ranked second in the number of creative industries. This means that R&D industries are the only high valued industries that make high sales against their number of industries in Isfahan.

Gross domestic product (GDP) is a measure of labor productivity in a country's economy. The economic theory of growth in real wages is based on increased productivity due to increase in skills, specialization, capital or improved technology (Hartley et al., 2013). Lee and Lim (2014) claims that the development of cultural industries is not only a driving force in export and the boosting of GDP; it is also a tool of the authoritarian state to strengthen its soft power overseas.

The estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Iran is \$412.2 billion in 2016. Isfahan has the third largest share of Iran's GDP (6.4%) after Tehran. The gross value added (GVA) of the creative industries was \$3 billion in 2016 and accounted for less than 1% of the Iran economy (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, 2016).

One important characteristic is that the higher two industries (art and architecture) show low productivity (sales share /industries share), which is lower than 1, whereas the lower three industries (design, music, film & video, and software & games) represent high productivity, which is higher than 1. Design and music, especially, represent the highest productivity (5), and we can know that efficient economic growth can be planned through these industries.

Art is a sector, where the number of industries is relatively large. The agencies of the sector commonly lack knowledge and resources for marketing activities. It is vital to develop their capabilities of handling themselves productively and doing good marketing work. Publishing, music and design are sectors, where entrance in the business is somewhat easy, however, the sales of these sectors are small because their markets are small. Foreign marketing should be expanded for developing these sectors. All in all, if the development of the creative industries focuses on marketing the city, the priority sectors to be chosen should consist of advertising, Film & video, and software & games. If the purpose of developing the creative industries is the sustainable development of creative industries agencies, contributions should be made towards developing the sectors of arts, architecture, and R&D.

## 6. SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis is an evaluation of various aspects which are relevant for the development of cultural and creative industries. These aspects are classified into four evaluation categories for the purposes of the SWOT analysis: Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat. The categories 'strength' and 'weakness' address internal factors of an object under review while 'opportunity' and 'threat' relate to external factors. The defined subject to be analyzed in our study is the sectors of creative industries in Isfahan. The findings of this evaluation step are directly integrated into the summarizing SWOT analysis in Table 2.



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3 Strengths and weaknesses in individual sector of creative industries in Isfahan come in  
4 various manifestations. It is often beneficial to continue to strengthen existing strengths and  
5 focus on relevant priorities, however, threats and opportunities also play a vital role.

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7 Cultural diversity and historical background is the great strength of Isfahan. Culture  
8 enriches the day-to-day quality of life of residents and plays a critical role in the look and feel of  
9 the city which can attracts tourists and provides them great opportunities for recreation.  
10 Architecture in Isfahan has also a rich tradition and can historically be characterized as dynamic  
11 and complex. The focus of young specialists in this city facilitates the innovative stream of  
12 thoughts and encourages the citizens to participate in creative projects. Handicraft steps out in  
13 the analysis as one of the most developed creative industries sub-branches with strong tradition,  
14 internationally recognized architecture, and with both demand and supply concentrated in  
15 Isfahan.

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17 It is obvious that the creative industries have not been sufficiently considered by public  
18 stakeholders, such as the municipality. A reasonable long-term planning or a suitable marketing  
19 strategy for developing creative industries has not yet submitted by the urban management.  
20 Moreover, many professionals are not acquainted with which funding programs exist for  
21 financing creative industries ideas and business start-ups and how such funds can be acquired.  
22 Isfahan market is also still dominated by foreign products. These things lead to difficulty for  
23 local agencies to compete with foreign products. In addition, price instability of domestic  
24 products that is influenced by the US Dollar exchange rate is also a major threat. Unfortunately,  
25 Inflation and its negative impact on presence of domestic tourists on one hand and the absence of  
26 Iran in many international markets because of sanction on the other hand, have been obstacles to  
27 achieve economic developments.  
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### 31 **7. Creative industries development strategies**

32 A Creative Industries strategy is best executed by a combination of public and private  
33 partners working together, because each partner brings qualities that the others lack. The results  
34 of the analysis show, that further efforts should be put in the promotion of the term creative  
35 industries and its content, promotion of the importance and its benefits.

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37 We also recognize that whatever plan we devise, it must first support and enhance the  
38 working lives of the creative individuals who are the heart of Isfahan's creative industries. City-  
39 marketing and place-branding strategies today often stress ideas and stereotypes of culture and  
40 creativity to promote attractive urban images. City branding aims to stimulate economic growth  
41 which can reinforce local identity and domestic products which results in well-being of its  
42 residents. Urban planning approach must consider the spirit and beauty of the city and create  
43 eye-catching spectacle for tourists and all citizens. Regard to rich historical, political, economic,  
44 social and cultural background of Isfahan and presence of specialists and experts in various  
45 fields, rebuild the old monuments and renew the public spaces will be possible in near future.  
46 Isfahan Municipality should try to support entrepreneurial ideas through cultural centers in  
47 different regions of the city. All these actors bring extra financial resources which, in turn, can be  
48 invested to improve creative industries of the city. Creative professionals and their active  
49 initiative enable the creation of organized networks promoting different subsectors of creative  
50 industries. This gives Isfahan, its products and services an authentic point of difference in  
51 increasingly busy marketplaces. There is a real need for the creative sector to improve its  
52 representation to the government so that the sector's development needs are more visible to  
53 policy makers. Gaps between producers and investors need to be bridged by better sharing of  
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3 information and training producers. A greater awareness of social media by the creative sector  
4 will allow artists and enterprises to work better through the challenges and difficulties.  
5 Collaboration should be developed at all levels: within organizations; within the creative sector;  
6 between the creative sector and other sectors.  
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8 To further build the creative industries in Isfahan, it would be necessary to more fully  
9 understand the competitive challenges faced by each of the sub-sectors, as well as to identify  
10 areas of significant economic opportunity. Taking the next steps requires more comprehensive  
11 economic strategies that would include:  
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- 13 • Increase awareness of the impact of creative businesses on education, community  
14 development and the wider economy by expanding educational programs
- 15 • Encourage public and private institutions to provide talent training in business skills
- 16 • Facilitate ongoing expert panels focused on training arts organizations to operate sustainably
- 17 • Establish a community-wide working group for decision-making and problem-solving about  
18 creative industries with community leaders, artists and scientists
- 19 • Create policies that support risk-taking, entrepreneurship and start-ups
- 20 • Mobilize of funding through the support of associations and creative workers
- 21 • Encourage young people to develop the entrepreneurial skills to build careers in the creative  
22 industries
- 23 • Develop partnerships between national and regional authorities in charge of different public  
24 policies such as economic development, employment, education and culture
- 25 • Leverage the work of local creative agencies to activate new product development projects
- 26 • Create a legal support system for artists
- 27 • Develop innovative financial instruments such as equity funds or guarantee funds to co-  
28 finance investments in the creative sectors
- 29 • Enhancing business and operational skills in cultural enterprises, including business planning,  
30 financial management and marketing
- 31 • Build new networks and ties between businesses, artists and public stakeholders
- 32 • Use technological and digital innovations to create and distribute creative content
- 33 • Bring together the technology innovation and design communities to enhance the commercial  
34 success of new products and services
- 35 • Undertake a marketing campaign to attract investors, businesses, and tourists by creating an  
36 interagency council composed of business leaders within creative cluster agencies to  
37 coordinate activity
- 38 • Strengthen cultural relations with other countries to facilitate cultural exchanges and forge  
39 partnerships with other cultural organizations
- 40 • Greater access to international markets to enable sales and distribution deals for film,  
41 television and digital media content
- 42 • Promote actively the 'Buy Local' policies for acquisition of creative content
- 43 • Support events and festivals that contribute to Isfahan's brand and increase tourists
- 44 • Promote and market creative domestic products and services
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## 8. Conclusion

According to results, insufficient development of the tourism industry, combined with the neglecting the importance of design and performing art in the reinforcement of creative industries sectors, are the main obstacles for developing the creative industries in this city. While Isfahan is rich in cultural diversity and creative talent, it has not benefited equally from the dynamism of the creative services, yet. According to the great potential of Isfahan both in the field of tourism and the art of handicrafts, the need of branding for handicrafts is felt (Sepahvand et al., 2016).

Creative industries include a broad set of economic sectors with cultural and design contents, and not all of them are subject to the same degree of state censorship in the Iran. While creative industries encompass a wide range of activities, television and digital media occupy a central position, enabling and facilitating development within the wider industry (Morgan, 2012), so radio and TV production companies should extend their horizons to both the broader Iran market and beyond. Furthermore, the increase in creative control and potential funding for filmmakers could elevate the Iranian film industry to be even more vibrant than it has ever been.

The number of creative industries in Isfahan has a positive effect on the whole sales, meaning that local governments should develop strategies for utilizing creative industries to lead economic growth. On the other hand, business owners of music and design are willing to choose that city for their business because the data shows that those industries can make high productivity in the city. Creative industries growth requires increasing investment in the varied forms of creativity such as the arts, culture, music, design and other related fields, because all are linked and flourish together (Malik and Dudrah, 2017). Economic regions that embrace creativity generate significantly higher revenue and provide greater stability into the future. Governments can make business investment strategies, and relocate excessive industries or limitations for future industries. The current national policy that obliges all local governments in Iran to promote creative industries in their localities would also appear ineffective. Creative industry is not only influenced by the economic dynamics of the property market but also by government intervention and personal value appreciation, respectively, held by the firms, the workers and the citizens (Liu, 2015). Therefore, the government's cultural policy in response to globalization leads to a sophisticate process of localization in the local art movement.

In general, the creative industries in Isfahan need to be encouraged by means of special policies and development strategies. Lack of connections with other urban creative communities creates a social barrier that endangers its status as a creative city. Promotion of traditional craft industries help to increase the attractiveness of a city, and indirectly supports service oriented industries including tourism. So Isfahan urban management should revive the tourism sector by presenting its local cultural products on international markets. However, Isfahan's investment in arts, culture and tourist attractions should not be in exchange for investments in other basic quality of life services. A key focus of the cultural planning should be on assessing the cultural needs of an area to identify ways to build on and link existing strengths and address potential problems (Grodach, 2013). Finally, creative industries strategies need to be considered in the wider context of arguments about public policy, development, and the institutional capacities of nation-states in the context of globalization.

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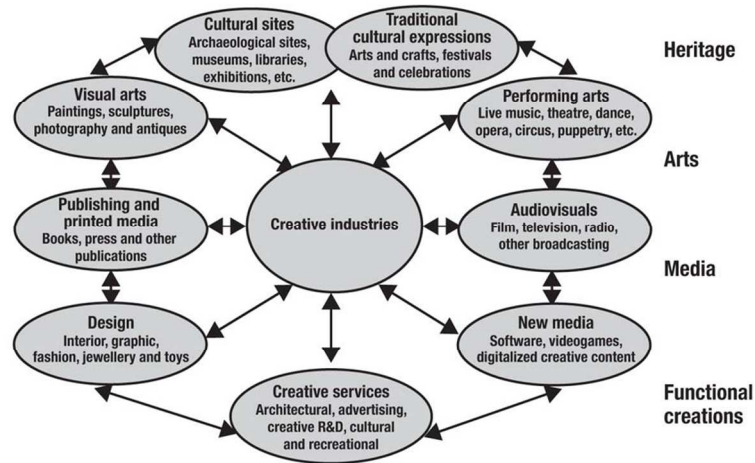


Figure 1. Classification of creative industries  
Source: UNCTAD

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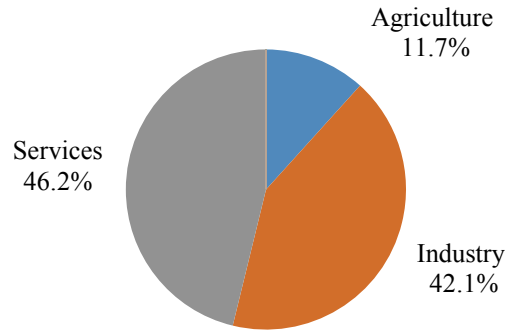
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Figure 2. The location of Isfahan in Iran

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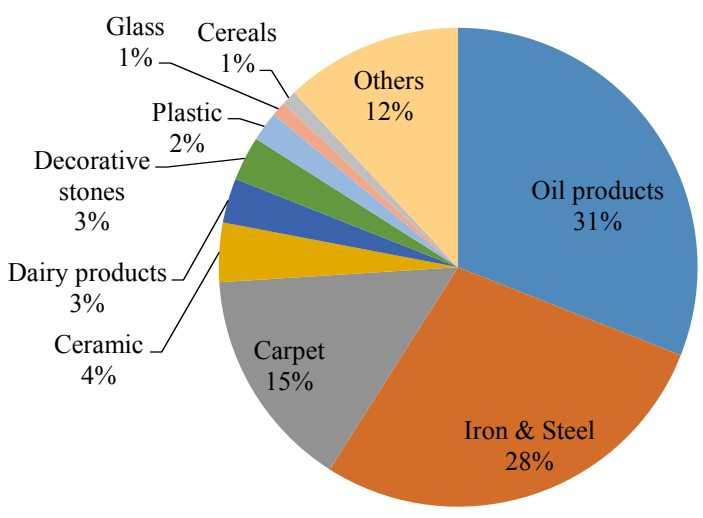


Source: Iran Statistics Center (2016)  
Chart 1. Employment in Isfahan by sector

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Source: Isfahan Municipal Report (2016)  
Chart 2. Isfahan's export

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Table 1. The number of industries, workers, sales in the creative sector (2016)

	Industries(N)	Workers(N)	Sales(\$)	Industries share	Workers share	Sales share	Productivity
Art	7,826	21,772	320,000	37.5%	30%	23.4%	0.6
Design	52	182	14,567	0.2%	0.2%	1%	5
Film & video	342	1,232	26,627	1.6%	1.7%	2%	1.2
Architecture & cultural heritage	6,368	20,851	196,817	30.5%	29%	14.4%	0.5
Soft & games	255	1,395	69,834	1.2%	2%	5%	4
Advertising	794	1,788	144,512	3.8%	2.4%	10.5%	2.7
Publishing	442	1,250	21,197	2%	1.7%	1.5%	0.7
Music	62	110	17,891	0.2%	0.1%	1%	5
R&D	4,772	23,841	553,842	22.8%	33%	40.5%	1.7

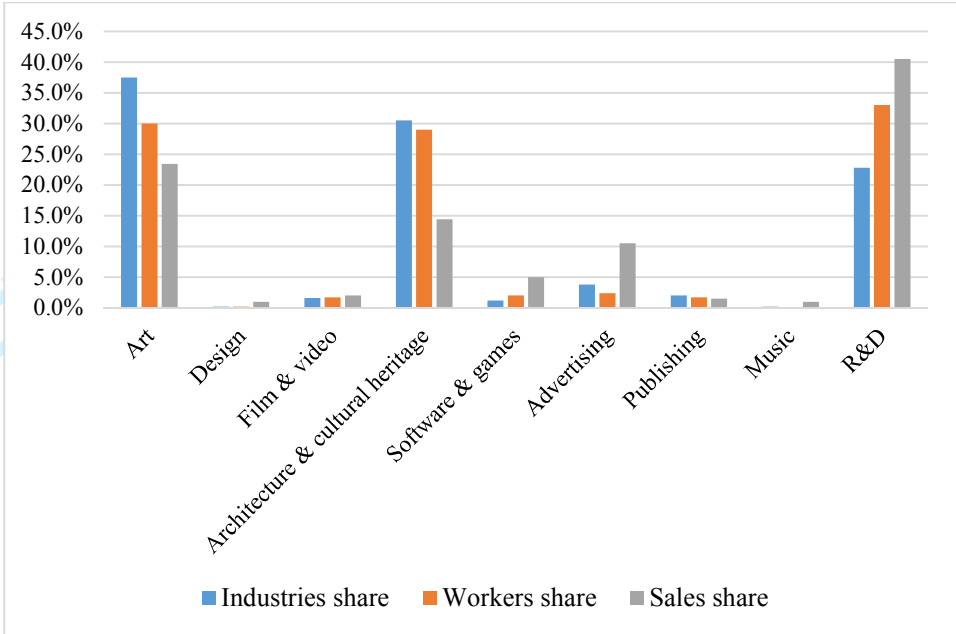


Chart 3. The share of industries, workers, and sales (2016)

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Table 2. Matrix of SWOT analysis (2018)

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good position of Isfahan for exporting oil products and handicrafts</li> <li>• Growing number of entrepreneurs and small knowledge-based industries</li> <li>• High number of artists &amp; researchers</li> <li>• Hub of science and technology, such as universities and research centers</li> <li>• Various cultural, historical, religious and eco-tourism attractions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractiveness of Isfahan for the countryside</li> <li>• Strong City branding (well-known as a creative city)</li> <li>• Good cultural and social infrastructures</li> <li>• Continued growth that includes new members of the creative class especially the youth</li> <li>• Increasing demand for creative products such as needlework, pottery, enamel, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of public performance &amp; festivals</li> <li>• Insufficient funding for creative business startups</li> <li>• There is no marketing strategy of the creative industries in place</li> <li>• Poor city-wide executive management and measurement system</li> <li>• Lack of specialized educational programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The widespread usage of foreign products</li> <li>• Rapidly changing technologies</li> <li>• Price instability of domestic products</li> <li>• Emerging socio-economic problems, tensions and intolerance such as inflation and sanction</li> <li>• Inflexibility of current administrative and economic policies</li> </ul>