



LOCAL DIGITAL JOURNALISM AND CREATORS: DRIVING JOBS AND GROWTH IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

The creator economy has emerged as a significant driver of employment generation, income creation, and digital value in India over the past decade, with accelerated growth in the post-Covid period. Enabled by digital platforms and social media networks, content creators and influencers have transitioned from peripheral participants in the economy to central actors within marketing, media, commerce, and communication ecosystems. This paper seeks to quantify and analyse the creator economy from a macroeconomic perspective, focusing on its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment generation, and structural transformation of the labour market. Despite its rapid expansion, the creator economy remains under-represented in formal economic measurement due to its decentralised, informal, and platform-driven nature. It integrates industry data, employment trends, monetisation models, and policy initiatives to assess the creator economy's evolving role within India's services-led growth framework.

KEYWORDS:

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PAPER ACCEPTED DATE:

14th October 2026

PAPER PUBLISHED DATE:

15th October 2026

PAPER DOI NO:

10.5281/zenodo.23403246

PAPER DOI LINK:

<https://zenodo.org/records/23403246>

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The creator economy has witnessed a substantial expansion in recent years, emerging as a dynamic component of India's digital and services economy. Fuelled by the widespread adoption of platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn, this ecosystem has redefined the nature of work, reshaped communication and marketing industries, and generated new forms of economic value across both developed and developing economies.

The post-pandemic period marked a critical inflection point for the creator economy. As formal employment opportunities contracted or stagnated, a growing segment of the workforce—particularly youth—shifted toward platform-enabled, independent digital livelihoods. Influencer-led content creation, once considered a supplementary activity, has evolved into a primary occupation for millions of individuals.

This paper aims to quantify the creator economy's economic contribution at a macroeconomic level, with a focus on GDP contribution, employment generation, and

labour market transformation in India. Despite its growing importance, the creator economy remains under-analysed in formal economic literature due to challenges related to informality, fragmented revenue streams, and data limitations.

GROWTH OF THE INFLUENCER MARKET INDUSTRY

India's influencer marketing industry has demonstrated robust growth, reflecting the increasing institutionalisation of creator-led communication. According to the *India Influencer Marketing Report 2025*, the industry is expected to grow by approximately 25 per cent by 2025, expanding from ₹3,600 crore (US\$ 421.30 million) in 2024. Both traditional advertising agencies and digital-first firms that are increasingly integrating influencer marketing into core brand strategies drive this growth.

A notable structural shift within the industry is the growing emphasis on content quality, relevance, and

authenticity over follower counts alone. Approximately 85 per cent of manufacturing brands prioritise content quality while selecting influencers, while 72 per cent prefer long-term partnerships rather than one-off campaigns. Macro-influencers continue to be favoured for brand safety and message control; however, micro- and niche influencers are gaining prominence in high-consideration categories such as automotive, financial services, and consumer durables, where trust and domain expertise are critical.

On the demand side, more than two-thirds of Indian consumers rely on influencers for product discovery and purchase decisions. This underscores the expanding role of creators not merely as marketing intermediaries, but as opinion leaders who shape consumption behaviour and brand narratives at scale.

EMPLOYMENT EXPANSION AND LABOUR MARKET SHIFTS

Employment data reflects the creator economy's growing role in absorbing workforce demand. In the post-Covid period, the estimated number of influencers in India increased sharply—from under one million in 2020–21 to approximately 4.6 million by 2023–24. Simultaneously, the broader gig workforce expanded from around 7.7 million to over 11 million during the same period.

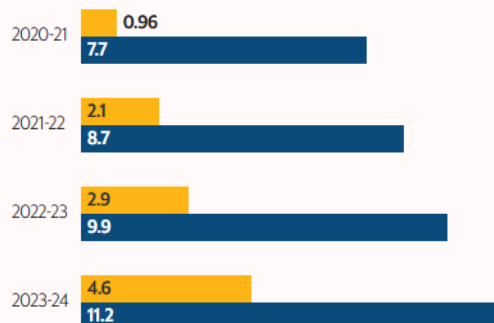
These trends indicate a structural shift toward platform-based and informal employment models. The rise of influencer jobs is closely linked to constraints in formal job creation, rapid digital penetration, and evolving career preferences—particularly among Gen Z. Younger workers increasingly favour flexible, self-directed careers that offer creative autonomy, diversified income streams, and scalability over traditional salaried employment.

The creator economy thus functions as both an employment buffer during periods of labour market stress and a long-term alternative employment model within India's digital economy.

Lack of formal jobs partly led to a surge in influencer and gig work in the post-covid period

Estimated number (in million) in India

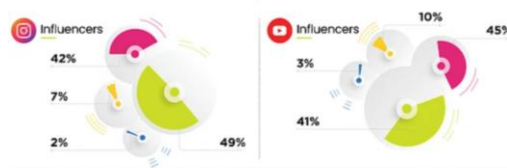
Influencers Gig workers



Influencers are the people who have substantial social media following and the ability to influence the decisions

Gen Z All the Way

83% of India's Gen Zs identify themselves as creators, and they dominate the influencer economy



MONETISATION MODELS IN THE CREATOR ECONOMY

A key feature of the creator economy is its diversified monetisation structure. Creators generate income through multiple channels, including brand partnerships, affiliate marketing, platform-based advertising revenues, and live commerce, paid subscriptions, intellectual property collaborations, and event-based engagements.

This multi-revenue model enables creators to operate as micro-entrepreneurs rather than dependent contractors. It also enhances their income resilience by reducing reliance on a single revenue source. At a macroeconomic level, these monetisation mechanisms contribute to services-sector growth, increase household incomes, and stimulate consumption, thereby strengthening the creator economy's indirect contribution to GDP. The country is now home to an estimated 2 to 2.5 million active digital creators -defined as those with over 1,000 followers - making it one of the fastestgrowing creator markets globally. Yet only 8-10% of these creators are currently able to monetise their content effectively. This highlights the significant untapped potential in the space.

How are Indian influencers doing:

It is surprising that only 8–10% of creators in India are able to monetize their content today, compared to 40% or more in mature markets. That's a huge gap and an even bigger opportunity as the ecosystem matures.

Metric	Value
Internet users	~950 million
Total creators	100+ million
Active creators > 1k followers	2–2.5 million
Monetised creators from Active	8–10%

Source: TRAI, BCG, EY

Moolah Machine

More the merrier is the bottom line in creator economy; more followers mean more money



Source: Koflence

* Earnings per content

Koflence an influencer-marketing platform highlights that the influencer-marketing rates vary widely based on

platform and follower count. On Instagram, influencers with 1,000–10,000 followers typically earn Rs 500–5,000 per post, while those with 10,000–1 lakh followers can charge between Rs 3,000 and Rs 1 lakh. For creators with 1–10 lakh followers, rates range from Rs 50,000 to Rs 5 lakh and those with over 10 lakh followers may earn upwards of Rs 2 lakh per post.

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL PUSH

The Government of India has increasingly acknowledged the creator economy as a strategic contributor to digital entrepreneurship, employment generation, and cultural dissemination. National leadership has publicly positioned content creators and social media influencers as participants in India's broader economic ambitions, including the goal of achieving a \$5 trillion economy.

Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw, has emphasised the role of the creator economy in fostering innovation, strengthening digital skills, and promoting indigenous platforms. Government initiatives focused on digital infrastructure, innovation, and emerging technologies have created an enabling ecosystem for creators to scale operations and formalise participation in the economy.

Affordable and widespread internet access is powering India's creator economy, with lakhs of people—especially young creators—producing content on platforms like YouTube. Recently, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw announced a \$1 billion fund to support this sector during a high-level session at the World Audio-Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) 2025. The fund will operate as a public-private partnership (PPP), with more details forthcoming.

Beyond economic value, the creator economy is also viewed as a vehicle for displaying India's culture, heritage, and traditional knowledge to global audiences, contributing to both economic and soft power outcomes.

JOB CREATION POTENTIAL AND SECTORAL SPREAD

The creator economy holds substantial potential for youth employment across diverse sectors such as fashion, beauty, travel, food, fitness, finance, education, and regional-language media. The rise of vernacular and hyperlocal creators has expanded participation beyond metropolitan centres, enabling income generation in Tier II and Tier III cities.

In addition to direct creator roles, the ecosystem supports ancillary employment in content production, editing, analytics, influencer management, legal services, and digital marketing. This multiplier effect positions the creator economy as an emerging pillar of India's digital services sector with broad-based employment implications.

MACROECONOMIC LINKAGES OF THE CREATOR ECONOMY

The expansion of the creator economy has wide-ranging

macroeconomic implications that extend beyond employment. At the GDP level, the creator economy contributes primarily through the services sector, particularly advertising, media, marketing, entertainment, and digital commerce. Revenues generated through creator monetisation add to gross value added (GVA) both directly, via creator earnings, and indirectly, via platform and agency revenues.

Creator incomes stimulate household consumption, particularly discretionary spending among younger demographics, generating a multiplier effect across consumer goods, technology, travel, and lifestyle services. Influencers also play an indirect role in accelerating consumption by shaping purchasing decisions and reducing information asymmetry between brands and consumers.

From a productivity standpoint, influencer-led communication lowers customer acquisition and information costs for firms, improving marketing efficiency and return on investment. Aggregated across industries, these efficiency gains contribute to overall economic productivity and competitiveness.

The creator economy also enhances labour market flexibility by absorbing underemployed labour and enabling participation across geographies, genders, and income groups. The rise of vernacular content further strengthens regional economic integration and supports small and medium enterprises by improving market access.

As monetisation structures mature and policy recognition increases, the creator economy holds potential for greater formalisation, improved tax compliance and more accurate inclusion in national income accounting.

India's creator economy has crossed the tipping point — 2–2.5 million creators now shape more than 30% of purchase decisions and influence 350–400 billion dollars of annual spending.

HOW INDIAN CREATORS ARE CONTRIBUTING TO INDIA'S GDP

Indian creators are emerging as a **significant economic force**, influencing consumer behaviour, driving brand spending, and generating direct and indirect employment—together contributing meaningfully to India's GDP.

According to a **Boston Consulting Group (BCG) report**, India has **2–2.5 million active creators** who influence **over 30% of Indian consumers**, shaping an estimated **\$350–400 billion in consumer spending**. While this spending is not direct GDP, it reflects the scale of **creator-led demand creation** across sectors such as fashion, entertainment, beauty, fintech, and e-commerce—feeding into overall economic activity.

This impact is enabled by strong **digital infrastructure growth**. Weekly digital content consumption increased from **6.6 hours in FY2020 to 10.9 hours in FY2024**, while India's internet user base expanded from **~740**

million to ~950 million over the same period. This has dramatically widened the reach and monetisation potential of creators.

The creator economy is also **demographically diversifying**—moving beyond Gen Z and metro audiences to include older age groups and Tier 2–3 cities, making creator-led influence more representative of India's mass market. **Short-form video** dominates consumption, with genres such as comedy, films, daily soaps, and fashion driving high engagement.

From a revenue standpoint, the ecosystem is seeing **strong brand confidence**. Around **70% of brands plan to increase creator-marketing budgets by 1.5–3x over the next 2–3 years**, signalling a structural shift in advertising and communication spend from traditional media to creator-led platforms.

In terms of **direct GDP contribution**, platforms themselves are reporting measurable impact. For instance, **YouTube's creative ecosystem alone contributed over ₹16,000 crore to India's GDP in 2024**, supporting thousands of creators and allied jobs—editors, production crews, managers, marketers, and tech professionals.

Overall, the **creator (or orange) economy**—spanning creators, platforms, brands, and intermediaries—has evolved into a **growth engine** that:

- Drives consumer spending
- Creates scalable digital livelihoods
- Fuels innovation in marketing and commerce
- Expands formal and informal employment

While challenges remain around monetisation stability, platform dependency, IP protection, and trust, the creator ecosystem is increasingly becoming a **meaningful contributor to India's economic growth and GDP narrative**, not just a cultural phenomenon.

Enabled by rapid digitalisation, widespread internet access, and platform-based monetisation mechanisms, content creators and influencers now play a measurable role in employment generation, income creation, and demand stimulation across multiple sectors of the economy.

From a macroeconomic perspective, the creator economy contributes to GDP primarily through the expansion of services such as advertising, media, marketing, entertainment, and digital commerce. While the decentralised and informal nature of creator activity complicates direct national income accounting, available evidence indicates a substantial indirect contribution. With an estimated 2–2.5 million active creators influencing over 30 per cent of consumer purchase decisions and shaping USD 350–400 billion in annual consumer spending, the creator economy has become a powerful demand-side driver within the Indian economy. Platform-level estimates—such as YouTube's reported ₹16,000 crore contribution to India's GDP in 2024—further underscore its growing economic relevance.

The creator economy has also emerged as an important employment buffer in the post-Covid labour market. It has absorbed a rapidly expanding workforce, particularly among youth, by offering flexible, scalable, and location-agnostic livelihoods. Beyond direct creator employment, the ecosystem has generated significant ancillary jobs in content production, digital marketing, analytics, influencer management, and legal and technical services, creating a multiplier effect across the digital services value chain. The expansion of vernacular and hyperlocal content has further enabled income generation beyond metropolitan centres, supporting more inclusive regional economic participation.

At the structural level, the creator economy is reshaping traditional employment norms by blurring the boundaries between formal and informal work, entrepreneurship and wage labour. Creators increasingly function as micro-entrepreneurs, operating diversified revenue models that contribute to household income growth and consumption-led GDP expansion. Simultaneously, influencer-led communication has improved market efficiency by lowering information asymmetries and customer acquisition costs for firms, enhancing productivity at an economy-wide level.

Despite its rapid growth, the creator economy remains under-represented in formal economic measurement and policy frameworks. Monetisation remains uneven, with only a small proportion of creators earning sustainable incomes, and challenges persist around platform dependence, algorithmic volatility, intellectual property protection, and trust deficits. Addressing these constraints through improved data collection, clearer regulatory recognition, skill development initiatives, and formalisation pathways will be critical to unlocking the sector's full economic potential.

In conclusion, India's creator economy has crossed a critical tipping point. It is no longer merely a cultural or marketing phenomenon, but an emerging economic engine with tangible implications for GDP growth, employment generation, and labour market transformation. As monetisation structures mature and institutional support deepens, the creator economy is poised to become an increasingly integral pillar of India's digital economy and a meaningful contributor to its long-term macroeconomic trajectory.

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