

Cultural Entrepreneurship in South Korea: Experiences and Lessons for Vietnam

Thi Thu Ha Nguyen¹, Ha My Nguyen¹

¹Institute of Business Administration, Thuongmai University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Abstract— This study investigates the experiences of the South Korea government in having promoted the entrepreneurship development in cultural industries and draw out lessons for Vietnam. The key drivers of Korean cultural entrepreneurship include strategic public policies and copywrite policy, institutional frameworks, the government's financial support, market development and international growth, and development of human capital and entrepreneurial capability. Based on the Korean experiences, some lessons are identified for Vietnam's policy implications in order to foster the sustainable development of entrepreneurship in cultural industries in the era of deep international integration.

Keywords— Entrepreneurship, cultural industries, South Korea, Vietnam.

I. INTRODUCTION

The South Korean government has integrated cultural industries into national development strategies and officially recognized them as important tools promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, and export-led growth [1]. This policy orientation was set with “the Basic Law for Cultural Industries Promotion” in 1999. Since then, the government has increased public funding, export aid, and institutional support through concerted efforts spearheaded by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST) and the Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA) to lessen the high degree of uncertainty associated with cultural production [2], [3]. To lower the early-stage risk for cultural industry-related entrepreneurs, recent budgetary plans, such as higher expenditures to the K-Content Fund in the 2026 cultural budget, emphasize investment and financing-based support for movies, games, music, and digital content [4].

These policies are especially important in the creative sectors, which are marked by project-based labor, symbolic value, and erratic worldwide demand [5]. From a cultural economics and developmental-state standpoint, the worldwide success of the Korean Wave, widely known as Hallyu - the transnational circulation and consumption of Korean cultural products and practices, including domains such as K-pop, K-cinema, K-dramas, fashion, beauty, digital media, and gaming, thus represents a process of state-enabled entrepreneurship that tackles structural market failures and expands Korea's tradition of state-market coordination into knowledge-based and symbolic sectors, a role that is still prominent in modern frameworks for innovation and cultural policy [6], [7]. Hence, Korean cultural industries serve as potent catalysts for changes in consumer behavior worldwide, industry diversification, and economic progress.

In Vietnam, a fundamental change toward viewing culture as a strategic resource for sustainable development is also reflected in Vietnam's policies on the growth of cultural industries, which have been gradually developed and solidified over time. In 2014, the Party Central Committee issued Resolution No. 33-NQ/TW on building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the country's sustainable development requirements [8]. Subsequently, the Vietnamese Prime Minister published several legal documents,

i.e., Decision No. 1755/QĐ-TTg (2016), Directive No. 30/CT-TTg (2024), and Decision No. 2486/QĐ-TTg (2025), highlighting the faster development of cultural industries in closer harmony with market procedures, corporate engagement, and national cultural branding in the context of global integration [9], [10], [11]. Notably, November 24th has been officially declared "Vietnam Culture Day" in accordance with Resolution No. 80-NQ/TW of the Politburo, issued on January 7th, 2026, and workers nationwide are entitled to an extra fully paid public holiday to honor cultural values and enhance the spiritual well-being. This serves as a normative and symbolic basis for the long-term growth of cultural industries and symbolically reinforces the value of culture in social life [12].

In terms of entrepreneurship, the Vietnamese Government has increasingly stimulated the entrepreneurial spirit, promoted a culture of innovation and creativity, and built a generation of future economic leaders. Recently, there has been an emergence in cultural industry-related startups. However, startups in cultural industries still encounter structural constraints, comprising an incomplete regulatory framework and resource allocation, a lack of coordination among important ecosystem actors, i.e., universities, research institutes, incubators, and investment and venture capital funds [13]. Therefore, experience of developing culturally related startups from successful countries, e.g., South Korea, will offer Vietnam valuable experiences. This article, therefore, addresses the following two main research questions: *How has South Korea's public policy promoted cultural entrepreneurship? What policy lessons from South Korea are relevant for Vietnam's cultural industries?*

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study systematically employs secondary data published in reports, journals, and legal documents, etc. to explore how South Korea's public policy has accelerated the development of entrepreneurship in cultural industries as well as identify relevant policy implications for Vietnam.

III. OVERVIEW OF KOREAN CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

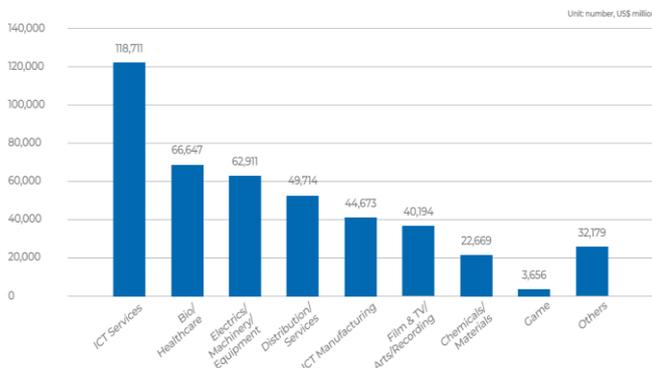
According to World Bank [14], content industries are defined as “industries associated with the production,

circulation, and use of “content”: specifically, the 11 industries of publishing, broadcasting, advertising, music, film, knowledge and information, cartoons, animation, characters, games, and content solutions”. Meanwhile, the concept of cultural industries has a broader scope including “all industries involved in the production, circulation, and use of cultural goods and services encompassing the activities associated with festivals, museums/ exhibitions, and heritage”. In Korea, both terms are applied primarily within administrative and legal contexts for policymaking purposes, and official statistical data are compiled only for the content industries. It should be noted that “creative industries” does not have a formal or legally recognized definition in Korea, despite its frequent use in academic discourse and the media [15].

The development of Korean cultural industries was marked by the Korean Wave in the 1990s. It originated as a result of the regional distribution of Korean films and television episodes across East and Southeast Asia, which was enabled by the expansion of transnational cultural interchange and media liberalization. The Korean Wave's spread outside Asia to Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, and other places was greatly accelerated starting in the early 2000s by the growth of K-pop, which was aided by digital technologies and international web platforms. Over time, the Korean Wave has evolved and comprises a variety of creative and cultural sectors, such as digital content, fashion, cosmetics, cuisine, and tourism. The Korean Wave has served as both a commercial cultural enterprise and a tactical tool of national soft power thanks to a combination of cultural hybridity (integrating Western popular forms with Korean cultural values) and continuous state support.

IV. THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT’S SUPPORT FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

A. The current situation of business startup trends in South Korea



Source: KVIC (2024)

Figure 1: Industrial distribution of deal activity of KFoF-backed funds by industry

According to UNDP [16], the wholesale and retail trade sector constituted the largest proportion of startups across all age cohorts, accounting for 36.3 percent of the total. By contrast, startups in the healthcare and social welfare services sector were marginal, representing only 0.4 percent overall. Individuals under 30 and those aged 30–39 were predominantly

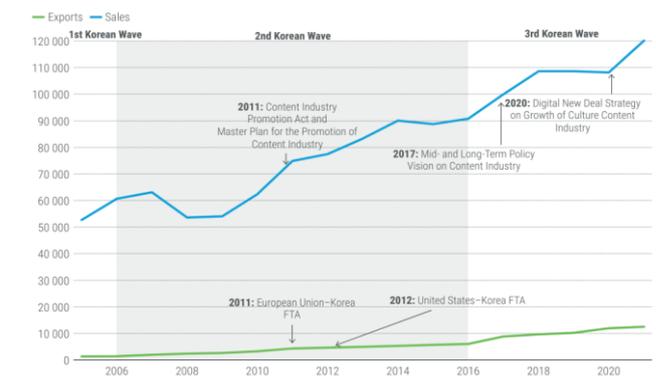
active in wholesale and retail trade, comprising 51.0 percent and 44.1 percent of startups in these age groups, respectively. Among founders aged 50–59, real estate recorded the highest share at 14.9 percent, while older cohorts showed a greater concentration in the electricity and gas supply sectors.

The Korea Fund of Funds (KFoF) arranges and manages its investment portfolios by sector in accordance with the demands of government organizations and restricted partners. These portfolios comprise a variety of funds for industries, i.e., film industry, tourism, etc. and for supporting young entrepreneurs. According to UNDP [16], in 2024, the ICT services sectors obtained the highest percentage of investment, followed by biotechnology, healthcare, electronics, manufacturing, and equipment respectively (Figure 1).

B. Experiences of promoting cultural entrepreneurship in South Korea

- Public policy and institutional framework development

Unit: US\$ million



Source: Cited in UN, 2024

Figure 2: Timeline of Korean Waves, domestic sales, and exports

The Korean government has played a crucial role in planning long-term strategies considering cultural industries as a vital driver of entrepreneurship and economic growth. Since the early 2000s, cultural content industries have been integrated into national development strategies such as the *Creative Economy* and subsequent innovation-led growth frameworks. These strategies have contributed to reducing policy uncertainty and fostering startups and private investment in cultural industries [14], [17]. Especially, the development of content industries has been promoted by policy interventions, institutional and legal arrangements, and intellectual property policies. These government measures have played a substantial role in promoting the growth of Korea’s content industries (Figure 2).

To create a solid and efficient foundation for the growth of Korean cultural industries, the institutional framework that regulates these industries is tightly linked with the nation’s legislation and governance institutions. Particularly, MCST serves as a major coordinating authority and a public agency that are in charge of important legislation and regulations pertaining to cultural industries. Because cultural industries encompass a wide range of creative fields and interact with related industries, i.e., manufacturing and information and

communication technologies, institutional framework is inevitably in compliance with the characteristics of several ministries.

Moreover, agencies, e.g., KOCCA serves as ecosystem builders, providing integrated support services comprising incubation, worldwide networking, business consulting, and support for intellectual property, etc. Such intermediaries decrease transaction costs, boost collaboration among ecosystem actors, and narrow gaps between entrepreneurial practice and policy objectives [14], [18].

- Intellectual property protection

The Korean government considers intellectual property (IP) protection as a cornerstone of the creative economy, enabling cultural entrepreneurs and creators to produce creative work and sustain innovation. Hence, Korea has adopted strong, internationally aligned IP rights, e.g., IP commitments with advanced economies through free trade agreements and the World Intellectual Property Organization treaties. In addition, Korea undertook extensive reforms of IP legislation over several years with an array of amendments of IP-related laws comprising the Patent Act, Trademark Act, the Copyright Act, and the Unfair Competition Prevention and Trade Secret Protection Act, etc. Designed as a statutory framework for protection, transaction, and monetization of creative products and services, the copyright policy aimed to establish an institutional framework that would incentivize creators and effectively protect copyrighted works. In addition, Korea has strengthened copyright management and enforcement mechanisms, i.e., statutory damages, standardized, specialized dispute resolution systems. These actions have helped Korea establish one of the highest levels of copyright protection in the world, promoting the long-term expansion of K-content and cultural entrepreneurship [17].

- Financial support

Realizing the high risk of entrepreneurship in cultural industries, the Korean Government has developed tailored financial tools to assist cultural industries and startups. In 2006, the Ministry of MCST launched a “fund of funds” called “Cultural Content Production Fund”, aiming at fostering investment in the content-based industry. The “fund of funds” invests in other sector-specific funds, i.e., the ‘Culture Account’ and the ‘Films Account’, which in turn support a variety of strands of the content-based industry, comprising games, animation, music, films, performing arts, characters, and dramas. The fund has supplied US\$ 2 billion of support between 2006 and 2021. The fund was notably sped up to its highest-ever level in 2023, reaching US\$ 632 million. The fund has scaled up investment in potential content creators and businesses and provided financing for producing quality works. The fund's primary goal is to support startups and small and medium-sized businesses, which are frequently unable to obtain private investment. More specifically, the “Content Intellectual Property Rights Fund” has been expanded to US\$ 120 million in an effort to nurture content companies with a proven track record of creating intellectual property rights (IPR), like Disney in the Republic of Korea [17].

Moreover, the Korean government has raised funding from venture capital businesses in order to accelerate

entrepreneurship in cultural industries, which creates a comprehensive institutional environment. According to Lee [19], this strategy emphasizes that the government has proactively regulated and supported the venture capital sector.

- Market development and internationalization

The Korean government's proactive involvement in market development and internationalization for businesses in cultural industries has been an essential element of the national strategy. The government has made it accessible to cultural entrepreneurs to enter foreign markets at an early stage of growth through export promotion laws, international cultural centers, global content markets, and assistance for international showcases and festivals, etc. An example to illustrate the government's support for entrepreneurship in cultural industries for market development and international growth is the recent K-Content Expo initiatives promoted by MCST and KOCCA. Instead being restricted to well-known entertainment companies, these initiatives are specifically targeted at startups and small and medium-sized businesses in the cultural and creative industries. These early-stage companies in fields like webtoons, animation, digital games, music production, and character licensing can interact directly with foreign buyers and partners through organized business-matching sessions, pitching events, and export consultations, accelerating their entry into global markets [17], [20].

According to MCST (2025), the Korean government has established centers that provide services for content businesses, i.e., guidance for market search, contracts, and IP protection. As a result, entrepreneurs in cultural industries have chances to deeply integrate into globalization. Additionally, it lowers the information and transaction hurdles that frequently keep startup companies from growing internationally. It can be said that these initiatives demonstrate that proactive government market formation can be a crucial support system for export-oriented cultural startups in the context of high levels of uncertainty [6], [14].

- Development of human capital and entrepreneurial capability

The Korean government reoriented its economic strategy toward enhancing human creativity, knowledge, technological competence, and entrepreneurial capacity as key drivers of long-term growth and national recovery in the aftermath of the 1997 financial crisis and the dearth of abundant natural resources. Therefore, a key component of Korea's policy to encourage entrepreneurship in cultural industries has been the development of human capital. Students, artists, and early-stage entrepreneurs are the target audience for government-funded programs that prioritize education and training in creative skills, digital technology, intellectual property management, marketing, and business development. These programs assist creative workers to convert artistic production into long-term economic endeavors by integrating cultural education with entrepreneurship training [6], [21].

V. LESSONS FOR VIETNAM

Although the Vietnamese government has considered cultural industry development as a decisive factor for developing the economy and promoting the national image,

there are still some “bottlenecks” that hinder startups’ access to resources. Therefore, valuable lessons from Korea will be applicable to Vietnam.

First and foremost, the Vietnamese government should improve public policy and the legal frameworks that create a convenient roadmap for startups to integrate into national innovation systems and global supply chains. Especially because legal systems of IP in Vietnam are fragmented and lack synchronization, the government should reckon IP protection as one of the pivotal institutional pillars of cultural industry development. A specialized IP court system and legal support fund for intellectual property for small and medium-sized enterprises, especially startups, should be established. Besides, the government should apply punitive compensation for serious IP violations.

Secondly, along with the current financial supports, e.g., interest rate subsidies, initial capital financing, or commitment of purchasing products, the Vietnamese government should raise more funding from capital ventures to provide diversified financial aids for startups to optimize their creative capacity.

Thirdly, Vietnam should foster cultural exchanges in the process of global integration through cultural programs such as cultural diplomacy channels, film festivals, fashion shows, art performance, and exhibitions, etc. Furthermore, continuously promoting, organizing international cultural weeks and festivals in Vietnam will contribute to develop the national dynamic cultural industries. At the same time, Vietnamese startups should incorporate with the government to upgrade digital technologies, i.e., machine learning, blockchain, and AI and integrate technologies and cultural values into products for sustainable development in a rapid changing environment.

Furthermore, weak connection among Vietnamese entrepreneurial agents, e.g., universities, research institutes, incubators, and investors hinder the efficient operation of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Hence, strengthening intermediary institutions and coordinating mechanisms is a crucial lesson to be learned from Korea.

Finally, human resources are a significant obstacle to the growth of cultural industries in Vietnam. Therefore, a thorough training reform is required where entrepreneurship actors, e.g., the government, educational institutions, incubators, and investors, etc. incorporate to upgrading infrastructure, engage cultural and arts training programs into entrepreneurship education.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declares that has no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Kim, Y. (Ed.). (2013). *The Korean wave: Korean media go global*. Routledge.
- [2]. Lee, J. (2024). Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism promotes “K-Culture Project” in 2024. UN Journal. Retrieved from <https://www.unjournal.kr/news/article.html?no=22876> on December 20th, 2025.
- [3]. The Korea Times (2024). Culture ministry aims to make Korea global cultural power. Retrieved from <https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/entertainment/k-pop/20240206/culture-ministry-aims-to-make-korea-global-cultural-power> on December 20th, 2025.
- [4]. Lee J. (2025). 2026 ministry strategy eyes Korea's rise as cultural superpower. Retrieved from <https://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Culture/view?articleId=284220> on December 25th, 2025.
- [5]. Kamon, B. (2022). The Hallyu policies of the Korean government. *Journal of Language and Culture*, 41(2), 1–24. Retrieved from <https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/JLC/article/view/265736> on November 10th, 2025.
- [6]. OECD (2023). *OECD reviews of innovation policy: Korea 2023*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/bdcf9685-en>.
- [7]. UNCTAD (2024). *Creative economy outlook 2024: Cultural industries and development*. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditetsce2024d2_en.pdf
- [8]. Party Central Committee (2014). Resolution No. 33-NQ/TW dated June 9, 2014, on building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the country's sustainable development requirements.
- [9]. Vietnamese Prime Minister (2016). Decision No.1755/QĐ-Ttđ on September 8, 2016 approving the national strategy for the development of cultural industries in Viet Nam to 2020, vision to 2030.
- [10]. Vietnamese Prime Minister (2024). Directive No. 30/CT-TTg dated 29 August 2024, on promoting the development of Vietnam's cultural industries.
- [11]. Vietnamese Prime Minister (2025). Decision No. 2486/QĐ-TTg dated November 14, 2025, on the approval of the strategy for the development of Vietnam's cultural industries until 2030, with a vision to 2045.
- [12]. Vietnams Politburo (2026). Resolution No. 80-NQ/TW dated January 7, 2026 on developing Vietnamse culture.
- [13]. Tran, T.N.M. (2025). Promoting creative and innovative entrepreneurship in the cultural sector in Vietnam. Communist Review. Retrieved on https://www.tapchicongsan.org.vn/web/guest/van_hoa_xa_hoi/-/2018/1112002/thuc-day-khoi-nghiep-doi-moi-sang-tao-trong-linh-vuc-van-hoa-o-viet-nam-hien-nay.aspx on December 20th, 2025.
- [14]. World Bank (2022). *Learning from the Korea Experience: Creative Cities and Innovation*. Retrieved from <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099134003022311270> on November 20th, 2025.
- [15]. Park & Jeong (2022). “Making Creative Cities in Korea: The Role of the National Government” in Learning from the Republic of Korea's Experience, the World Bank (2022).
- [16]. UNDP (2025). *State of the Ecosystem for Youth Social Entrepreneurship in the Republic of Korea*. Retrieved from <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2026-01/undp-seoul-state-of-the-ecosystem-for-youth-social-entrepreneurship-rok-2025.pdf> on January 20th, 2026.
- [17]. United Nations (2024b). *K-content goes global: how government support and copyright policy fueled the republic of Korea's creative economy*. Retrieved from https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditetsce2023d3_en.pdf on January 5, 2026.
- [18]. Affandi, R. A., & Putri, N. W. (2023). KOCCA strategy for expanding South Korean cultural content to global audiences amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In *E3S Web of Conferences* (Vol. 426, p. 02050). EDP Sciences.
- [19]. Lee, H. K. (2022). Supporting the cultural industries using venture capital: a policy experiment from South Korea. *Cultural trends*, 31(1), 47-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2021.1926931>
- [20]. Kim, H. (2025). Hallyu, the Korean Wave: South Korea's Transition to Cultural Powerhouse. *The Journal of Law, Social Justice and Global Development*, (28), 16-25.
- [21]. United Nations (2024a). *Creative Economy Outlook 2024*. Retrieved from <https://unctad.org/publication/creative-economy-outlook-2024> on December 18th, 2025.