

“THE RISE OF CREATOR ECONOMY IN BHARAT: A MASS COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE”

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ABSTRACT

Bharat has witnessed a profound transformation in the field of communication due to the rapid expansion of digital media platforms and internet accessibility in recent years. The emergence of the “creator economy” has enabled ordinary individuals to become communicators, educators, entertainers, entrepreneurs, and opinion leaders through digital platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. Unlike traditional communication systems controlled by institutional media houses, the creator economy has democratised communication and enabled participatory digital culture across urban and rural regions of the country. This paper examines the rise of the creator economy in Bharat from a mass communication perspective while linking it with broader dimensions such as Aatmanirbhar Bharat, women empowerment, rural economic participation, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship. The study highlights how creators from villages, small towns, homemaking backgrounds, and geographically distant regions are generating livelihoods and social influence through communication-based digital participation. The research adopts a descriptive approach based on secondary sources, policy observations, and communication theories. The paper concludes that the creator economy is not merely a technological or entertainment phenomenon but an emerging socio-economic communication movement contributing toward self-reliance, cultural representation, and participatory digital development in Bharat.

KEYWORDS: Creator Economy, Mass Communication, Digital Media, Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Women Empowerment, Rural Economy, Digital Literacy.

INTRODUCTION

Bharat has always been a civilisation rooted in dialogue, storytelling, oral traditions, knowledge-sharing, and collective communication. Long before the emergence of modern digital platforms and mass communication technologies, Bharat possessed a rich tradition of interpersonal and societal communication deeply embedded within its civilisational consciousness. In Bharatiya tradition, Devarshi Narad ji is often regarded as one of the earliest communicators and messengers who travelled across different lokas, communities, rulers, sages, and societies carrying information, dialogue, knowledge, warnings, wisdom, and narratives (Kuthiala, 2017). From ancient kathavachaks and folk performers to community gatherings and traditional forms of public discourse, communication has historically played an important role in shaping social and cultural consciousness. In the contemporary digital age, this tradition of communication has assumed a new technological form through the emergence of the creator economy.

The rise of affordable internet services, smartphone accessibility, and social media platforms has transformed the communication landscape of Bharat. Earlier, communication was largely centralised within newspapers, television channels, cinema industries, and institutional media organisations. The flow of information generally moved in one direction i.e. from media

institutions to audiences. However, digital platforms have fundamentally altered this structure by enabling ordinary individuals to create, distribute, and monetise content independently.

This transformation has given rise to what is now widely referred to as the “Creator Economy”. The creator economy refers to the digital ecosystem in which individuals create communication-based content and generate income through advertisements, sponsorships, subscriptions, affiliate marketing, audience support, and digital collaborations (Peres, Schreier, Schweidel, & Sorescu, 2024). In Bharat today, creators are actively producing content related to education, spirituality, agriculture, health awareness, finance, regional culture, folk traditions, travel, gaming, devotional discourse, lifestyle communication, and entertainment.

The significance of this transformation lies in the fact that communication itself has increasingly become a medium of livelihood and entrepreneurship. A young individual from a village can now educate millions through educational videos. A homemaker can transform traditional culinary knowledge into economic opportunity through cooking channels. A creator living in mountainous or geographically distant regions can showcase local culture and tourism before global audiences. Thus, the creator economy is not confined merely to entertainment or influencer culture; it represents a larger socio-economic and communication transformation within contemporary Bharat. The creator economy also strongly resonates with the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat by enabling self-employment, decentralised digital participation, and communication-driven entrepreneurship. It has reduced barriers related to geography, institutional access, and economic background, thereby democratising opportunities within the communication ecosystem. From a mass communication perspective, the creator economy reflects a transition from passive audience culture toward participatory communication culture where audiences themselves become communicators, influencers, educators, and contributors within the digital public sphere.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the emergence and growth of the creator economy in Bharat.
- To analyse the transformation of mass communication through digital creator culture.
- To study the role of the creator economy in promoting Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
- To evaluate the contribution of creators toward rural economy, women empowerment, and digital literacy.
- To understand the socio-economic impact of creator economy.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(The Economic Times, 2026) The digital creator ecosystem in India is rapidly transforming into a more structured and professionally organised industry. Brands are becoming increasingly accountable in their collaborations, while creators are adopting more formal and sustainable business practices. Simultaneously, the growing use of Artificial Intelligence and evolving regulatory frameworks are improving efficiency and accelerating the expansion of the sector, indicating significant future growth of the creator-driven digital economy in Bharat.

According to the Kofluence, (2026) “Decoding Influence: Annual Research Report 2026,” which analysed data from more than 2 million creators along with surveys and expert interviews, India’s influencer marketing industry is estimated to be worth around ₹3,000–3,500 crore in 2025. The report further projects that the sector may grow to nearly ₹4,500–

5,000 crore by 2027, indicating the rapid expansion and formalisation of the digital creator ecosystem in Bharat.

According to Boston Consulting Group (BCG), (2025), India's creator ecosystem is witnessing rapid expansion with more than 4 million digital creators actively producing content across platforms, while nearly 100 million individuals are estimated to be involved in some form of content creation activity. The report further highlights that India currently has one of the world's largest internet user bases, with over 800 million internet users, creating immense opportunities for digital communication and creator-led entrepreneurship. It also notes the increasing participation of creators from regional and vernacular backgrounds, demonstrating how digital platforms are enabling broader inclusion within Bharat's communication and economic landscape. The report reflects the government's recognition of creators as contributors to innovation, employment generation, cultural representation, and digital growth in contemporary Bharat.

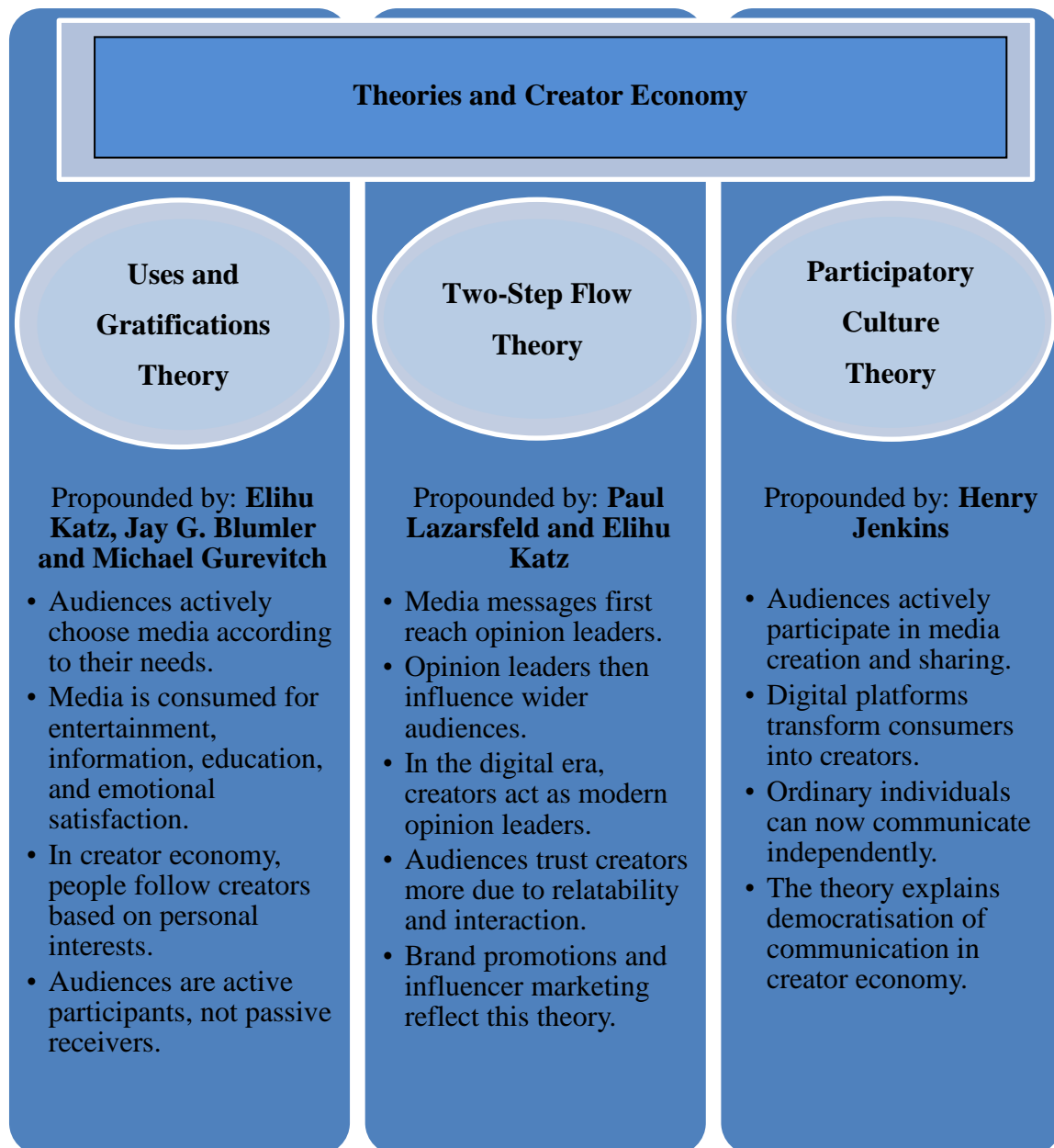
Research on digital influencers and online communication suggests that creators significantly shape audience behaviour, purchasing patterns, lifestyle aspirations, and public discussions. Abidin, (2018) observed that creators establish emotional and relational engagement with audiences through authenticity and interactive communication practices. Castells, (2009) explained the emergence of network societies enabled through digital communication technologies.

However, most existing studies primarily focus on advertising and influencer marketing dimensions. Limited scholarly attention has been given to the creator economy from a broader Bharat-centric mass communication perspective linked with rural participation, women empowerment, self-reliance, and socio-economic transformation. Therefore, the present paper attempts to examine the creator economy as a larger communication movement shaping contemporary Bharat.

THEORIES OF MASS COMMUNICATION AND CREATOR ECONOMY

The rapid growth of digital media and content creation in Bharat can be better understood through various mass communication theories that explain audience behaviour, media participation, and communication influence. Theories such as Uses and Gratifications Theory, Two-Step Flow Theory, and Participatory Culture Theory provide an academic framework to analyse how digital creators engage audiences, shape public opinion, and transform ordinary users into active participants within the contemporary communication ecosystem.

Figure 1: Theories and Creator Economy



Source: Developed by Author

CREATOR ECONOMY AND MASS COMMUNICATION

The creator economy has fundamentally transformed mass communication by decentralising content production and reducing dependence on traditional media institutions. Earlier, communication was controlled by newspapers, television channels, and radio networks. Today, creators independently communicate with millions of audiences through digital platforms. The interactive nature of digital communication enables audiences to comment, react, share, and participate in discussions, making communication more dynamic and participatory. Creators also personalise communication, which enhances audience trust and engagement. Digital creators function as communicators, entertainers, educators, and opinion leaders simultaneously. Their influence extends beyond entertainment into social, cultural, political, and economic spheres.

The Economic Impact of Content Creation:

The rise of the creator economy is not merely a technological development but a major socio-economic transformation emerging from the digital revolution of the country. In recent years, social media platforms have enabled ordinary individuals to become communicators, entrepreneurs, educators, entertainers, and opinion leaders without requiring access to traditional media institutions. What makes the creator economy unique is that it is not confined only to metropolitan influencers or celebrities. Individuals from villages, small towns, mountain regions, and economically modest households are increasingly participating in digital communication and generating livelihoods through content creation. This transformation reflects a broader shift in mass communication where communication itself has become an economic resource. In many households, especially among younger generations, content creation is increasingly being viewed as a legitimate profession rather than merely a hobby. Educational creators, finance communicators, fitness trainers, spiritual speakers, gaming creators, and regional vloggers are building sustainable digital careers through audience engagement and platform monetisation. The economic impact of this ecosystem is substantial. The economic impact of content creation is as follows:

➤ **Economic Perspective of the Creator Economy**

The rise of digital content creation in Bharat is no longer confined to entertainment alone; it has gradually evolved into a major source of livelihood, entrepreneurship, and economic participation. This has emerged as an important source of income generation and digital entrepreneurship in Bharat. Platforms such as YouTube enable creators to earn revenue through advertisements, sponsorships, affiliate marketing, subscriptions, paid collaborations, and audience support. In recent years, content creation has increasingly evolved into a full-time profession. Young creators are establishing independent careers through educational communication, devotional content, regional storytelling, technology reviews, financial education, and cultural communication. Reports suggest that India's creator ecosystem is emerging as a major digital economic force influencing communication, advertising, and consumer behaviour.

➤ **Employment Generation through Digital Platforms**

The economic significance of creator ecosystem extends beyond individual creators. Editors, scriptwriters, photographers, designers, video editors, digital marketers, and production professionals are also economically connected with creator-led communication industries. Thus, the creator economy generates both direct and indirect employment opportunities. Direct employment includes professions such as content creators, podcast hosts, editors, thumbnail designers, graphic artists, camera operators, and social media strategists working within digital communication industries. Indirect employment has also increased through tourism promotion, equipment rentals, local businesses, handicrafts, regional products, hospitality services, and brand collaborations associated with creators. In many regions, local economies benefit when travel vloggers and regional influencers attract tourism and digital visibility. Therefore, digital communication platforms are not merely spaces of interaction but have increasingly become centres of livelihood generation and economic activity.

➤ **Strengthening Rural Economy and Regional Participation**

One of the most transformative aspects of the creator economy is its contribution toward rural and regional economic participation. Earlier, media and communication opportunities remained concentrated within metropolitan centres. However, digital platforms have reduced geographical barriers and enabled creators from villages, tribal regions, small towns, and

distant locations to communicate directly with wider audiences. Creators from rural Bharat are increasingly producing content related to agriculture, folk traditions, regional cuisine, devotional practices, handicrafts, tourism, and local lifestyles. Such communication not only generates income for creators but also promotes regional culture, local products, tourism activities, and traditional knowledge systems. This transformation has strengthened decentralised participation within Bharat's communication ecosystem while simultaneously contributing toward regional economic visibility.

➤ **Digital Literacy and Technological Empowerment**

The creator economy has also significantly contributed toward digital literacy in Bharat. Participation within digital communication platforms encourages individuals to learn video editing, communication strategies, graphic designing, online marketing, content management, and audience analytics. In many cases, individuals who initially participated merely as viewers gradually developed digital competencies and transformed into active creators themselves. Thus, digital participation becomes a medium of technological learning and empowerment. The creator economy therefore functions not only as a communication system but also as a process of digital education and skill development.

➤ **Participation of Women and Homemaker: Empowerment**

The creator economy has opened new communication and entrepreneurial opportunities for women across Bharat. Women creators are actively contributing to fields such as education, parenting, spirituality, finance, cooking, health communication, devotional discourse, and motivational communication. A particularly significant transformation is the increasing participation of homemakers within digital communication spaces. Many women who traditionally remained confined within domestic roles are now generating independent income through cooking channels, stitching tutorials, devotional storytelling, home-management content, beauty communication, and regional cultural content. This transformation reflects not only economic participation but also communication empowerment where women are emerging as influential digital voices within Bharat's public communication sphere. (The Economic Times, 2026) Recent reports indicate increasing participation of women creators from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities who view digital communication as a medium of identity, expression, and self-reliance.

➤ **Creator Economy and Aatmanirbhar Bharat**

The rise of the creator economy strongly aligns with the national vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat by enabling individuals to generate independent livelihoods through communication-based digital entrepreneurship. Unlike conventional employment systems that often depend upon institutional structures and urban concentration, the creator economy provides decentralised opportunities where individuals can convert creativity, knowledge, communication skills, and local experiences into economic participation. Educational creators, spiritual communicators, finance educators, agricultural advisors, travel vloggers, regional storytellers, and cultural communicators are increasingly emerging as self-reliant digital entrepreneurs. Communication itself has therefore become a medium of economic productivity and livelihood generation. This transformation is particularly important because it enables individuals from ordinary social and economic backgrounds to participate within the digital economy without requiring large financial capital or institutional access.

➤ **Institutional Recognition and National Creators Award**

The establishment of the National Creators Award reflects the growing recognition of digital creators within Bharat's communication ecosystem. (Press Information Bureau, 2024) The

award acknowledged creators contributing in fields such as education, social awareness, agriculture, storytelling, culture, fitness, and innovation. This institutional recognition signifies that creators are no longer viewed merely as entertainers but as influential communicators contributing toward social awareness, public discourse, and national development. It also demonstrates the increasing legitimacy of creator-driven communication within contemporary Bharat. The initiative reflects institutional recognition of digital creators as contributors to public communication and national development.

➤ **Opportunities for Remote and Mountain Regions**

Digital platforms have also created economic opportunities for individuals situated in geographically distant and mountainous regions. Earlier, geographical isolation restricted participation within mainstream media and economic systems. However, creators from remote areas are now showcasing local traditions, landscapes, tourism, and cultural narratives before national and global audiences. For instance, creators from Himalayan villages, North-Eastern states, Rajasthan's rural regions, and tribal belts are producing travel vlogs, folk music content, cultural storytelling, agricultural guidance, and local cuisine videos that generate both visibility and income. In many cases, these creators also indirectly promote tourism, handicrafts, regional products, and local economies. Travel vloggers, local storytellers, and regional communicators residing in mountain regions and border areas are increasingly generating income through communication-driven digital participation. Thus, the creator economy has reduced geographical limitations and enabled broader inclusion within Bharat's digital communication landscape.

➤ **Brand Promotion through Creator Economy**

The rise of the creator economy has significantly transformed the nature of brand promotion and advertising in contemporary Bharat. Earlier, brand communication primarily depended upon traditional mass media platforms such as television, newspapers, radio, and cinema advertisements where communication flowed in a one-way manner from companies to consumers. However, the emergence of digital creators has reshaped this structure by introducing more interactive, personalised, and audience-driven forms of promotional communication. Today, brands increasingly collaborate with digital creators because creators possess strong audience engagement, relatability, and community trust. Unlike conventional celebrities, creators communicate with audiences regularly through videos, live sessions, stories, vlogs, and interactive discussions, which establish a sense of familiarity and authenticity among viewers. As a result, audiences often perceive creator recommendations as more personal and trustworthy compared to traditional advertisements. Platforms such as YouTube and Instagram have become major spaces for digital brand communication where creators promote products related to fashion, technology, education, finance, health, food, travel, spirituality, and lifestyle. Brands increasingly prefer collaborating with regional and micro-creators because such creators maintain closer audience relationships and higher engagement within specific communities and cultural groups.

➤ **Socio-Economic Impact**

Beyond economic opportunities, digital participation has also strengthened confidence, social visibility, and community engagement among ordinary citizens. For many youth, homemakers, and individuals from economically modest backgrounds, content creation has emerged as an alternative source of livelihood and upward social mobility. In several cases, creators have been able to support their families, establish independent businesses, purchase equipment, and improve their standard of living through earnings from advertisements, sponsorships, and digital collaborations. The creator ecosystem has also encouraged skill

development and financial independence, particularly among women and young entrepreneurs. Thus, communication-based digital participation is not only generating employment opportunities but is also gradually influencing consumption patterns, economic security, and overall living conditions resulting in socio-economic development.

CHALLENGES WITHIN THE CREATOR ECONOMY

Despite its transformative potential, the creator economy also faces several challenges such as algorithm dependency, content saturation, monetisation instability, digital harassment, misinformation, and unequal income distribution. While a small percentage of creators achieve large-scale visibility and earnings, many smaller creators struggle to sustain consistent monetisation. (Business Insider, 2026) Studies indicate that while top creators capture a large share of platform revenues, many small creators struggle to achieve financial sustainability. Therefore, the creator economy simultaneously reflects both opportunities and inequalities within platform-driven communication systems. Continuous pressure to maintain audience engagement also affects mental well-being and content authenticity. Therefore, alongside opportunities, the creator economy also reflects emerging inequalities and uncertainties within platform-driven communication systems.

CONCLUSION

The rise of the creator economy in Bharat represents far more than the emergence of a digital entertainment ecosystem. It reflects a larger transformation within communication culture, socio-economic participation, and digital entrepreneurship. Today, communication itself has become a medium of livelihood, empowerment, identity formation, and economic participation. Individuals from villages, small towns, remote mountain regions, and homemaking backgrounds are increasingly emerging as creators, communicators, educators, and entrepreneurs within Bharat's digital public sphere. The creator economy has democratised communication by reducing barriers related to geography, institutional access, and economic background. Simultaneously, it contributes toward digital literacy, women empowerment, regional representation, and the broader vision of *Aatmanirbhar Bharat*. From a mass communication perspective, the creator economy represents a transition from centralised institutional communication toward participatory and communication-driven socio-economic transformation. It is not merely changing the manner in which people consume media; it is reshaping the very relationship between communication, livelihood, culture, and self-reliant development in contemporary Bharat.

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