



The Creative Industries & Gen Z



**CREATIVITY IS
CONTAGIOUS.
PASS IT ON**

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Tejarah Talks is organized by Oman Business Forum in association with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion. With a firm focus on Oman's current and future business, export and investment environment, Tejarah Talks is a series of informal, interactive evening discussions that brings together some of Oman's most inspirational and innovative thinkers and doers to share their stories, insights and ideas with an enthusiastic crowd. It is a platform for positive interaction.



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Tejarah Talks 'The Creative Industries & Gen Z' 2 November 2022 was moderated by His Highness Sayyid Dr. Adham Al Said, Founder, The Firm. The panelists were Dr. Mona Ismail, Dean, Scientific College of Design; Dr. Abdul Azeez Al Ghareebi, Assistant Professor, UTAS, College of Creative Industries; Samah Al Ansari, Founder, Studio Sein; and Maryam Al Kharbooshi, Director, Cultural Identity Department, Ministry of Culture, Sports & Youth.

The Creative Industries & Gen Z Panelists



Dr. Mona Ismail
Dean, Scientific College
of Design



Dr. Abdul Azeez Al Ghareebi
Assistant Professor, UTAS,
College of Creative Industries



Samah Al Ansari
Founder,
Studio Sein



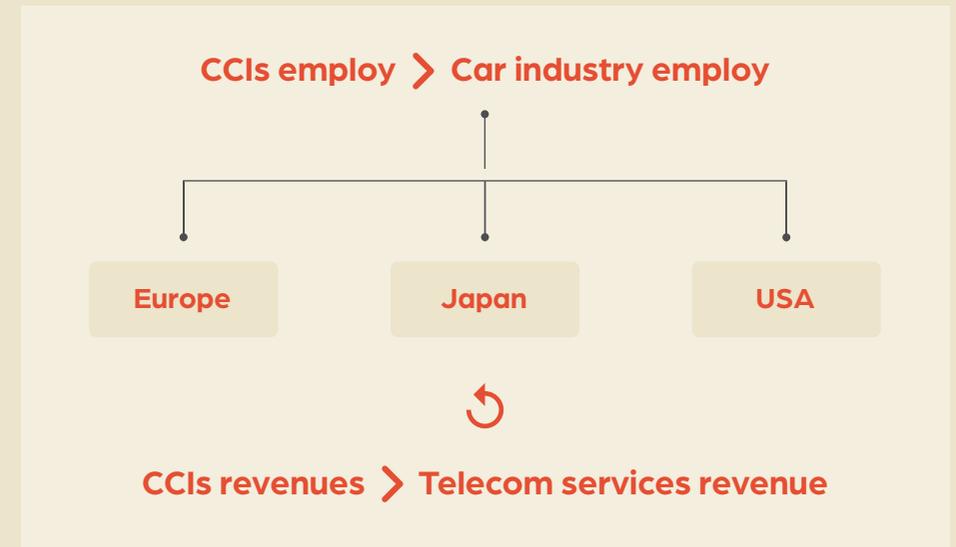
Maryam Al Kharbooshi
Director, Cultural Identity Department,
Ministry of Culture, Sports & Youth

Creativity The New Gold?

According to UNESCO, the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) – architecture, advertising, broadcasting, film, streaming, publishing, software, the performing arts and arts-related retail – generate over US\$2.5 trillion a year, that’s 3% of world GDP.¹ They create nearly 30 million jobs worldwide, with more people aged 15–29 working in this sector than any other.²



And incredible as it might seem, CCIs employ more people than the car industry of Europe, Japan and the US combined – 30 million jobs versus 25 million and their revenues exceed those of telecom services.



Adorno & Horkheimer

The concept of the CCI is far from new with the term 'cultural industries' coined as far back as 1948 by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.³ Over the 70+ years since they developed the concept, ways of creating, producing and distributing cultural products have changed dramatically.

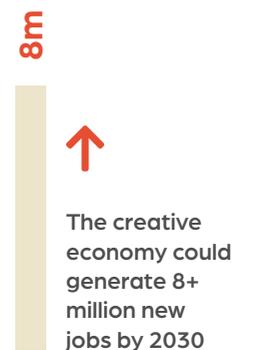
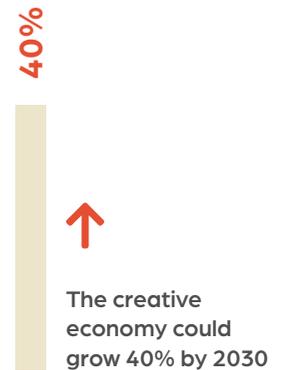
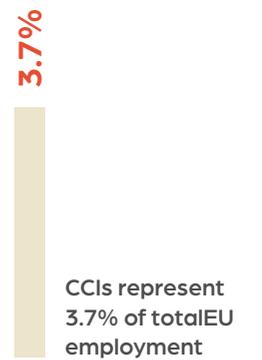
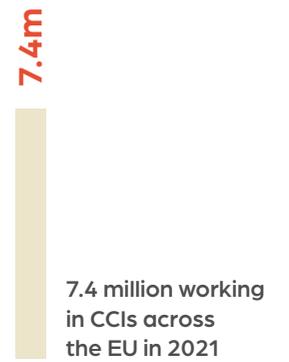
In fact, these days it is hard to underestimate the benefits of the successful promotion of the CCI. Investing in them drives economic growth and creates long-term jobs - according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis the arts and culture sector was a US\$876.7 billion industry or 4.2% of the country's GDP in 2020.⁴



From a European perspective, in 2021, there were 7.4 million people working in the CCI across the EU, representing 3.7% of total employment. Broken down by age, employment was characterised by a slightly higher percentage of people aged 30-39, 24.9% for cultural employment vs 23.2% for total employment. Among those working in CCI professions, 60.4% had tertiary education.⁵

Recent Deloitte research suggests the creative economy could grow 40% by 2030, adding more than 8 million jobs in nine of the world's leading economies.⁶ The importance of the CCI for overall economic performance is likely to expand. This means its importance for policymaking is also likely to increase, with countries looking to take advantage of this underlying rise in global demand. There is no doubt CCI is a juggernaut of a sector, particularly at the international level, where film, fashion, design, music and video games have grown over the years to form a major pillar of some of the world's most successful advanced economies.

Today it is fair to say, CCI play an important role in Oman's economic success. Whether it is products, architecture, film, fashion or design, Oman's creative class has not only the potential to generate wealth, attract investment and talent but also influence and help shape how the rest of the world sees us. In fact, Oman's creative economy is already triggering a value chain between artists, entrepreneurs, distributors and support services across multiple sectors to provide modern, sustainable jobs.



Gen Z: Who Are They?

Contrary to popular misconception, Gen Z are not millennials. According to the Pew Research Center, millennials are those born between 1981 – 1996. Gen Z is identified as those born between 1997 – 2010.⁷



Before we go any further, it is important to recognise that not every person within a defined generation will exhibit the same qualities and characteristics, although that should not prevent us from attempting to identify Gen Z. It is, however, a generation that refuses to be pigeon holed and maintains a mind-set all its own, particularly when it comes to engaging on social media platforms.

According to a JWT Intelligence and Snap Inc., study 51% of Gen Z believe their generation is more creative than previous generations.⁸ Representing 32% of the global population, they are also the world's most populous generation. This cohort of 2 billion will potentially upend our concept of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship.⁹

Gen Z have created a new cultural currency that values uniqueness, authenticity, creativity, shareability and recognition. What is different for this generation is not as simple as the Internet or technology—what has changed is this generation's relationship with culture.



51%

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Where is Creation Happening?

In 2022, creation and curation for the majority of people takes place online. Twitter is today's microblogging service. Instagram offers Omani brands a platform to differentiate themselves from competitors through unique visual content. While TikTok is a glimpse into what it means to be young in today's hyper-connected world. This broadening understanding of creativity, brought on by the wider access to content creation through digital media, is often not reflected in young people's inclusion in Oman's arts and culture sector. Gen Z often think the sector is not a space for them as creatives, but one reserved for the more 'typically' artistic. Is this view not at odds with what the sector wants or needs and with what young people would enjoy and benefit from? Research suggests the arts and culture sector – at least in the eyes of many Gen Z – is still too bound by traditional notions of what we understand 'art' and 'culture' to be.



TikTok is a glimpse into what it means to be young in today's hyper-connected world.



Instagram offers Omani brands a platform to differentiate themselves from competitors through unique visual content.

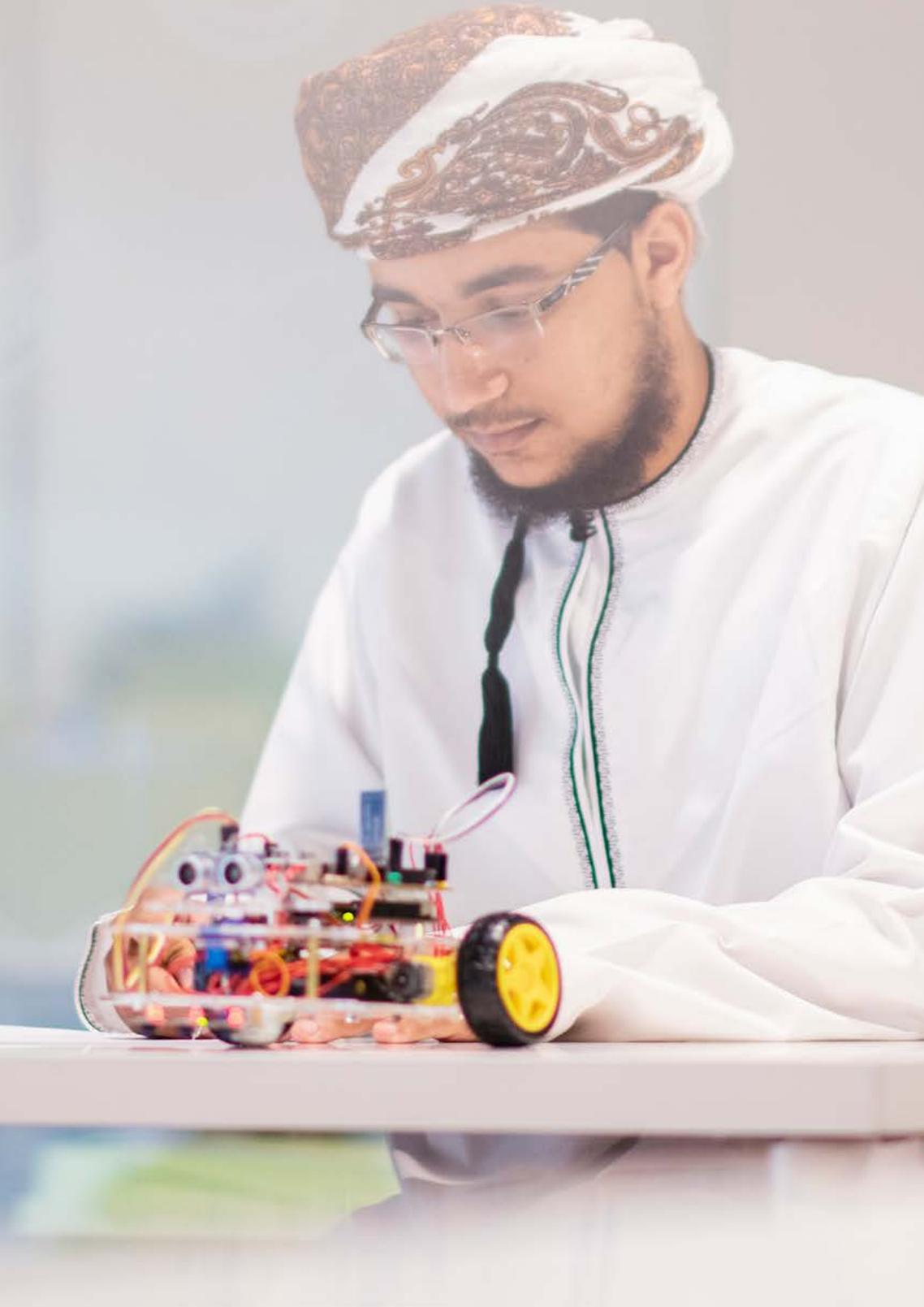
Gen Z in the Creative Space

Gen Z creatives are now in their mid-20s and entering the Omani workplace, their attitudes can have a transformative, bottom-up impact on not just the type of work Oman's CCIs do – from design studios and advertising agencies to radio stations and architecture firms – but the kind of organizations that assist them – from grass-root start-ups to the most experienced creatives and agencies. But in order to create this environment for change, Oman's CCIs have to actively engage in it. From an international perspective, there is evidence to suggest this culture shift is starting to take place. For example, global branding consultancy Interbrand has introduced specific programs that ensure Gen Z viewpoints are integrated into the fabric of the agency, influencing its overall culture and the kind of briefs it works on.¹⁰ At a time that is fraught with social, cultural and environmental challenges, we need the values-led approach of Gen Z more than ever to help create a more just, sustainable, greener world. At the same time, we need the CCIs to embrace and support Gen Z creatives and the positive change they will bring.



Gen Z are bringing a fresh perspective to Oman's CCIs

Pride in Place & Identity



Whether it is arts, films, graphic design, advertising, festivals, fashion, music, museums, galleries, digital animation or video games, CCI's are more than just sectors with sound economic growth potential, they are also expressions of the human imagination spreading important social and cultural values. CCI's tell Omani stories and support social cohesion, pride in place and identity. Our historic buildings, landscapes, traditions, food, galleries and museums are all part of Oman's unique international offer and play an important role in its promotion, helping attract visitors, inward investment as well as talent. It is fair to say that CCI's are interwoven into Oman's awe-inspiring history. And while heritage is always, by definition, from the past, creativity is always, by definition, new. They need each other and we all need them to enrich our lives. There is no doubt, creativity is the new gold.

Transactional vs Emotional Relationships

Omani Gen Z consumers want to know more about brands, their ethics, how they contribute or give back to local communities, how they conduct themselves behind the scenes and how they go about developing products. More than 60% of Gen Z say they are likely to stop buying from a brand that does not meet their personal values – 42% say 'likely' and 20% say 'very likely'.¹¹ So, brands beware, do not get on the wrong side of Gen Z.

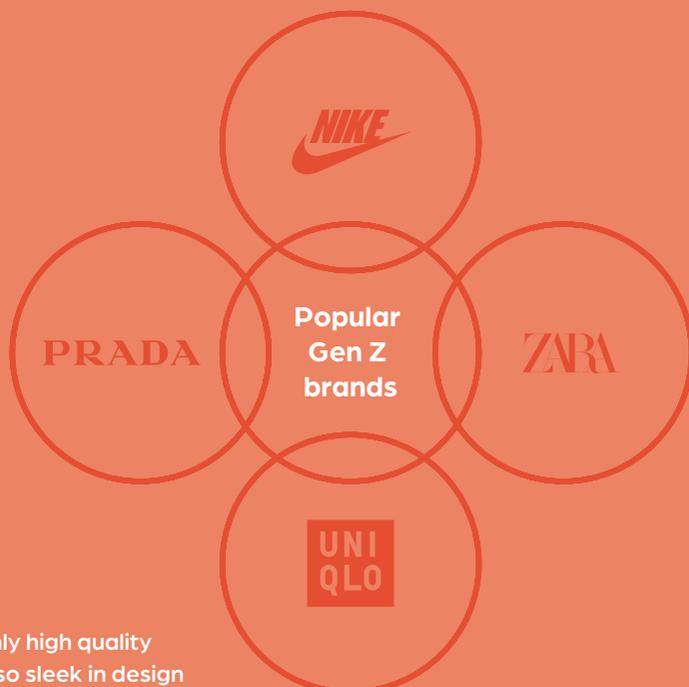


In essence, Gen Z want a less transactional and more emotional relationship with brands. In fact, a recent Motista report revealed that consumers who have an emotional relationship with a brand have three times higher lifetime value and will likely recommend the company at a rate of 71%, instead of the average 45%.¹²

It is this emotional, authentic and personal approach to building relationships that Omani brands need to develop with Gen Z.

Retail in a Visual Age

We are in the midst of a digital revolution where everyone has a camera phone in their pocket and Gen Z are used to describing their tastes, preferences and emotions through photography and film on Instagram and TikTok. Film and photography are the new conversation mediums, they have become integral to the lives of modern, tech-savvy Gen Z consumers. This proliferation of photos and videos has transformed shopping behaviour. In the past, consumers found inspiration and discovered new products by visiting brick-and-mortar shops. Of course this still happens, but Gen Z consumers also get inspiration by scrolling through Instagram feeds. Then, when evaluating whether to buy they look for photos and videos taken by other consumers who have already bought the product – as they seek to make more informed purchase decisions. Because of this, Oman-made products can no longer be solely functional, they also have to be visually appealing to be popular. Think about today's most popular Gen Z brands such as Nike, ZARA, Prada and UNIQLO their products are not only high quality but also sleek in design. Gen Z flock to these brands.



Brands & Social Real Estate

Social media users now account for 58% of the global population. That is 4.6 billion users.¹³ And in 2022 those users are spending on average 2 hours and 27 minutes every day on social around the globe, it is where Omani brands need to be.¹⁴ But do they know the new rules? In the 2010s, social was a brand's megaphone. Then it became where Omani companies went to build connections and relationships. Today, it has become the largest digital marketplace. In a recent study, 73% of Gen Z do the majority of their shopping on a mobile device. Additionally, 83% of Gen Z report that some or all of their shopping originates with social media.¹⁵ As social channels become the new storefronts, messaging apps are becoming the digital equivalent of walking into a store. Brands are setting up shop and leveraging their social real estate. So how do they stand out? It is all about courageous creativity. And the fact that most Gen Z have multiple social media accounts highlights the need for Omani businesses to appeal across a variety of platforms. There is no question, retail is online, on mobile and now, increasingly on social media. Omani brands that do not want to be left behind should be preparing marketing strategies that include the popular social media platforms Gen Z is turning to before making purchase decisions.

4.6bn

4.6 billion social media users in 2022



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58%

Social media users now account for 58% of the global population



Listen & Learn

Creativity thrives on diverse minds and wide-ranging perspectives, qualities that typify Gen Z. But it can be all too easy to try and mould young creatives in our own image through the lens of what we know, while forgetting what they can teach us and giving them space to lead. Oman's CCIs have a responsibility to not only mentor, but to listen and learn from and with them. Gen Z's creative talent and imagination are a productive source for the economy and entrepreneurship, it needs nurturing and developing. The future of Oman's culture and creative industries depends on it.



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Contacts

Scientific College of Design	scd.edu.om
University of Technology & Applied Sciences	utas.edu.om
Studio Sein	studio-sein.com
Ministry of Culture, Sports & Youth	mcsy.om

For further details on Tejarah Talks contact:

Team Tejarah Talks

OBF Office

Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion

PO Box 550

Muscat, 100

Sultanate of Oman

(+968) 9242 7219

tt@tejarah.gov.om

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