

“Recover together, recover stronger”: an exploratory literature review on the recovery challenges of creative SMEs following the COVID-19 pandemic and proposed future recommendations

Recovery
challenges of
creative SMEs

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Abstract

Purpose – The rise of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has enabled researchers and industry professionals to reinvent their strategies for basic economic understanding. Two years after the outbreak of the pandemic, businesses are now trying to adapt to the impact it has brought, hoping to receive support as it did in the past. However, before this feat can be accomplished, it is imperative to understand the recovery hurdles created by the pandemic. This research aims to fill the literature gaps by examining the challenges during recovery within the creative small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) industry, as there are few relevant studies that focus on this field.

Design/methodology/approach – Through a methodical bibliometric literature review and network analysis, the paper intends to critically explore relevant recovery challenges within the field while providing answers to the appropriate research questions. A total of 43 articles were selected for an in-depth review. Using the analysis from the selected articles as a guide, a framework was developed to address the recovery challenges alongside the recommended propositions.

Findings – The findings from this paper suggest that a lack of synergy among four major categories (governmental, supply chain, organizational and stakeholders) contributes to recovery challenges within the field of research.

Originality/value – The review also offers clarification in understanding the current and upcoming trends within the creative industry, SMEs and COVID-19. This paper can thus help researchers, industry practitioners and managers discover and analyze the recovery challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords Creative industry, SMEs, Supply chain, COVID-19, Sustainability, Recovery challenges

Paper type Literature review

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1. Introduction

Recovery and sustenance are critical factors in ensuring business long-term viability. Understanding and analyzing the risks involved is subject to the event and may result in either short-term or long-term consequences for businesses depending on the severity, but these consequences are only achieved by critically identifying and scrutinizing potential key recovery challenges post-event (Cheng and Zhang, 2020). Over time, having faced numerous disasters, society may be able to create several resilience indices based on overcoming varied forms of disasters by learning and understanding the recovery challenges involved post-disaster (Rose and Krausmann, 2013). However, this only applied if similar adversities reoccur, which is why a high-impact disaster, such as the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which exceeded modern expectations, was able to easily create adverse effects on a global scale (Paul *et al.*, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented numerous challenges across various industries, and the creative industry has not been exempted from its impact. According to UNESCO (2021), approximately 1 in 8 museums have been unable to reopen, while artists and other professionals within the industry have faced significant financial struggles, often lacking access to social safety nets. The widespread shift towards digital media, prompted by the pandemic, has brought about its own set of consequences. The sudden transition has compelled numerous businesses to migrate to the digital space, resulting in an influx of new users and a notable surge in the growth of the digital sphere (DataReportal, 2020). Social media became too important for both established and new businesses to communicate with customers compared to other platforms (Syiaifullah *et al.*, 2021; Susanto *et al.*, 2021). Some industries, such as digital artists, were already very much in the digital world and were not impacted much. However, this was not the case for industries that depend on live crowds for their income, such as event planners and the performing arts. Different things have happened in reaction to the drop in income, such as people switching careers and more people looking for independent and casual work (Genero, 2021). In 2020, the creative industry and the culture industry lost a total of approximately 70 billion US dollars (USD) in gross value added (GVA). Because of this loss, 10 million jobs were lost in the same year (Richard *et al.*, 2021).

In the past few years, the creative industry has been known to be important in many different areas. In 2019, the UK Creative Industries had a GVA of £115.9 billion, which is a large amount of money when measured in today's money. Using prices from 2020 as a guide, this amounts to an enormous gift of approximately £13.2 million per hour, even when inflation is taken into account. The creative industry's GVA has grown by more than 43% since 2010, which is faster than the UK's gross domestic product (GDP), which grew at less than half that rate (Infographics, 2020). Since then, many experts in both the business and Internet worlds have written more about this idea for industry growth. According to Hartley (2011), the artistic business is a very important part of the economy. It stresses how important small and medium-sized businesses are to many areas, including e-commerce, music and cartoons. In contrast to large, tightly linked industries, these small and medium-sized businesses make it easier for cross-disciplinary groups, open and adjustable teams and creative businesses to form. In the creative industry, this method pushes people to work together, come up with new ideas and be flexible.

While numerous academic authors have made efforts to explore the challenges and potential solutions arising from the impact of the pandemic, there is a limited amount of in-depth analysis specifically addressing the recovery challenges faced by the creative industry as a result of the pandemic (Oyewale *et al.*, 2020; Omar *et al.*, 2020; Sungkawati, 2021; Adam and Alarifi, 2021). Through an extensive literature review, only a small number of studies were found that critically examined the intersection of the creative industry, SMEs and the recovery challenges they encountered due to the pandemic.

This research was formulated to address the following research questions:

- RQ1. What recovery challenges are SMEs in the creative industry facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- RQ2. Why are these challenges important for SMEs' recovery?
- RQ3. How can these challenges aid future research in acquiring sustainability post-COVID-19?

This study makes a substantial contribution to the area by examining the hitherto unknown difficulties encountered by innovative SMEs during recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This research fills a significant need in the current literature by providing a fresh viewpoint on the difficulties faced by firms as they attempt to adapt and recover. Through a systematic bibliometric literature review and network analysis, this article sheds light on the complex relationship between governmental, supply chain, organizational and stakeholder variables that have hampered past recovery attempts. Additionally, it elucidates developing tendencies in the creative sector and SMEs in the framework of COVID-19. A deeper comprehension of the post-pandemic recovery environment is fostered by this study, which provides researchers, industry practitioners and managers with tools to analyze and confront these difficulties.

This paper involves 7 sections. [Section 2](#) contains the systematic literature review (SLR) methodology. The analysis and synthesis of the selected articles can be found in [Section 3](#). Network analysis and cluster analysis are presented in [Section 4](#). [Section 5](#) highlights the recovery challenges. The discussion of findings, implications and the unique contributions of this research are all emphasized in [Section 6](#). Finally, conclusions and recommendations are presented in [Section 7](#).

2. Methodology

This study employed the SLR approach to conduct a systematic review of the considered publications. It aids in a methodical assessment of published works and analyses present research trends and research gaps related to the issue under consideration.

2.1 Systematic literature review

[Rother \(2007\)](#) described SLR as a subset of scientific literature that “uses rigorous methodology to prevent shortcuts and bias in conducting a review.” The method employed in this research can be characterized as a scientific approach that integrates available data to systematically address a specific research question in a transparent and replicable manner. It aims to incorporate all relevant published data pertaining to the subject under investigation while also assessing the quality and reliability of the collected data. This rigorous approach ensures that the research findings are based on a comprehensive and robust analysis of the literature ([Lame, 2019](#)). [Nasir et al. \(2021\)](#) made use of this methodology when discussing the effect of COVID-19 and the operations of global supply chains. Within their research, [Herrero-Luna et al. \(2022\)](#) aimed to uncover evidence of innovation concerning the circular economy (CE) with the use of SLR. For this research, the SLR methodology used can be found in [Figure 1](#).

2.2 Selection of databases

To begin the SLR, the selection of articles from trusted databases can be considered the initial step. This research varied in database by using SCOPUS. The reason for using the Scopus database is to gather as much information as possible and “also provide a useful breadth of the topic” ([Guides.library.ucla.edu, 2022](#)). For this research, articles were selected within the time frame of 2018–2022 for the following reasons: 1) to understand scholarly perspectives on

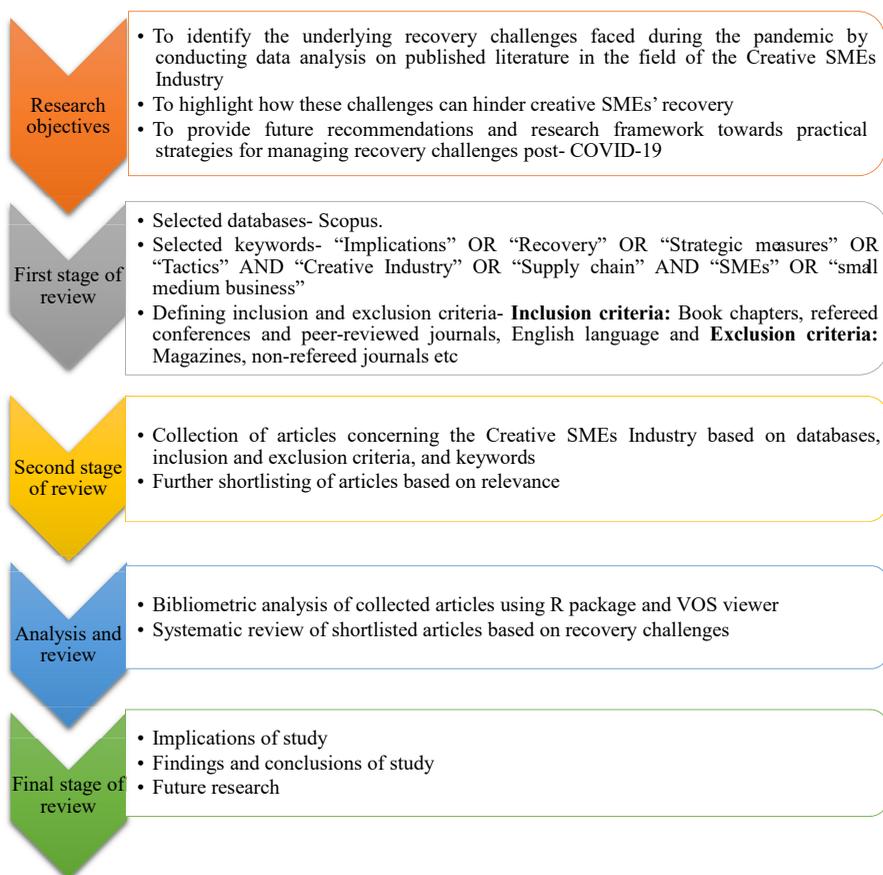


Figure 1.
The SLR methodology
framework

Source(s): Authors' own work

creative SMEs immediately before and during the pandemic and 2) to provide evidence of the gaps in the literature.

2.3 Selection of keywords

The selection of keywords is a critical concern regarding the identification of relevant research articles. As highlighted by [Xiao and Watson \(2019\)](#), the research question(s) should be used to generate the search keyword(s), which can be broken down into concept domains. Using exact keywords can increase search accuracy but may leave out records. For this research, the keywords used for obtaining the applicable articles within the area of the creative SMEs industry are as follows: String 1: "Implications" OR "Recovery" OR "Strategic measures" OR "Tactics" OR "COVID-19" AND String 2: "Creative industry" OR "Supply chain" AND String 3: "SMEs" OR "small medium business".

2.4 Defining inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria for the databases involved book chapters, refereed conferences and peer-reviewed journals. For this research, only articles published in the English language

were taken into consideration. The exclusion criteria included magazines, nonreferred journals, etc. The reason for using specific criteria, as mentioned by Rother (2007), is to determine the validity of the selected studies. This method simplifies the decision-making process for deciding which articles to include in the review.

2.5 Identifying, screening and selecting relevant studies

In keeping with the inclusion and exclusion criteria, articles were identified, screened and selected based on relevance. According to Durach et al. (2017), the inclusion/exclusion criteria are used in conjunction to summarize the sample of primary studies into a smaller group known as the “synthesis sample.” This sample includes all relevant studies while excluding unrelated studies. First, with the use of several databases, the search for articles by using selected keywords within the specified timeframe generated a total of 196 articles. Second, all articles were downloaded; for SCOPUS, article data were downloaded in an Excel format and within Excel, all individual articles were then further downloaded. After article downloading, they were further scrutinized against the appropriate keywords and inclusion of the research topic: creative SMEs industry.

3. Bibliometric analysis of selected articles for this in-depth literature review

Donthu et al. (2021) described bibliometric analysis as a tool that can be used to rigorously interpret vast quantities of unstructured data. As a result, well-conducted bibliometric studies can lay the groundwork for progressing a field with innovative and significant methods. As stated previously, a total of 43 articles were eligible for bibliometric analysis and further review. With this, the next step would be to conduct a breakdown of the selected articles, which is why this research made use of the R package for its bibliometric analysis and the VOSviewer for its network analysis. Focusing on the selected articles, Figure 2 depicts the articles published within the time frame of 2018–2022.

3.1 Document type

Table 1 provides a summary of the bibliometric analysis.

The data shown provide more insights into the selected articles from 2018 to 2023 within the field of the creative SMEs industry. From Table 1, it can be noted that out of the 43 documents, 41 sources were published with respect to the selected field, including journals and book chapters. The total number of authors’ keywords used amounted to 112. The number of unique authors was 152. Of the 43 articles, only 4 were singled authored, with the rest written by various authors. The top 10 publishing sources of the selected articles can be found in Table 2. It can be noted from the table that the top 3 journals are “International Journal of Supply Chain Management”, “International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management” and “Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management”.

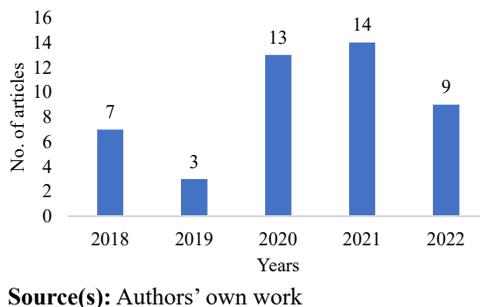


Figure 2. Year-wise articles based on the creative SMEs industry

Timespan	2018:2023
Sources (Journals, Books, etc.)	41
Documents	43
Annual growth rate %	6.48
Document average age	1.67
Average citations per doc	3.457
References	1,738
<i>Document contents</i>	
Keywords plus (ID)	40
Author's keywords (DE)	112
<i>Authors</i>	
Authors	152
Authors of single-authored docs	4
<i>Authors collaboration</i>	
Single-authored docs	4
Coauthors per doc	3.41
International coauthorships %	0
<i>Document types</i>	
Article	43
Source(s): *Authors' own work	

Table 1.

Synopsis result of the bibliometric analysis regarding the 43 articles in the field of the creative SME industry*

Journals	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
<i>"International Journal of Supply Chain Management"</i>	1	1	1	0	0	3
<i>"International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management"</i>	1	0	0	0	1	2
<i>"Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management"</i>	2	0	0	0	0	2
<i>"Archives of Business Review"</i>	0	0	0	1	0	1
<i>"Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics"</i>	0	0	0	0	1	1
<i>"Asian Journal of Business and Accounting"</i>	0	0	1	0	0	1
<i>"Benchmarking"</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1
<i>"Central European Business Review"</i>	0	0	0	0	1	1
<i>"European Journal of Marketing"</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1
<i>"Geografia"</i>	0	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Total</i>	6	1	3	1	3	14
Source(s): *Authors' own work						

Table 2.

Top 10 journals published within the field of the creative SMEs industry*

3.2 Country-wise statistics

The country-wise statistics were analyzed with respect to the selected articles. [Table 3](#) shows the top countries from the selected articles. From this table, Indonesia and China had the highest frequency of published articles, with 6 and 3, respectively.

[Table 4](#) depicts the citations of each country's publication within the selected time frame. From [Table 4](#), it can be seen that authors from Finland have the highest number of citations, 39, with the same number of average citations per article. This is followed by Indonesia and the Netherlands, with 20 and 16 citations, respectively.

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Country	No. of articles
Indonesia	6
China	3
South Africa	2
The UK	2
Austria	1
Bangladesh	1
Finland	1
The Netherlands	1
Norway	1
Saudi Arabia	1

Table 3.
Top 10 corresponding authors' countries in the field of the creative SMEs industry*

Source(s): *Authors' own work

Country	Total citations	Average article citations
Finland	39	39.00
Indonesia	20	4.00
The Netherlands	16	16.00
Bangladesh	7	7.00
China	5	2.50
Norway	3	3.00
South Africa	2	1.00
Thailand	2	2.00
Saudi Arabia	1	1.00
Spain	1	1.00

Table 4.
Ranking of the top 10 countries' citations in the field of the creative SMEs industry*

Source(s): *Authors' own work

3.3 Keyword statistics

Keyword statistics aid in analyzing the most frequently used keywords according to the categories of author keywords, article titles and article abstracts. From a list of 1,283 keywords, the top 20 keywords in the category of article are presented in [Table 5](#). From this table, the two main terms involving this research topic are ranked at both highest and lowest, with SMEs being 18 and creative industry at 7. The word cloud in [Figure 3](#) is based on the top 50 keywords within the field of selected article abstracts.

Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency
Supply chain	72	DC dimensions	9
Enterprises SMEs	18	Medium-sized enterprises	9
Product innovation	13	Structural equation	9
Publishing limited	13	Information sharing	8
Chain sustainability	11	Sustainability risks	8
Chain management	10	Creative industry	7
Circular economy	10	Green marketing	7
Innovation performance	10	Medium enterprises	7
Business models	9	SMEs performance	7
Circular business	9	Supply chains	7

Table 5.
Top 20 keywords based on the category of the selected articles in the field of the creative SMEs industry*

Source: *Authors' own work

4.2 Cluster analysis

Any bibliometric study can be said to include cluster analysis as a crucial component. This approach assists in classifying, identifying and isolating similar units from dissimilar units (Bynen, 2012). For instance, within this research study, the network between authors, publications and cocitations is examined. From the selected articles, the top 4 research clusters were created. Table 6 depicts the top articles of each cluster alongside their total link strength (TLS). The TLS represents the overall link strength of cocitation linkages between an article and other articles.

4.3 Emerging research themes

4.3.1 Cluster 1: creative SMEs and circular supply chain. The use of circular practices within the supply chain can be highly beneficial, as this involves the reuse of products. However, to achieve this, the implementation of digital technologies is advised. Articles involving the use of digital technologies and SMEs' supply chains were reviewed.

In cluster 1, the top article was authored by Ali (2022), with a TLS of 492. The article discussed how the use of technological development can aid the overall business performance of SMEs with the acceptance of green supply chain practices (GSCPs). The concept behind this is aimed at cost reduction, especially during the manufacturing process. By recruiting 407 textile SME executives, the author was able to validate the proposed model of green supply chain practices; with this, SME executives can improve their business processes. The second article is Huynh (2021), with a TLS of 272. This article proposes the use of digital innovation and several circular business models (CBMs) within the fashion subsector to achieve a more suitable CE.

Concerning the selected articles, the following propositions have been highlighted for future research:

Proposition 1. Identification and evaluation of circular supply chain strategies that the creative SMEs industry can use to advance sustainability.

	Total link strength
<i>Cluster 1 articles</i>	
Ali (2022)	492
Huynh (2021)	272
Sutrisno and Kumar (2022)	154
Rezaei et al. (2018)	118
<i>Cluster 2 articles</i>	
Mukhsin and Suryanto (2022)	231
Lassnig et al. (2021)	207
Somjai et al. (2019)	141
Ko et al. (2018)	96
<i>Cluster 3 articles</i>	
Nasir et al. (2021)	544
Sugandini et al. (2020)	468
Sutrisno and Kumar (2022)	293
<i>Cluster 4 articles</i>	
Ikram et al. (2018)	138
Lita et al. (2018)	101
Rodhiah and Mukmin (2021)	80
Source(s): *Authors' own work	

Table 6.
Cluster analysis of
author teams for
selected articles in the
field of the creative
SMEs industry*

Proposition 2. To adopt the use of digital innovation within creative SMEs' supply chain practices.

Proposition 3. To establish the use of a framework for the practical implementation of environmentally friendly practices in the creative SMEs industry.

4.3.2 Cluster 2: business models and creative SME performance. Several factors are involved in achieving positive SME performance, i.e., product innovation and digital transformation.

In cluster 2, Mukhsin and Suryanto (2022) acquired a total TLS of 231. By using the pottery subsector as a case study, the authors were able to deduce how competitive advantage, as well as sustainable supply chain management, can influence SME performance. The authors revealed that by increasing market share, average selling price in comparison to rivals, overall competitive position and overall customer service levels, one company can outperform another, thereby improving performance. *Lassnig et al. (2021)* have a total TLS of 207 and their study expatiated on the need for SMEs to adopt digital transformation in all aspects for better company performance.

Concerning the selected articles, the following propositions have been highlighted for future research:

Proposition 4. To restructure the concept of competitive advantage gained prior to the pandemic to create a proper model for recovery methods.

Proposition 5. Analyzing the relationships between creative SMEs and their consumers for the enhancement of their performance can be a future research approach.

Proposition 6. To monitor SME performance using a smart support system consisting of data sharing and Internet of Things (IoT) integration.

4.3.3 Cluster 3: sustainable marketing strategies and creative SMEs. For any organization, whether small or large, it is highly beneficial to implement the proper marketing strategy for long-term financial benefits.

In cluster 3, Nasir et al. (2021), with a TLS of 544, expatiated on the need for decision-makers to restructure their existing strategies due to the COVID-19 impact. Their study consisted of data collection from 40 experts in Bangladesh, with one of the predominant conclusions being the use of 'crowdfunding' to aid the revival of businesses affected by the pandemic. *Sugandini et al. (2020)* obtained a TLS of 468. Their study involved data collected from Indonesia from the perspective of green marketing strategy and proved that green purchasing has a decent effect on green marketing strategy.

Concerning the selected articles, the following propositions have been highlighted for future research:

Proposition 7. To develop safety nets for the continuity/survival of creative SMEs.

Proposition 8. To re-evaluate the risks and challenges regarding sustainability practices for the improvement of creative SMEs' capabilities.

Proposition 9. To develop new marketing strategy frameworks that can be of use to dispute the effects of the pandemic.

4.3.4 Cluster 4: the significance of organizational synergy in creative SMEs. In cluster 4, Ikram et al. (2018), with a TLS of 138, discussed China's cost advantage being visible throughout the entire value chain because of the synergistic advantages of vertical and horizontal integration of supply clusters. Additionally, it was shown that specialized markets and foreign merchants play a vital role in the creation of sustainable clusters by describing how specialized markets and international players permit concentrated supply. According to

the study, the entities that belong to different nations play a crucial role in building worldwide links; as a result, it ratifies the 3.0 Theorem of Globalization.

With respect to the selected articles, the following propositions are highlighted for future research:

Proposition 10. To develop a study consisting of the integration of other industries alongside the creative SMEs industry to develop a knowledge-based model for sustenance practices.

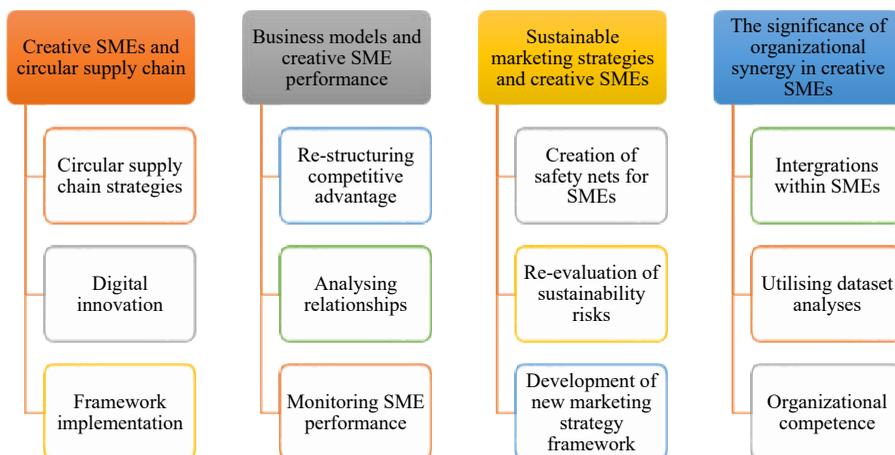
Proposition 11. Utilizing dataset analyses to create a prediction model to help organizational leaders comprehend the opinions and suggestions of the creative SMEs industry.

Proposition 12. To create organizational competence by encompassing the use of several artificial intelligence (AI) methods to encourage information sharing for new market conditions.

A theoretical model (Figure 5) that represents all propositions within each cluster has been presented in consideration of the review.

5. Discussion of findings

This literature review portrayed a summary of the 43 selected articles regarding the field of the creative SMEs industry. With this, SLR and bibliometric analyses of the field mentioned were conducted. For the SLR, book chapters, articles and conference proceedings were analyzed. The systematic review of the shortlisted articles considered different criteria (clusters), such as creative SMEs and circular supply chains, business models and creative SME performance, sustainable marketing strategies and creative SMEs and the significance of organizational synergy in creative SMEs. Moreover, a bibliometric analysis was conducted as a means of obtaining relevant information for this research. Five major groups were considered for the bibliometric analysis: document type, author statistics, country-wise statistics and citation and keyword statistics. Top journals, countries, authors and noteworthy research trends were recognized. Top journals such as “*International Journal*



Source(s): Authors’ own work

Figure 5. Theoretical model representing the key propositions in the field of the creative SMEs industry

of *Supply Chain Management*, *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management* and *Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management* published articles regarding the field of the creative SMEs industry (Table 2). The top countries from the selected articles were Indonesia and China (Table 3). Cluster analysis was performed to provide insights into the research networks of the authors.

The findings of the comprehensive literature review revealed the existence of recovery obstacles in several aspects of the creative SMEs industry, including managerial/organizational, governmental, stakeholder and supplier chains. The study framework, shown in Figure 6, presents a conceptual framework that aims to enhance clarity regarding recovery issues and prospective propositions in the future. The promotion of future research opportunities is advocated, as the proposed framework has the potential to facilitate the expeditious and efficient response of scholars and industry experts in tackling the issues of pandemic-induced recovery. Presently, with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications within the scope of this research, there exists a dearth of substantial empirical evidence to adequately elucidate the multifarious obstacles associated with recovery.

During the initial phase of the pandemic, creative SMEs encountered significant challenges due to a lack of both managerial support and external assistance. The absence of such assistance further intensified the difficulties faced by these SMEs during that period (Adam and Alarifi, 2021), all contributing to the recovery challenges presented. Therefore, with the help of a literature review, the list of recovery challenges in the field of the creative SMEs industry is presented in Table 7.

5.1 Implications of this study

5.1.1 Theoretical implications. Several significant theoretical implications for economics and pandemic recovery may be drawn from this study. First, the unusual nature of the COVID-19 epidemic highlights the necessity for flexible economic policies. By examining the unique difficulties faced by innovative SMEs during times of recovery, this study strengthens the theoretical basis for economic resilience in targeted fields of endeavor. For future studies in economics, the use of a systematic bibliometric literature review and network analysis as a research approach underscores the significance of adopting cutting-edge tools for comprehending complex, linked topics. The results, which show that governments, supply

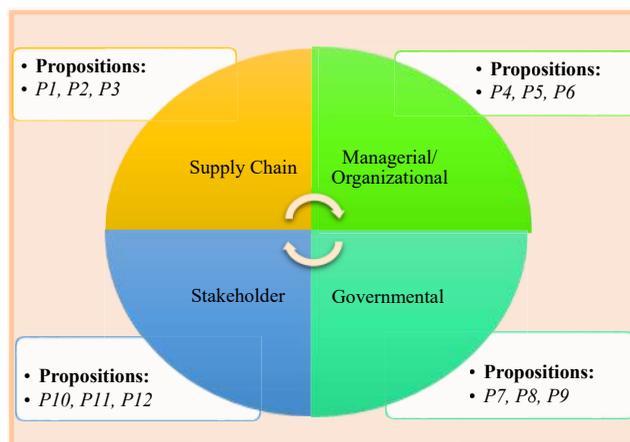


Figure 6. The research framework for the creative SMEs industry makes this complete sentence, along with all the tables and figures

Source(s): Authors' own work

Sr. No.	Recovery challenges name	Support references
1	Psychological impact	Prause (2021), Stafford (2022), Vitálišová <i>et al.</i> (2021)
2	Policy and regulation ratification	Gunartin (2022), Rosyadi <i>et al.</i> (2022), Protogerou <i>et al.</i> (2022), Crawford and Dewfield (2022), Chollisni <i>et al.</i> (2022), Priambodo <i>et al.</i> (2021), Gasparin and Quinn (2020), UNESCO (2022), Sargent (2021), De (2020), Palla and Strickler (2021), Comunian and England (2020), Joffe <i>et al.</i> (2022)
3	Insufficient governmental aid	Rosyadi <i>et al.</i> (2022), Wijayani and Puspitarini (2022), Chung <i>et al.</i> (2018), Buchoud <i>et al.</i> (2021), Creative Industries (2022), Abisuga and Sirayi (2018), UNESCO (2022), Sargent (2021), Bateman (2022), Gross <i>et al.</i> (2021), Khlystova <i>et al.</i> (2021), Bhowmik <i>et al.</i> (2021)
4	Human resource restriction	Mathory <i>et al.</i> (2022), Kurniawan <i>et al.</i> (2023), Creative Industries (2022), Jeannotte (2021), Hartati <i>et al.</i> (2022), Sargent (2021), Bateman (2022), O'Brien <i>et al.</i> (2020), Vitálišová <i>et al.</i> (2021), Sungkawati (2021), Klein and Todesco (2021), Wolor <i>et al.</i> (2021), Kukreja (2022)
5	Technological adaptation	Wijayani and Puspitarini (2022), Hendrati <i>et al.</i> (2022), Protogerou <i>et al.</i> (2022), Novotny (2021), Priyono <i>et al.</i> (2020), Priambodo <i>et al.</i> (2021), Gasparin and Quinn (2020), Bennett <i>et al.</i> (2021), Towse <i>et al.</i> (2020), Nobre (2020a, b), Joffe <i>et al.</i> (2022)
6	Training and education	Kurniawan <i>et al.</i> (2023), Protogerou <i>et al.</i> (2022), Crawford and Dewfield (2022), Priambodo <i>et al.</i> (2021), Riley (2021), Gasparin and Quinn (2020), Tresna and Raharja, (2019), Beckett and Easton (2022), Bateman (2022)
7	Customer interaction	Motiv (2021), Buchoud <i>et al.</i> (2021), Luft (2022), Hawley (2022), Sargent (2021), Bateman (2022), Harrison (2021), Nobre (2020b), Vecco <i>et al.</i> (2022)
8	Finance and funding	Chung <i>et al.</i> (2018), Novotny (2021), Creative Industries (2022), Harwiki and Malet (2019), Abisuga and Sirayi (2018), Gasparin and Quinn (2020), Salder (2021), Beckett and Easton (2022), Stafford (2022), Khlystova <i>et al.</i> (2021), Bhowmik <i>et al.</i> (2021)
9	Diversity	Novotny (2021), Murillo-Aviña <i>et al.</i> (2022), Beckett and Easton, (2022), Stafford (2022), Gross <i>et al.</i> (2021), Azizova and Huseyn (2021)
10	Noncollaboration	Crawford and Dewfield (2022), Riley (2021), Gasparin and Quinn (2020), Luft (2022), Hawley (2022), Liubarets <i>et al.</i> (2021), Azizova and Huseyn (2021)
11	Lack of information	Gunartin (2022), Priambodo <i>et al.</i> , (2021), Gasparin and Quinn (2020), Salder (2021), Ginting <i>et al.</i> (2020), Popa <i>et al.</i> (2021), Joffe <i>et al.</i> , (2022)
12	Environmental awareness (sustainability)	Harwiki and Malet (2019), Priambodo <i>et al.</i> (2021), Brydges <i>et al.</i> (2020), McKinsey (2021), Wijayani and Puspitarini (2022)
13	Innovation constraint	Harwiki and Malet (2019), Tassabehji <i>et al.</i> (2019), Games (2019), Luft (2022), Beckett and Easton (2022), Creative Industries (2022), Kukreja (2022), Wijayani and Puspitarini (2022)
14	Knowledge sharing	Tassabehji <i>et al.</i> (2019), Liu (2018), Gasparin and Quinn (2020), Ginting <i>et al.</i> (2020), Wang <i>et al.</i> (2022)
15	Competition	Abisuga and Sirayi (2018), Beckett and Easton (2022), Rahmadani and Jefriyanto (2021), Munizu and Riyadi (2021)
16	New framework and model development	Murillo-Aviña <i>et al.</i> (2022), Peñarroya-Farell and Miralles (2022), Gasparin and Quinn (2020), Vecco <i>et al.</i> (2022), Hadi and Supardi (2020), Purnomo <i>et al.</i> (2021), Wolor <i>et al.</i> (2021)

(continued)

Table 7.
List of recovery challenges in the field of the creative SMEs industry*

Sr. No.	Recovery challenges name	Support references
17	Weak supply chain	Murillo-Aviña <i>et al.</i> (2022), Priambodo <i>et al.</i> (2021), Bennett <i>et al.</i> (2021), Bateman (2022), PRD (2020), Brydges <i>et al.</i> (2020), Ubaidillah and Riyanto (2020), Omar <i>et al.</i> (2020)
18	Customer's lack of awareness and pressure	Priambodo <i>et al.</i> (2021), Gasparin and Quinn (2020), Bennett <i>et al.</i> (2021), Sargent (2021), Purnomo <i>et al.</i> (2021)
19	Increased cost	Bennett <i>et al.</i> (2021), Indrawati <i>et al.</i> (2022), Paul <i>et al.</i> (2021), Omar <i>et al.</i> (2020), Vecco <i>et al.</i> (2022), Rahmadani and Jefriyanto (2021)
20	Industry switch	Stafford (2022), O'Brien <i>et al.</i> (2020), Siepel <i>et al.</i> (2021)
21	Decreased sales	Hartati <i>et al.</i> (2022), Sargent (2021), Bateman (2022), Towse <i>et al.</i> (2020), Harrison (2021), Paul <i>et al.</i> (2021), Sungkawati (2021), Bartik <i>et al.</i> (2020), The Economist, (2021), Wijayani and Puspitarini (2022)
22	Business closure	Gross <i>et al.</i> (2021), Omar <i>et al.</i> (2020), Klein and Todesco (2021), Khlystova <i>et al.</i> (2021), Hadi and Supardi (2020), Bouronikos (2022), Siepel <i>et al.</i> (2021), McKinsey (2021)
23	Management competence	Yustian (2021), Peñarroya-Farell and Miralles (2022), Adam and Alarifi (2021), Purnomo <i>et al.</i> (2021), Klein and Todesco (2021), Vecco <i>et al.</i> (2022)
24	Financial management	Andaningsih and Setyowati (2022), Creativescotland (2021), Rahmadani and Jefriyanto (2021), Widyastuti and Hermanto (2022), The Economist, (2021), Joffe <i>et al.</i> (2022)
25	Performance lag	Rosyadi <i>et al.</i> (2022), Andaningsih and Setyowati (2022), Khlystova <i>et al.</i> (2021), Creativescotland (2021), OECD (2020), Yustian (2021), Towse <i>et al.</i> (2020), Bhowmik <i>et al.</i> (2021)
26	Product/service promotion	De (2020), Priyono <i>et al.</i> (2020), Yustian (2021), Vecco <i>et al.</i> (2022), Siepel <i>et al.</i> (2021), Rahmadani and Jefriyanto (2021), Kukreja (2022)
27	Account monitoring	Widyastuti and Hermanto (2022), Peñarroya-Farell and Miralles (2022), Kukreja (2022), Wijayani and Puspitarini (2022), Joffe <i>et al.</i> (2022)
28	Debt increases and bankruptcy	De (2020), Popa <i>et al.</i> (2021), Oxfordeconomics (2020), Creative Industries (2022), Rahmadani and Jefriyanto (2021), Bhowmik <i>et al.</i> (2021), McKinsey (2021), Wijayani and Puspitarini (2022)
29	Daily operational capability	Rosyadi <i>et al.</i> (2022), Hawley (2022), Creative Industries (2022), Bateman (2022), Richard <i>et al.</i> (2021), OECD (2020), Oxfordeconomics (2020), Nobre, (2020b), The Economist (2021)
30	National and international market access	Vecco <i>et al.</i> (2022), Siepel <i>et al.</i> (2021), Bhowmik <i>et al.</i> (2021), McKinsey (2021), The Economist (2021), Kukreja (2022), Azizova and Huseyn (2021), Wijayani and Puspitarini (2022)
31	Transforming assurance	De (2020), Popa <i>et al.</i> (2021), Priyono <i>et al.</i> (2020), Nobre (2020b), Patrick and Elsdén (2020), Vecco <i>et al.</i> (2022), Rahmadani and Jefriyanto (2021), Peñarroya-Farell and Miralles (2022)
32	Size disadvantage	Klein and Todesco (2021), Popa <i>et al.</i> (2021), Oxfordeconomics (2020), Creative Industries (2022), Towse <i>et al.</i> (2020), Patrick and Elsdén (2020), Siepel <i>et al.</i> (2021), Azizova and Huseyn (2021)
33	Future uncertainty	Creativescotland (2021), OECD (2020), De (2020), Popa <i>et al.</i> (2021), Priyono <i>et al.</i> (2020), Oxfordeconomics (2020), Nobre (2020b), Towse <i>et al.</i> (2020), Comunian and England (2020)
34	Customer demand (behavioral change)	OECD (2020), De (2020), Popa <i>et al.</i> (2021), Priyono <i>et al.</i> (2020), Yustian (2021), Towse <i>et al.</i> (2020), Vecco <i>et al.</i> (2022), Peñarroya-Farell and Miralles (2022), Siepel <i>et al.</i> (2021), Bhowmik <i>et al.</i> (2021)

Table 7. Source(s): *Authors' own work

chains, organizations and stakeholders are not working together, provide theoretical insights into the systemic and structural barriers that might slow recovery after a pandemic.

Moreover, the creative sector, SMEs and COVID-19 are all areas where new and developing patterns may be identified and clarified, enriching the theoretical landscape and paving the way for the creation of more complete models and frameworks for crisis management and economic adaptation. Consequently, this study adds to the theoretical foundation of economic resilience and recovery techniques, especially as they pertain to innovative SMEs with novel difficulties.

5.1.2 Practical implications. Relationships in the SME supply chain, government, managerial/organizational and stakeholder spheres were uncovered via research in the literature. Prospective and current managers may benefit from analyzing the clusters to create new strategies. Managers will need buy-in from all quarters in the wake of the epidemic if they are to foster the healthy expansion of the sector. In addition, as was previously indicated, calls for government support for the revival of the creative industry are warranted. Managers and high-level decision-makers should weigh the potential costs against the benefits of various options for increasing company efficiency. With this in mind, this review seeks to help decision-makers become more familiar with the challenges faced by the creative SME sector as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic and the literary viewpoints on the subject. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2020) describes the COVID-19 epidemic as a “culture shock” to the creative sector. According to Kolb (2016), the introduction of social media and the Internet called for a radical revamping of marketing tactics and methods. Many businesses in the cultural sector, including museums and convention centers, depend largely on direct customer contact. Because of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, these groups have had to spend heavily on new systems and technology and learn new skills to keep up with the times. The audience may or may not return in large numbers despite these changes (Guilbert and Hyde, 2021). In addition, economies of scope have been harmed due to the growing acceptance of online weddings and 3D museum tours. The number of clients who pay for their services when they are provided in person is decreasing.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the critical necessity of understanding the nuanced difficulties encountered by innovative SMEs throughout the post-COVID-19 recovery period. The research adds to the expanding body of literature on economic adaptation in the aftermath of a global crisis by calling attention to the paucity of studies on this subject. The paper successfully reveals a notable lack of synergy among critical categories – government, supply chain, organizational and stakeholders – that significantly impacts recovery within the creative SME industry by employing a rigorous methodological approach, including bibliometric literature review and network analysis. The creative sector and SMEs have been significantly impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic and the identification of new patterns provides vital insights into the industry’s and the sector’s changing environment. To help businesses adapt to the new realities posed by the pandemic, this study provides a comprehensive framework for researchers, industry practitioners and managers to analyze and understand the problems at hand. The research has several flaws, however and that has to be stated. While helpful, the study’s reliance on a bibliometric literature evaluation and network analysis means it may miss some of the creative SME industry’s nuanced recovery issues. Although effort was made in selecting these 43 papers, it is possible that they do not represent the full breadth of available research. Furthermore, given the dynamic nature of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the creative sector, the results of this research should be seen as a snapshot taken at a particular period. To better understand the difficulties that creative SMEs encounter during their return, future studies might use mixed-method techniques to go beyond the aforementioned confines. Studies using a longer time frame

would allow researchers to see how these problems change over time and how successful various solutions are. The results' applicability might also be improved with the use of comparison analysis across sectors and locations. There is room for beneficial inquiry into the unique roles of digital transformation, innovation and government policies in addressing recovery issues in the creative sector. This study provides a springboard for a myriad of future studies that might elucidate the dynamics of economic recovery after a pandemic.

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