

Knowledge management for cultural capital investment in universities: A proposed model

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Received March, 2026

Accepted August, 2026

Abstract

Purpose: Investing in cultural capital is vital for universities operating within the knowledge economy; however, integrated models linking knowledge management (KM) processes to cultural value creation in higher education remain limited. This study aims to develop a KM-based model to support investment in cultural capital at King Abdulaziz University.

Design/methodology/approach: A mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to 240 academic and administrative leaders, while qualitative insights were gathered from a focus group of seven experts in KM and the cultural sector to refine the model. The study examined knowledge generation, storage, sharing, and application.

Findings: The results indicate a strong perceived role for KM in supporting investment in cultural capital, with an overall mean score of 4.02. Knowledge sharing had the highest mean (4.22), followed by knowledge storage (4.20), generation (4.12), and application (4.09). Based on these findings, the study proposes an integrated KM model linking core KM processes to cultural capital development.

Research limitations/implications: The model is conceptually developed and contextually informed by empirical evidence from a single Saudi university. Further research is needed to examine its applicability across different higher education contexts.

Practical implications: The model offers practical guidance for university leaders and policymakers seeking to promote cultural investment and institutional competitiveness and may support the mobilization of intellectual resources for sustainable cultural value creation.

Originality/value: The study integrates KM processes with cultural capital investment in higher education and offers an original conceptual framework for examining how universities may mobilize intellectual resources to support cultural value creation, providing contextual evidence from a Saudi university within the knowledge economy.

Keywords: Knowledge management, Cultural capital, Knowledge economy, Higher education, Integrated KM model, Cultural value

Jel Codes: I23, M19, O31

To cite this article:

Abduljalil, M., Komosany, N., & Bahkali, I. (2026). Knowledge management for cultural capital investment in universities: A proposed model. *Intangible Capital*, 22(3), 893–915. <https://doi.org/10.3926/ic.3836>

1. Introduction

The contemporary knowledge economy has redefined the sources of value creation, placing knowledge, creativity, and intangible assets at the center of institutional competitiveness and sustainability (Satar et al., 2025). Within this context, knowledge management (KM) has evolved into a strategic organizational capability that supports knowledge creation, organization, storage, transfer, and application, thereby strengthening strategic decision-making and sustaining competitive advantage (Ferreira et al. 2020; Nonaka & Toyama, 2015). Universities, as knowledge-intensive organizations, are uniquely positioned to operationalize KM not only for research and innovation but also for the strategic investment of cultural assets.

Parallel to the rise of the knowledge economy, the cultural and creative sectors have gained increasing recognition as drivers of economic growth, innovation, and sustainable development. Within this context, cultural capital—encompassing cultural knowledge, creative capabilities, artistic production, and institutional recognition—has emerged as a foundational resource that supports creativity, social value creation, and long-term sustainable development (Borre et al., 2023; Hale et al., 2023).

In this regard, KM provides a critical operational bridge between cultural resources and value creation. International reports indicate the growing economic importance of cultural and creative industries, which contribute approximately 3.39% to global GDP (UNESCO, 2025), while the creative economy alone represents 3.1% of global GDP, 3% of global goods trade, and 21% of global services trade (United Nations General Assembly, 2023). Furthermore, Salvaggio (2024) emphasizes that the role of cultural institutions extends beyond the aesthetic dimension to encompass community engagement and support economic development through activities such as cultural tourism and knowledge-based industries.

However, the transformation of cultural capital from a latent institutional resource into an investable and value-generating asset requires systematic mechanisms capable of capturing, organizing, and mobilizing cultural knowledge (Nonaka & Toyama, 2015; UNESCO, 2025). Despite this need, while cultural capital has gained increasing theoretical attention within cultural economics and development studies (Krutpuksee et al., 2024; Wan, 2024), the integration of KM processes into cultural capital investment models remains limited, particularly within HEIs. Existing studies (e.g., Henz & Oliveira, 2024; Hale et al., 2023) continue to examine these domains largely as separate streams of research, providing few integrated frameworks that explain how knowledge is generated, stored, shared, and applied across cultural activities and value domains.

In response, several cultural sector frameworks—such as Throsby's (2008) concentric circles model, cultural value-chain (De-Propriis & Mwaura, 2013), and UNESCO's (2025) value-generation models—provide conceptual tools for understanding cultural value creation. However, these frameworks remain weakly connected to organizational knowledge processes. Integrating them with established KM models, such as the SECI model, offers the potential to develop a more holistic approach that aligns knowledge dynamics with cultural investment strategies.

Building on this integration, KM processes—generation, storage, sharing, and application—provide a systemic framework that can link academic knowledge with cultural practices and support the development of cultural capital within universities. Through these processes, universities can generate cultural content, preserve cultural knowledge, facilitate knowledge exchange, and translate knowledge into cultural initiatives and creative activities. Integrating KM with different forms of cultural capital—tangible, embodied, and institutional—strengthens the university's role in the creative economy and enhances its contribution to cultural and social development.

Within the Saudi context, this integration gains particular relevance in light of Vision 2030, which emphasizes the knowledge economy, cultural development, and the strategic role of universities in national transformation. King Abdulaziz University (KAU), as a leading research and educational institution, represents an appropriate context for examining how KM can be systematically employed to support investment in cultural capital. To address this gap, this study seeks to develop an integrated KM-based model for investing in cultural capital at KAU. Through an empirical examination of the four core KM processes—knowledge generation, storage, sharing, and application—and their integration with established KM and cultural sector frameworks, the study proposes a framework that conceptually links these processes to cultural value generation, thereby contributing to both theory and practice in higher education institutions (HEIs).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Knowledge Management

Recent decades have witnessed a broader transformation in the role of universities, expanding their mission beyond knowledge provision toward contributing to economic, social, and cultural value creation (Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2020). Florida (2002) links this transformation to the rise of the creative economy, while Cruz et al. (2019) highlight universities' increasing integration into global networks and the growing pressure to align their outputs with societal demands. However, despite this expanded role, knowledge transfer activities remain predominantly associated with technological and scientific domains, while cultural domains continue to receive comparatively limited attention (Cruz et al., 2019).

Building on the university's evolving role in the knowledge and creative economy, KM has become a cornerstone for strategic and sustainable advantage (Omotayo, 2015). It provides a systematic framework to create, organize, and leverage knowledge, enhancing institutional performance, innovation, and sustainability (Jelinek, 2011 in Igbinovia & Ikenwe, 2017). KM Processes (KMPs) —including knowledge creation, storage, sharing, and application— form an integrated system through which organizational knowledge is generated, retained, disseminated, and exploited (Adeinat & Abdulfatah, 2019; Teixeira et al., 2020).

Knowledge generation involves acquiring, creating, and innovating knowledge via research, learning, and creative thinking, often conceptualized through Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) SECI model (Massoudi & Birdawod, 2023; Pattinson & Preece, 2022). Knowledge storage codifies and organizes knowledge to ensure accessibility and continuity, transforming tacit knowledge into explicit forms for long-term use (Haapalainen & Pusa, 2012; Igbinovia & Ikenwe, 2017). Knowledge sharing entails the dissemination of explicit and tacit knowledge through formal and informal mechanisms such as publications, communities of practice, mentoring, and social interaction (Ikenwe & Igbinovia, 2015; Igbinovia & Ikenwe, 2017; Latilla et al., 2019). Knowledge application translates knowledge into practical value, crucial for organizational effectiveness and higher education in converting intellectual and cultural resources into sustainable outcomes (Igbinovia & Ikenwe, 2017).

Against this backdrop, knowledge management (KM) has become a strategic mechanism supporting organizational development and decision-making in higher education institutions (HEIs) (Dneprovskaya & Shevtsova, 2023). In this context, HEIs function as learning organizations that integrate knowledge creation and application to enhance intellectual capital and achieve sustainable development, with research and development (R&D) representing a key output of KM processes. However, KM in HEIs remains a rapidly growing yet fragmented field lacking integrated theoretical frameworks. Quarchioni et al. (2022) describe it as embryonic, characterized by diverse approaches and limited conceptual integration, and identify six core axes —strategy, processes, technologies, human factors and organizational culture, performance and innovation, and governance and policies— calling for a comprehensive framework that connects them. Complementing this view, Galgotia and Lakshmi (2022) argue that knowledge generated within universities is often inadequately organized and utilized, highlighting the need for a holistic KM approach encompassing acquisition, storage, dissemination, and application to support research and innovation. Furthermore, Latilla et al. (2019) demonstrate that the absence of formal knowledge transfer mechanisms threatens the sustainability of tacit knowledge. This aligns with Zukauskaitė's (2012) view of universities as central actors in knowledge exchange and innovation networks; however, prior research (Sokoh & Okolie, 2021) has largely focused on small organizations or networks rather than universities as integrated systems producing cultural capital in its embodied, objectified, and institutionalized forms.

Nevertheless, KM research in HEIs has predominantly focused on performance outcomes. Masa'deh et al. (2017) confirm a direct positive impact of KM processes on job performance, while Sahibzada et al. (2022) show that this relationship is mediated by knowledge worker productivity. Bratianu (2022) advances a multidimensional perspective, conceptualizing knowledge as intellectual, emotional, and spiritual resources and emphasizing dynamic strategies based on knowledge flows, leadership, partnerships, and cultural context. Consistent with this perspective, recent studies indicate that effective KM also depends on enabling organizational conditions, including innovation, institutional collaboration, and organizational culture, which strengthen knowledge utilization and institutional performance (Asiedu et al., 2023; Teixeira-Quiros et al., 2022; Aichouche et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence further indicates that KM enhances organizational creativity (Alzghoul et al., 2023) and facilitates the transformation of academic assets into competitive advantage (Chaudhary et al., 2023). Moreover, bibliometric analyses (Altawe et al., 2026) reveal rapid growth in KM research, particularly in relation to digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and sustainability.

2.2. Knowledge Management Models

To conceptualize these knowledge processes, several KM models have been proposed to explain how knowledge is created, shared, and applied within organizations. These include the Evans–Dalkir–Bidian model (Evans et al., 2014), the Fraunhofer model (Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering IAO, 2003), the McElroy model (McElroy, 2003), and the Nonaka–Takeuchi SECI model (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). While these models offer conceptual frameworks for understanding knowledge flows, they vary in scope, operationalization, and empirical application. Among these, the SECI model is widely recognized for its systematic explanation of how tacit and explicit knowledge interact to generate organizational knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Xu, 2013). Its emphasis on dynamic, cyclical processes makes it particularly relevant for settings where knowledge is both a strategic asset and a cultural product.

The Nonaka–Takeuchi SECI model (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka et al., 2000; refined by Xu, 2013) is one of the most influential knowledge management models, providing a conceptual framework for understanding knowledge creation and conversion within organizations. The model has been widely applied and further developed across diverse organizational and higher education contexts, as demonstrated by recent studies such as Böhm and Durst (2026), Žatuchin (2024), and Purnamawati and Hidayat (2025).

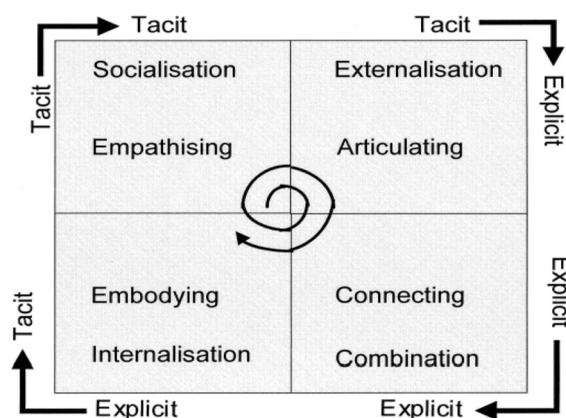


Figure 1. The SECI model of knowledge creation (Nonaka et. al., 2000)

The Nonaka–Takeuchi SECI model (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka et al, 2000; refined by Xu, 2013) illustrates how tacit and explicit knowledge are transformed into organizational knowledge through four dynamic and interrelated processes: Socialization, Externalization, Combination, and Internalization. Socialization (tacit–tacit) involves sharing tacit knowledge through experience, observation, and interaction. Externalization (tacit–explicit) converts tacit knowledge into explicit forms, such as concepts, documents, or publications. Combination (explicit–explicit) integrates diverse explicit knowledge to create new knowledge, while Internalization (explicit–tacit) occurs when individuals absorb and apply explicit knowledge, transforming it into personal expertise and organizational learning. These processes operate iteratively in a spiral, amplifying knowledge across individual, group, and organizational levels, and facilitating continuous innovation by engaging both internal and external knowledge sources. In this study, the SECI model is used as a foundational framework to structure KM processes that drive the transformation of knowledge into cultural capital within the proposed KMM-CCI framework.

2.3. Cultural Capital and Conceptual Models

The concept of cultural capital has evolved from Bourdieu’s foundational framework, where economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital are interconnected and convertible, albeit requiring effort, time, and strategic

investment (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital, in this view, is not merely an individual asset but is embedded within social and institutional structures that confer its effectiveness. Bourdieu (1986) differentiates between embodied cultural capital—skills, knowledge, and dispositions acquired through education and socialization; objectified cultural capital—tangible cultural artifacts; and institutionalized cultural capital—formal academic qualifications or credentials. This tripartite conceptualization highlights the cumulative, socially mediated, and institutionally reinforced nature of cultural capital. Importantly, it also frames the mechanisms through which cultural knowledge can be reproduced, mobilized, and transformed into social or economic advantage.

Extending Bourdieu's sociological lens, Throsby (1999, 2001, 2008, 2015) situates cultural capital within the domain of cultural economics, emphasizing that cultural goods carry intrinsic, symbolic, and institutional value that cannot be fully captured by market pricing alone. He distinguishes between economic and cultural value, proposing cultural capital as a distinct asset that stores, embodies, or generates cultural value in addition to any economic returns (Throsby, 1999). Throsby's framework is further refined through the concepts of intrinsic, instrumental, and institutional value, offering a systematic approach to evaluating cultural goods beyond purely financial metrics. This theoretical distinction is particularly relevant to HEIs, which generate and disseminate knowledge that is simultaneously intellectual, cultural, and social. Accordingly, cultural capital in HEIs may be understood as the cumulative cultural value generated through knowledge-intensive activities rather than as a static stock of cultural resources. Drawing on Bourdieu's typology and Throsby's cultural economics perspective, it encompasses the symbolic, creative, and institutional assets that emerge through KM processes of generation, storage, sharing, and application. Investment in cultural capital is therefore reflected in the university's ability to transform these processes into measurable cultural outcomes, including scholarly and creative outputs, documented cultural assets and intellectual property, cultural events and partnerships, and digital and entrepreneurial initiatives. Collectively, these outcomes represent tangible and intangible manifestations of cultural value that strengthen institutional competitiveness while contributing to broader social and economic development.

Recent scholarship has increasingly addressed the intersection of cultural capital with digital and intangible resources. Merisalo and Makkonen (2022) conceptualize digital capital as an intangible resource encompassing both technical and cognitive competencies, echoing Bourdieu's notion of embodied capital. Similarly, Calderón-Gómez (2021) distinguishes tangible and intangible digital assets, highlighting the cumulative and transferable nature of such resources. These developments suggest that cultural capital in contemporary contexts is not limited to physical artifacts or formal qualifications but extends to knowledge-based, digital, and socially embedded assets, which HEIs are uniquely positioned to cultivate.

Building on these theoretical perspectives, an important question remains regarding how cultural capital can be operationalized within university contexts. Studies confirm its role in employability (Chi & Vu, 2023), cultural entrepreneurship (Romanelli & Zbucha, 2020), creative industries (Hale et al., 2023), economic growth (Wan, 2024), and sustainability (Hack-Polay et al., 2023). However, these studies primarily examine cultural capital from sectoral or organizational perspectives, providing limited insight into how knowledge production within HEIs may contribute to the development of cultural assets. This perspective highlights the importance of examining conceptual models that explain the relationship between cultural value creation and institutional knowledge processes. One of the key cultural models considered in this study is Throsby's (2008) Concentric Circles Model of the Cultural Industries.

Throsby's (2008) Concentric Circles Model illustrates the relationship between cultural and economic value in creative industries. The model positions basic creative arts at the core, where cultural value is highest, surrounded by increasingly commercialized industries in successive outer circles. While widely adopted by organizations such as UNESCO, the WTO, and the World Economic Forum, the model has limitations when applied to HEIs. Specifically, it does not account for knowledge flows, academic mediation, or institutional mechanisms that convert educational or research outputs into cultural capital. Thus, although conceptually robust for mapping value relationships in industries, its direct operationalization for universities remains underexplored. In this study, the model is used to inform the classification of cultural assets that can be leveraged through KM processes within the proposed KMM-CCI framework.

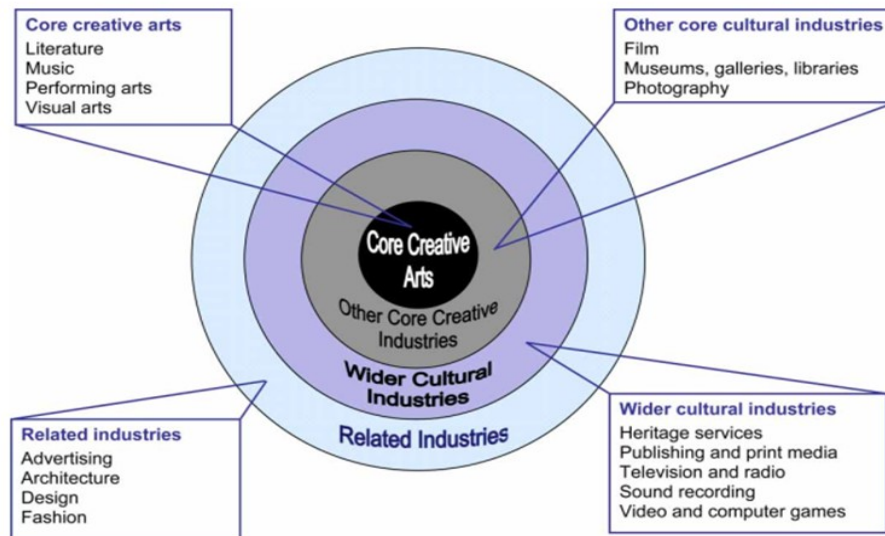


Figure 2. The concentric circles model of the cultural industries (Throsby, 2008)

Complementing Throsby's perspective, De-Propriis and Mwaura (2013) propose the Cultural Value Chain and Intermediate Processes Model.

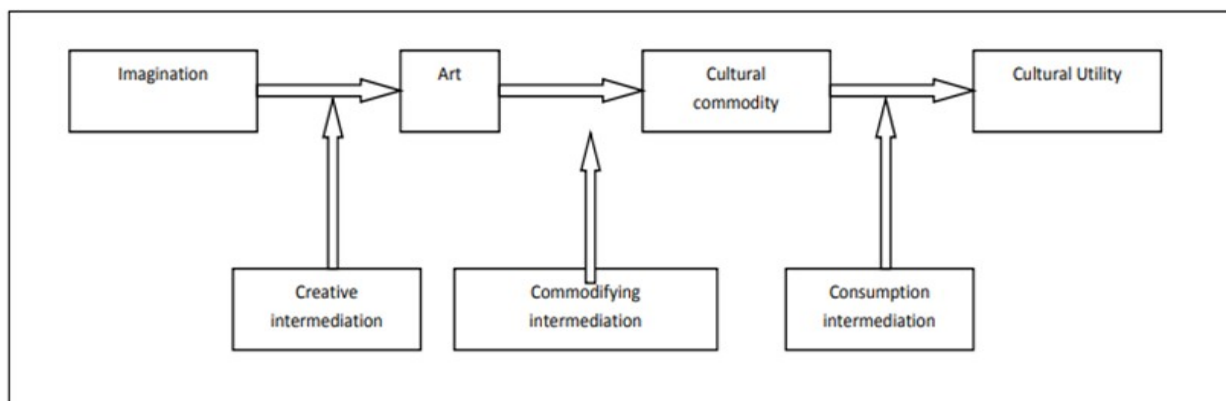


Figure 3. Cultural Value Chain and Intermediate Processes. (De-Propriis & Mwaura, 2013)

Figure 3. The De-Propriis and Mwaura (2013) model addresses these limitations by introducing cultural intermediaries—actors who mediate between creators and audiences across the value chain. The model identifies creative, commoditization, and consumer mediation, highlighting how cultural ideas are translated into both symbolic and marketable forms. A notable contribution is the cultural value-added curve, which illustrates that cultural value peaks during creation and consumption, and dips during production. While this model foregrounds mediation and symbolic value creation, it is primarily designed for cultural industries, not universities. Thus, the translation of tacit academic knowledge into institutionalized cultural capital remains insufficiently theorized. In this study, the model is used to highlight the role of institutional and knowledge mediation processes in transforming academic knowledge into cultural capital within the proposed KMM-CCI framework.

Extending this value-chain perspective, UNESCO's (2025) Creative Value Generation Systems framework conceptualizes cultural production as a dynamic system involving creators, participants, supporters, and intermediaries.

It distinguishes creativity and production, publishing, and consumption systems, emphasizing collaboration, rights management, and audience engagement. While this system's approach offers a more holistic

understanding of cultural value creation, its application to HEIs is largely implicit. Specifically, it does not account for how universities can strategically leverage KM processes —generation, storage, sharing, and application— to enhance cultural capital as a tangible and intangible institutional asset. In this study, the framework is used to support the integration of KM processes into cultural production systems, enabling the transformation of university-generated knowledge into institutional cultural capital within the proposed KMM-CCI framework. Collectively, these models provide complementary perspectives on knowledge processes and cultural value creation; however, understanding how these perspectives can be integrated within higher education requires further synthesis.

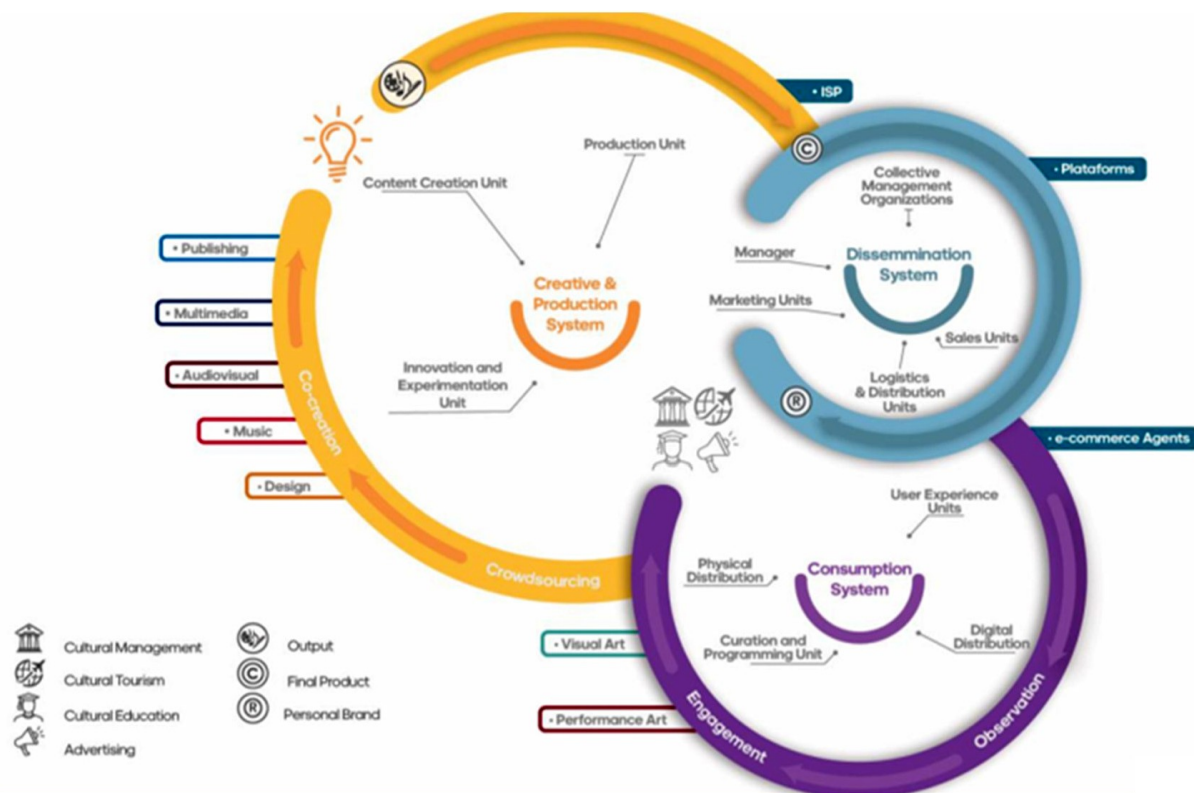


Figure 4. Creative Value Generation Systems Model for Cultural and Creative Industries (UNESCO, 2025)

Taken together, the reviewed literature demonstrates substantial progress in explaining KM processes and conceptualizing cultural capital within higher education. Existing KM models, particularly the SECI model and related frameworks, provide systematic explanations of knowledge generation, storage, sharing, and application, whereas cultural capital models emphasize the symbolic, social, institutional, and economic dimensions of cultural value. Collectively, these studies reveal two complementary yet only partially connected lines of inquiry. KM research has primarily examined organizational performance, innovation, and knowledge flows, whereas cultural capital research has focused on cultural value creation and cultural assets without fully explaining the knowledge-based mechanisms through which universities generate, preserve, and transform these assets.

Consequently, limited attention has been given to how KM processes contribute to the formation of embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital within HEIs. This conceptual separation highlights the need for an integrated framework that brings together knowledge management processes and cultural capital perspectives to examine how university-generated knowledge may contribute to cultural value creation and sustainable institutional development. Moreover, the reviewed literature is predominantly drawn from Asian and European contexts, with comparatively limited applied research examining such integration within Arab universities, particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. These gaps provide the theoretical foundation for the integrated framework proposed in the present study.

3. Methodology

3.1. A Quantitative Approach

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2018), integrating quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the role of KM in supporting investment in cultural capital at KAU and to develop a proposed investment model. The quantitative component employed a descriptive case study design using a structured questionnaire to investigate current KM practices related to cultural capital investment. The descriptive-analytical approach was adopted based on literature supporting its suitability for exploratory studies on KM in HEIs, as it enables accurate description of organizational and cognitive phenomena without assuming causal relationships. Study instruments and items were developed from relevant prior research to ensure content validity and conceptual consistency.

3.1.1. Sample Selection

A purposive sampling was employed to identify participants who occupied academic and administrative leadership positions and possessed direct knowledge of KM practices and cultural capital investment within the university. The organizational units included in the study were selected according to predefined criteria that reflected their relevance to the research objectives, as outlined below:

1. Relevance to cultural capital, through disciplines or activities linked to cultural sector domains outlined by UNESCO (2025). This criterion was adopted to ensure that the selected units are directly engaged in disciplines or activities connected to cultural capital, as defined by UNESCO (2025). Such alignment ensures that participants operate within contexts where cultural capital is actively produced, managed, or enhanced.
2. Connection to KM and the knowledge economy, through programs or initiatives that support the transition toward a knowledge-based economy. This criterion ensures that the selected units are involved in activities related to knowledge creation, sharing, and application, which is essential for examining the intersection between KM practices and cultural capital investment.
3. Demonstrated societal impact, through active community cultural engagement and the enrichment of cultural capital. This criterion focuses on units with measurable contributions to cultural development. Including such entities enables the study to capture the applied and outward-facing dimensions of cultural capital investment beyond institutional boundaries.

The organizational units included in the study are summarized in Table 1. Their selection was guided by the predefined criteria described above.

Faculties	Arts; Economics; Tourism; Architecture
Deanships	Graduate Studies; Student Affairs; Scientific Research; Library Affairs
Centers	Entrepreneurship and Innovation; Digital Transformation; Human Skills Development; University Education Development; “Made by My Hands”; Innovators Studies and Research; Scientific Publishing; Arabization and Translation
Administrative Departments	Investment; Human Resources; Culture; Finance

Table 1. Organizational units included in the study

3.1.2. Population and Sample

The study population consisted of participants who occupied academic and administrative leadership positions at KAU. The study relied on purposive sampling to recruit participants from organizational units whose functions aligned with the study objectives. The selected units are presented in Table 1. This technique was adopted in line with the study objectives, which require selecting participants with direct knowledge of the research context. It is appropriate for identifying “information-rich cases” among academic and administrative leaders, as noted by Creswell (2018) who emphasizes its relevance in exploratory research. The sample comprised 240 participants from the target population of academic and administrative leaders, a size considered adequate

for descriptive exploratory studies and suitable for preliminary analysis within the institutional context. The participants represented a range of academic and administrative leadership positions, involving deans, vice-deans, department chairs, supervisors, individuals serving as directors, deputy directors, and unit managers. Following the distribution of the questionnaire to the selected participants, 198 completed forms were collected. After screening the responses, three incomplete questionnaires were discarded, resulting in a final sample of 195 valid cases for analysis, with a response rate of 81.25%.

3.1.3. Study Instrument

3.1.3.1. Questionnaire Design

The study employed a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire was originally developed for the doctoral research project after an extensive review of the literature on KM and its role in cultural capital investment and was designed to align with the overall research objectives and questions. The instrument comprises two main sections. The first collects demographic information (gender, age, qualifications, academic rank, leadership position, and years of experience), while the second consists of four axes addressing: (1) the current state of KM at KAU, (2) the role of KM in supporting investment in cultural capital, (3) challenges facing the application of KM, and (4) requirements for strengthening this role. The questionnaire was developed with particular attention to the institutional context of KAU and was informed by relevant literature and previous studies conducted within the university (e.g., Al-Sulami, 2021; Al-Zahrani, 2022). The instrument was also used in a related study Abduljalil et al. (2026), which examined the third and fourth axes of the research framework, focusing on challenges and requirements. The present study utilizes the validated questionnaire to analyze the second axis, which examines the role of KM in supporting investment in cultural capital. Although both studies are based on the same research context, they address distinct research objectives and questions. The analyzed axis in the current study comprises four dimensions: knowledge generation, knowledge storage, knowledge sharing, and knowledge application. Each dimension consists of five items.

3.1.3.2. Validity and Reliability

Face and Content Validity

The questionnaire was reviewed by the thesis supervisors and five experts in KM to ensure clarity, relevance, and comprehensive coverage of the study variables. It was also examined by a linguistic reviewer to ensure accuracy and clarity of expression. Based on their feedback, the questionnaire was refined and finalized before the pilot study.

Internal Consistency

A pilot study involving 30 participants with characteristics comparable to those of the target population was conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The pilot data were analyzed using SPSS, and Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the association between each item and its corresponding dimension. The results, presented in Table 2, indicated statistically significant positive correlations across all items, supporting the internal consistency of the instrument.

No.	KM for Cultural Capital Investment at KAU	Pearson's Correlation
Knowledge Generating: The creation or acquisition of new organizational knowledge.		
1	The university encourages the establishment of cultural facilities and attracts funding from donors and investors to support and develop tangible cultural capital.	0.662*
2	The university organizes events and workshops to stimulate creative thinking and generate new knowledge that contributes to the development of intangible cultural capital.	0.831**
3	The university is committed to developing individuals' skills and competencies in cultural and linguistic fields.	0.791**
4	The university attracts talent to foster innovation and add value to cultural projects.	0.746*
5	The university encourages academic departments to collaborate on joint cultural projects that promote innovation and enhance the university's reputation.	0.793**

No.	KM for Cultural Capital Investment at KAU	Pearson's Correlation
Knowledge Storage: The capture, organization, and preservation of organizational knowledge.		
6	The university is committed to preserving tangible cultural resources (such as documents, artworks, and archives) and facilitating access to them.	0.639**
7	The university manages digital libraries containing databases of cultural research and studies.	0.818**
8	The university documents patents and awards obtained in cultural fields.	0.639*
9	The university provides systems for protecting intellectual property rights related to cultural and creative initiatives.	0.694*
10	The university is committed to documenting and developing cultural activities and individual experiences, thereby enhancing the cumulative knowledge base.	0.736*
Knowledge Sharing: The exchange of knowledge and experiences among organizational members.		
11	The university provides technological tools for knowledge exchange and fosters creativity and innovation in cultural fields.	0.811**
12	The university establishes mechanisms to benefit from experts with high cultural standing.	0.692*
13	The university establishes partnerships with external cultural institutions to exchange expertise and knowledge, enrich cultural capital, and generate new economic benefits.	0.778**
14	The university supports initiatives to publish cultural research and articles in peer-reviewed journals and periodicals to expand cultural content.	0.756*
15	The university organizes cultural and artistic exhibitions to maximize the economic value of cultural resources and attract investment.	0.729*
Knowledge Application: The use of organizational knowledge to support cultural initiatives, and value creation.		
16	The university launches cultural awards and competitions that contribute to the development of cultural capital.	0.778**
17	The university recognizes and nurtures talented individuals to promote innovation and the development of patents.	0.694*
18	The university supports the marketing of cultural goods (such as books, paintings, and films) to achieve sustainable economic returns.	0.741*
19	The university offers intensive English language courses to improve the language proficiency of its staff.	0.853**
20	The university offers programs in cultural and arts management to apply acquired knowledge and enhance cultural and economic value.	0.680*

** $p < 0.01$. * $p < 0.05$

Table 2. Pearson's Correlation Between Items (based on SPSS)

Reliability

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The instrument demonstrated high internal reliability across all dimensions, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.945 to 0.973 and an overall coefficient of 0.959. These results confirm the suitability of the instrument for the present study.

3.2. Qualitative Method: Focus Group for Model Development

To complement the quantitative findings and support the development of the proposed model, a qualitative focus group was conducted within a sequential explanatory mixed-method design. This phase aimed to refine and contextualize the model based on expert insights. The focus group included seven purposively selected participants, all holding PhDs in KM and possessing more than five years of professional experience. Participants were academic or administrative leaders at KAU with direct involvement in KM, institutional strategy, or cultural initiatives.

The session was conducted online via Zoom and lasted approximately two hours. It was moderated using a semi-structured discussion guide addressing the model's components, operational mechanisms, implementation feasibility, and alignment with the university context. The session was recorded with informed consent and transcribed for analysis. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis through initial coding and subsequent

categorization into broader themes related to strengths, gaps, and implementation requirements. The qualitative findings were triangulated with quantitative results to enhance interpretive depth and coherence.

Trustworthiness was ensured through member checking, where participants reviewed a summary of the findings to confirm accuracy. Confidentiality and voluntary participation were maintained in accordance with institutional ethical standards. This qualitative phase strengthened the model's conceptual coherence, contextual relevance, and practical applicability.

4. Results

The results are presented according to the four dimensions of the second questionnaire axis —knowledge generation, knowledge storage, knowledge sharing, and knowledge application— which represent the core KM processes examined in this study. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each dimension to assess its perceived role in supporting investment in cultural capital.

4.1. Knowledge Generating

Table 3 presents the arithmetic means and standard deviations of participants' responses regarding the Knowledge Generation dimension. Overall, the findings indicate that knowledge generation practices are perceived as important mechanisms for supporting cultural capital investment. The highest-rated practice was developing individuals' skills and competencies in cultural and linguistic fields (Item 3), highlighting the central role of human capability development in generating and utilizing cultural knowledge. Conversely, academic collaboration on joint cultural projects (Item 1) received the lowest rating, suggesting a potential area for strengthening institutional collaboration. Nevertheless, the consistently high ratings across all items indicate a strong recognition of knowledge generation as a foundation for cultural value creation.

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Agreement Degree	Rank
1	The university encourages the establishment of cultural facilities and attracts funding from donors and investors to support and develop tangible cultural capital.	3.88	.829	Agree	5
2	The university organizes events and workshops to stimulate creative thinking and generate new knowledge that contributes to the development of intangible cultural capital.	4.01	.692	Agree	2
3	The university is committed to developing individuals' skills and competencies in cultural and linguistic fields.	4.07	.600	Agree	1
4	The university attracts talent to foster innovation and add value to cultural projects.	3.97	.703	Agree	3
5	The university encourages academic departments to collaborate on joint cultural projects that promote innovation and enhance the university's reputation.	3.96	.775	Agree	4
The first dimension: Knowledge Generation for Cultural Capital Investment		4.12	.959		

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for the Knowledge Generation Dimension of KM (compiled by the authors using IBM SPSS Statistics 27)

4.2. Knowledge Storage

Table 4 presents the arithmetic means and standard deviations of participants' responses regarding the Knowledge Storage dimension. The findings highlight the perceived importance of knowledge storage practices in preserving and enabling access to cultural knowledge for investment purposes. The highest-rated practice was managing digital libraries containing databases of cultural research and studies (Item 2), emphasizing the role of digital infrastructure in safeguarding cultural knowledge and facilitating its future utilization. The relatively lower rating of preserving tangible cultural resources (Item 1) suggests a potential need for greater attention to physical cultural assets alongside digital preservation efforts. Overall, the findings indicate that knowledge storage mechanisms represent an important foundation for sustaining and developing cultural capital within the university context.

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Agreement Degree	Rank
1	The university is committed to preserving tangible cultural resources (such as documents, artworks, and archives) and facilitating access to them.	4.10	.628	Agree	5
2	The university manages digital libraries containing databases of cultural research and studies.	4.45	2.90	Strongly Agree	1
3	The university documents patents and awards obtained in cultural fields.	4.148	.660	Agree	3
4	The university provides systems for protecting intellectual property rights related to cultural and creative initiatives.	4.17	.652	Agree	2
5	The university is committed to documenting and developing cultural activities and individual experiences, thereby enhancing the cumulative knowledge base.	4.143	.617	Agree	4
The second dimension: Knowledge Storage for Cultural Capital Investment		4.20	.728		

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for the Knowledge Storage Dimension of KM (compiled by the authors using IBM SPSS Statistics 27)

4.3. Knowledge Sharing

Table 5 presents the arithmetic means and standard deviations of participants' responses regarding the Knowledge Sharing dimension. The findings emphasize the perceived importance of knowledge sharing practices in expanding access to cultural knowledge and enhancing its value within the university context. The highest-rated practice was supporting the publication of cultural research in peer-reviewed journals, highlighting the role of scholarly dissemination in transforming cultural knowledge into a shared institutional resource. The relatively lower rating of organizing cultural and artistic exhibitions suggests that practical cultural engagement activities may require further development to complement academic dissemination efforts. Overall, the findings indicate that knowledge sharing represents an important mechanism for connecting knowledge creation with broader cultural value.

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Agreement Degree	Rank
1	The university provides technological tools for knowledge exchange and fosters creativity and innovation in cultural fields.	4.07	.616	Agree	5
2	The university establishes mechanisms to benefit from experts with high cultural standing.	3.93	.743	Agree	1
3	The university establishes partnerships with external cultural institutions to exchange expertise and knowledge, enrich cultural capital, and generate new economic benefits.	3.86	.859	Agree	3
4	The university supports initiatives to publish cultural research and articles in peer-reviewed journals and periodicals to expand cultural content.	4.20	.614	Strongly Agree	2
5	The university organizes cultural and artistic exhibitions to maximize the economic value of cultural resources and attract investment.	3.81	.906	Agree	4
Third Dimension: Knowledge Sharing for Cultural Capital Investment		4.22	1.22		

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for the Knowledge Sharing Dimension of KM (compiled by the authors using IBM SPSS Statistics 27)

4.4. Knowledge Application

Table 6 presents the arithmetic means and standard deviations of participants' responses regarding the Knowledge Application dimension. The findings highlight the role of applying organizational knowledge in transforming cultural capabilities and ideas into practical initiatives that generate cultural value. The highest-rated practice was appreciating talent and innovation (Item 2), emphasizing the importance of recognizing creative capabilities as a means of converting knowledge into cultural outcomes. This was followed by supporting cultural awards and competitions (Item 1), which reflects the role of institutional initiatives in encouraging cultural participation and creativity. The relatively lower rating of marketing cultural products (Item 3) suggests that mechanisms for translating cultural outputs into economic value may require further development. Overall, the findings indicate that knowledge application represents an important link between knowledge resources and cultural capital investment.

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Agreement Degree	Rank
1	The university launches cultural awards and competitions that contribute to the development of cultural capital.	4.03	.620	Agree	2
2	The university recognizes and nurtures talented individuals to promote innovation and the development of patents.	4.14	.603	Agree	1
3	The university supports the marketing of cultural goods (such as books, paintings, and films) to achieve sustainable economic returns.	3.73	.791	Agree	5
4	The university offers intensive English language courses to improve the language proficiency of its staff.	4.00	.621	Agree	3
5	The university offers programs in cultural and arts management to apply acquired knowledge and enhance cultural and economic value.	3.84	.696	Agree	4
Fourth Dimension: Knowledge Application for Cultural Capital Investment		4.09	.913		

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for the Knowledge Application Dimension of KM (compiled by the authors using IBM SPSS Statistics 27)

Table 7 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the KM dimensions and shows that all dimensions were highly evaluated, indicating the perceived importance of KM practices in supporting cultural capital investment. Knowledge Sharing received the highest evaluation, highlighting the central role of exchanging and disseminating knowledge in transforming individual and institutional knowledge into shared cultural resources. Knowledge Application received the relatively lowest evaluation, which may indicate that translating cultural knowledge into practical initiatives remains an area requiring further development. Overall, the findings indicate that KM processes collectively provide an essential foundation for enabling universities to develop, preserve, exchange, and utilize cultural capital.

No.	Items	Mean	SD	Agreement Degree	Rank
1	Dimension 1: Knowledge Generation	4.12	.959	Agree	3
2	Dimension 2: Knowledge Storage	4.20	.728	Strongly Agree	2
3	Dimension 3: Knowledge Sharing	4.22	1.22	Strongly Agree	1
4	Dimension 4: Knowledge Application	4.09	.913	Agree	4
Axis 2: KM for Cultural Capital Investment		4.02	.382		

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for the KM Dimensions. (compiled by the authors using IBM SPSS Statistics 27)

4.5. The KM Model for Cultural Capital Investment (KMM-CCI)

4.5.1. Model Design

The model proposed in this study emerges as an integrated framework for investing in cultural capital within the university context, based on the integration of two fundamental research phases. In the first phase, a previous study Abduljalil et al. (2026) focused on diagnosing structural and organizational challenges and identifying KM requirements. The results revealed that investment in cultural capital at KAU faces strategic and organizational challenges (e.g., lack of a clear vision, limited institutional coordination, weak external partnerships), professional and training challenges (e.g., insufficient incentives and limited sustainable development programs for staff), informational challenges (e.g., inadequate documentation and weak evaluation mechanisms), and technological challenges (e.g., limited tools and platforms to support the collection, analysis, and storage of cultural knowledge). In contrast, the study identified key requirements to enhance the role of KM in cultural investment, including a strategic and structural framework that integrates cultural investment into the university's strategic direction and establishes specialized support units and centers; human development through targeted training and academic programs to strengthen competencies; and technological and knowledge infrastructure through the development of integrated electronic platforms for managing, documenting, and sharing cultural knowledge. These findings form the foundation of the KMM-CCI model, translating identified challenges and requirements

into an integrated framework that links knowledge management processes with cultural capital investment to support the creation of sustainable cultural and economic value.

The second phase explored the strategic role of KM processes—generation, storage, sharing, and application—in supporting the potential transformation of knowledge resources into tangible cultural capital, as supported by the findings of the current study. By combining previously identified enabling requirements with the proposed conceptual links among knowledge management processes and cultural capital investment, the model illustrates a conceptual pathway through which a university may transform tacit and explicit knowledge into cultural, social, symbolic, and economic value. The model draws on Throsby's theoretical framework, UNESCO cultural models, and the value chain models of De Propriis and Mwaura, with the SECI model serving as the cornerstone for explaining knowledge transformation within the university context.

To examine the model's contextual relevance and alignment with the institutional environment, the qualitative focus group phase described in the methodology was employed. Participants from KAU reviewed the model's components, commented on their contextual suitability, and provided feedback on the model's potential to connect knowledge with cultural and economic value. The resulting KMM-CCI model is therefore proposed as an integrated, applied framework that connects previously identified enabling requirements with knowledge management processes, supporting the university's institutional role as a cultural and knowledge producer in alignment with the objectives of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

4.5.2. Model Components

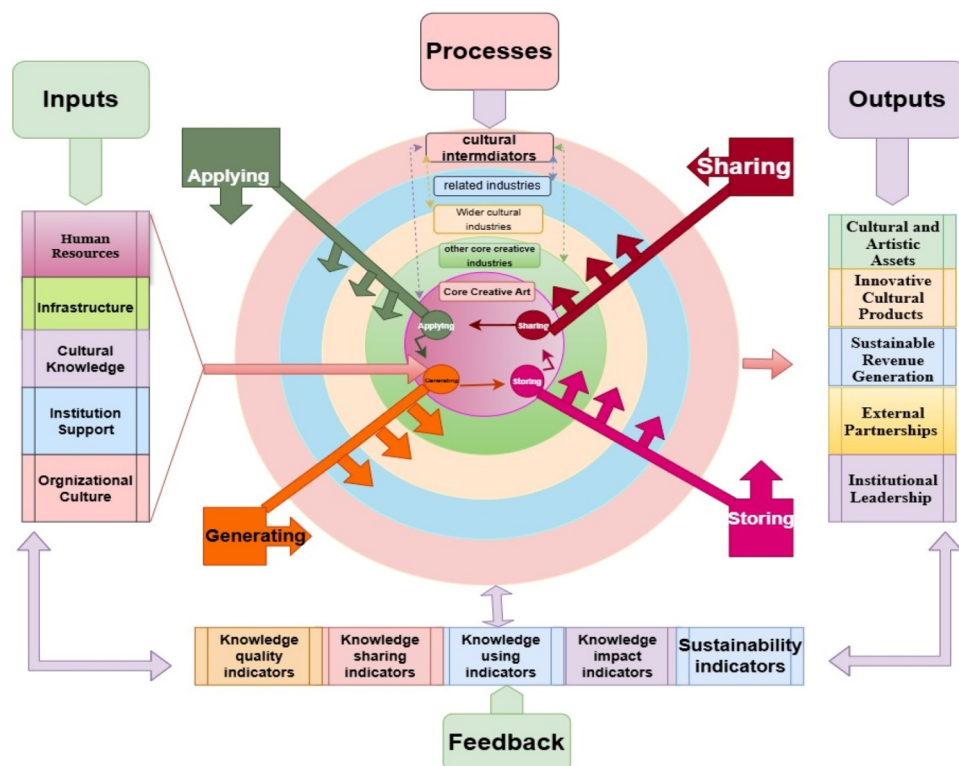


Figure 6. KM Model for Cultural Capital Investment

4.5.3. Input

The implementation of the proposed KM model for investing in cultural capital depends on a set of interrelated inputs that enable its application. These include human resources, infrastructure, institutional support, organizational culture, and cultural knowledge. Human resources represent the core driver of the model, involving students as cultural producers, faculty as mentors, administrators as coordinators, and external partners supporting knowledge exchange. Infrastructure—both physical and digital—facilitates the production and dissemination of cultural knowledge, while institutional support ensures strategic alignment

and sustainability. A collaborative organizational culture promotes creativity and knowledge sharing, and cultural knowledge, in both tacit and explicit forms, constitutes the primary asset for sustainable cultural capital investment.

4.5.4. Processes

The model integrates four complementary frameworks to structure cultural capital investment processes. Throsby's Concentric Circles model identifies cultural investment domains; Nonaka's SECI model organizes knowledge generation, storage, sharing, and application across all domains; De Propriis and Mwaura's Cultural Value Chain and Intermediate Processes model explains the sequence of value creation through cultural production, intermediation, and dissemination; and the UNESCO 2025 Framework highlights the role of cultural intermediaries and stakeholders. Together, these frameworks position cultural capital investment as a dynamic and interactive process rather than a linear value chain.

4.5.5. Circle One: Core Arts

This circle includes literature, music, and fine arts. KM processes support talent discovery, creative production, documentation of works, dissemination through performances and digital platforms, and application through awards and talent development programs. Survey and focus group findings highlighted strong knowledge sharing in these domains. Focus group insights emphasized cross-departmental collaboration as a driver for value creation.

4.5.6. Circle Two: Essential Cultural Industries

This circle covers film, museums, libraries, and audio-visual production. KM processes focus on creative collaboration, digital preservation of cultural outputs, knowledge dissemination through festivals and publications, and application through cultural production, entrepreneurship, and academic programs.

4.5.7. Circle Three: Broader Cultural Industries

This circle includes publishing, digital media, video games, and crafts. KM processes support interdisciplinary creation, documentation of cultural content and traditional skills, global knowledge sharing, and commercialization of cultural products. Quantitative data indicated high engagement in knowledge application for these outputs.

4.5.8. Circle Four: Culture-Related Industries

This circle encompasses design, advertising, architecture, and cultural tourism. KM processes enable innovation through design labs and training, knowledge exchange with industry partners, and application through incubators, creative services, and professional programs.

4.5.9. Circle Five: Cultural Intermediaries

This circle intersects all others and includes policymakers, critics, artists, legal advisors, marketers, entrepreneurs, and publishers. These actors mediate cultural value, protect intellectual property, expand audiences, and transform cultural production into sustainable cultural, economic, and symbolic value. This circle reflects the study's emphasis on external partnerships and institutional coordination as key enablers.

4.5.10. Outputs

The proposed model identifies multiple interconnected outputs that represent potential pathways through which knowledge management processes may contribute to tangible and intangible forms of cultural capital, informed by the survey and focus group findings. These outputs include the protection and development of cultural and artistic assets, the creation of innovative cultural products and services, and potential opportunities for diversified revenue streams through intellectual property, commercialization, and consulting activities. The model also provides a framework that could strengthen external partnerships, support student employability and cultural entrepreneurship, and contribute to the university's leadership and reputation in the cultural and creative sectors. Collectively, these proposed outputs represent potential areas of cultural value creation and may support the development of the university as a hub for cultural capital investment.

4.5.11. Feedback

Feedback is a critical mechanism for ensuring continuous improvement and evaluating the performance of the model. It relies on integrated indicators assessing the quality, sharing, and utilization of cultural knowledge, including its accuracy, relevance, and alignment with institutional objectives. Additional indicators measure the extent to which cultural knowledge contributes to creative production, educational activities, and decision-making, as well as its impact on cultural, social, symbolic, and economic value. Sustainability indicators further evaluate the continued generation, protection, and long-term use of cultural knowledge. Together, this feedback mechanism supports sustained knowledge-driven cultural investment and reflects the continuous transformation of tacit and explicit knowledge emphasized in the SECI model and cultural sector frameworks.

5. Discussion

The findings suggest that KM processes —knowledge generation, storage, sharing, and application— are perceived as relevant to cultural capital investment at KAU, indicating a coherent institutional approach rather than isolated organizational practices. These findings extend the current KM literature by suggesting that KM processes function not only as organizational capabilities for enhancing learning and performance but also as potential strategic mechanisms for identifying, preserving, sharing, and applying cultural assets within higher education institutions (HEIs). Previous research has largely emphasized the role of KM in organizational performance, innovation, creativity, and competitive advantage (Masa'deh et al., 2017; Alzghoul et al., 2023; Chaudhary et al., 2023). The present findings are broadly consistent with this literature, particularly in recognizing the importance of KM processes as an integrated system, while extending its application to cultural capital investment as an additional area of KM relevance in higher education.

This perspective broadens the scope of KM by positioning cultural capital investment as a potential area of application for KM within higher education. Theoretically, this integration establishes a conceptual link between KM processes and cultural capital investment by framing knowledge management as a potential mechanism through which universities can identify, preserve, share, and mobilize knowledge resources to support cultural value creation.

Empirically, the study contributes contextual evidence from the Saudi higher education context, where research examining the intersection of KM and cultural capital remains limited, thereby extending the empirical evidence base on their intersection in higher education. Methodologically, the study contributes by developing the KMM-CCI model, which brings together established theoretical frameworks and empirical insights into a unified conceptual framework that can inform future research and institutional application. Rather than empirically establishing these relationships, KMM-CCI provides a conceptual framework for examining them within the higher education context.

Given the descriptive and single-institution nature of the study, the findings provide contextual evidence of how KM processes are perceived and integrated into cultural capital investment at KAU rather than evidence of causal relationships or effects that can be generalized across HEIs. The results indicate the contextual relevance of considering KM processes in relation to cultural capital investment within the institutional context examined and provide a basis for developing the proposed KMM-CCI model. However, broader conclusions regarding the applicability, effectiveness, or explanatory capacity of the model require further empirical testing across multiple institutional contexts using appropriate statistical and comparative research designs.

Knowledge generation, exemplified by faculty development in creative, linguistic, and cultural domains, reflects the SECI processes of Socialization and Externalization, whereby tacit expertise is codified into cultural outputs. This is consistent with Throsby's concept of intangible cultural capital and suggests the potential for universities to mobilize intellectual resources in ways that support socially and culturally valuable knowledge. Importantly, the emphasis on higher-order cognitive skills —critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy— highlights the potential relevance of knowledge production to cultural and economic development and its alignment with KAU's strategic priorities and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

Knowledge storage at KAU reflects a systematic approach to preserving both tangible and intangible knowledge assets, including digital repositories, intellectual property, patents, and cultural initiatives. This practice can be

understood in relation to the combination and internalization aspects of the SECI model, helping to preserve knowledge and maintain its accessibility for potential future application in cultural capital development. Such practices may contribute to institutional sustainability and memory, which are relevant to long-term investment in cultural resources and to the university's role as a knowledge-intensive cultural producer. Nevertheless, while storage mechanisms received a high mean in the findings, further research is needed to examine how stored tacit knowledge is mobilized across faculties and creative units.

Knowledge sharing emerged as the most prominent KM process in the findings, facilitated by conferences, exhibitions, collaborative projects, and digital platforms. By fostering interaction and exchange, KAU's knowledge-sharing practices may facilitate the development of collective institutional capability from individual and departmental knowledge, supporting both symbolic and instrumental dimensions of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Throsby, 1999). Initiatives such as English language development, academic writing workshops, and international publishing support extend knowledge dissemination globally, reinforcing the university's cultural visibility and its role in the international knowledge network. Nevertheless, the evidence remains descriptive; quantitative assessment of knowledge flows or network analysis could strengthen the empirical grounding and allow future research to examine potential relationships between knowledge sharing and cultural value creation. The relatively high mean for knowledge sharing (4.22) is also consistent with literature emphasizing knowledge dissemination, social interaction, and knowledge exchange as central KM processes (Ikenwe & Igbinoia, 2015; Igbinoia & Ikenwe, 2017; Latilla et al., 2019). In the present context, however, knowledge sharing is considered not only in relation to organizational learning and performance but also as a potential contributor to cultural value creation.

Knowledge application represents the culmination of KM processes, translating knowledge into tangible cultural outputs such as creative projects, patents, awards, and community engagement programs. This dimension operationalizes the concept of institutionalized cultural capital and reflects KAU's potential to generate social, economic, and symbolic returns through the application of knowledge. However, while the descriptive results suggest a strong level of implementation, the absence of correlational or structural analysis limits the ability to determine the effectiveness of each KM process in producing measurable cultural impact. Incorporating explanatory analysis in future research could provide further empirical assessment of the proposed KM–Cultural Capital relationships and help examine the model's predictive utility in higher education contexts.

The study's findings indicate that KAU integrates KM processes (generation, storage, sharing, and application) into its institutional practices at an advanced level. This is evident in its focus on scientific publication in peer-reviewed journals as a primary channel for transforming knowledge into a cumulative cultural asset and enhancing its symbolic and economic value. The results also indicate the role of academic and digital platforms in expanding the dissemination of cultural knowledge and transforming it into investable cultural capital within the university.

These findings further reflect the university's efforts to develop research and linguistic capabilities through training programs and academic writing support centers, in addition to fostering innovation by recognizing talent, offering awards, and organizing cultural competitions. These practices may contribute to transforming knowledge into cultural and creative outputs with both economic and social value.

In this context, these results align with the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030, a comprehensive national strategic framework aimed at restructuring the Saudi economy by transitioning from oil dependency to a diversified, knowledge-based, and innovation-driven economy. The vision emphasizes strengthening the role of the cultural and creative sectors, developing human capital, supporting scientific research, and empowering universities as key drivers of economic and social development, in addition to enhancing quality of life through the promotion of cultural production, national identity, and creative industries.

The study's findings are also consistent with several previous studies in the field of KM and cultural capital. For example, they align with Zbucha (2020), who emphasized KM as a key strategy for building competitive advantage in cultural entrepreneurship, and Zukauskaitė (2012), who highlighted the role of universities in supporting innovation within cultural industries. They also correspond with Chi and Vu (2023), who highlighted the role of education and language learning in developing cultural capital, and Xing and Chi (2021), who

demonstrated the positive impact of cultural capital investment on economic growth. Taken together, these points of convergence extend existing insights by positioning KM processes as a potential mechanism for cultural capital investment within universities, thereby connecting two strands of literature that have largely been examined separately, particularly in the Saudi higher education context.

5.1. Model Application

The KMM-CCI model is applied at the institutional level as a strategic framework to guide universities in integrating KM processes (generation, storage, sharing, and application) into their development plans, thereby supporting investment in cultural capital. This is achieved by linking these processes to academic, cultural, and research initiatives, and directing policies and resources toward supporting creative activities and cultural production within the university. The study's findings also indicate that establishing a center for cultural capital can contribute to the practical activation of this model and enhance its institutional application.

Regarding the empirical verification of the model, future studies can test the relationships between its components using advanced statistical methods such as regression analysis or structural modeling. This will allow for measuring the impact of each KM process on cultural capital outputs.

As for measuring the results, a set of indicators reflecting cultural capital outputs can be used, such as the volume of cultural and creative production, the number of cultural projects and events, the level of external partnerships and collaborations, the economic returns generated from cultural products, and the level of social impact and institutional standing of the university.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the role of KM in supporting investment in cultural capital at KAU and proposed an integrated framework (KMM-CCI) grounded in both KM theory and cultural sector models. The model integrates Nonaka and Takeuchi's SECI framework with key cultural models, including Throsby's Concentric Circles, UNESCO's cultural value and creative industries frameworks, and De Propriis and Mwaura's cultural value chain. This integration provides a conceptual framework for understanding how KM processes may contribute to cultural value creation and the development of both tangible and intangible forms of cultural capital, addressing a gap in the literature, particularly in higher education contexts in the Arab region.

Empirical findings from academic and administrative leaders indicate that KM processes —generation, storage, sharing, and application— are perceived as relevant to cultural capital investment within the institutional context examined. These findings highlight the potential strategic importance of knowledge-based practices in supporting cultural, social, and economic value creation in universities. The study contributes theoretically by linking KM and cultural capital scholarship, and practically by proposing a structured framework that can support the mobilization of knowledge resources for cultural capital investment in alignment with national priorities such as Saudi Vision 2030.

However, this study is limited by its focus on a single institutional context, purposive sampling, and reliance on descriptive analysis without employing advanced statistical techniques such as correlation or structural modeling. Future research is encouraged to further examine and extend the proposed model across multiple universities, adopt longitudinal and comparative research designs, and examine additional factors such as digital transformation, cultural entrepreneurship, and performance measurement. Such efforts could provide stronger empirical evidence regarding the relationships proposed in the model and further enhance understanding of how universities may systematically leverage knowledge to generate sustainable cultural, social, and economic value.

7. Generalizability

It should be noted that the study's focus on a single institutional case (KAU) aligns with the exploratory nature of the research, which aims to construct a conceptual model for KM and cultural capital investment rather than to achieve statistical generalization across all HEIs. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within their specific institutional context, taking into account variations among universities in organizational structures, the maturity of KM practices, and cultural policies. This limits direct statistical generalization. However, the proposed model is characterized by its adaptability and transferability to similar contexts, such as

Saudi and Gulf universities, as well as research-oriented and creative HEIs. This is achieved through contextual adaptation of KM processes and cultural capital indicators to suit institutional specificities. In addition, the model can be applied at multiple levels, including strategic integration within university plans, adaptation of measurement indicators, and institutional implementation through the establishment of cultural capital units or centers. Thus, the model is presented as a flexible, context-sensitive framework rather than a rigid generalized model.

Ethical Statement

This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of KAU (Approval No. REC.KAU.2026.001). Official permission was granted by the university to collect data from academic and administrative participants. Participation was voluntary, and participants' responses were treated confidentially.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Authors' contributions

Mukarram Abduljalil: Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data collection, data curation, formal analysis, writing – original draft, and project administration.

Nabil Komosany: Supervision, methodological guidance, validation, and writing – review and editing.

Ismail Bahkali: Co-supervision, validation, and writing – review and editing.

Data availability

Data available upon request.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

The authors confirm that no artificial intelligence tools were utilized in the preparation, writing, or analysis of this manuscript. All work, data, and text are original and created by the authors in alignment with academic integrity standards.

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