

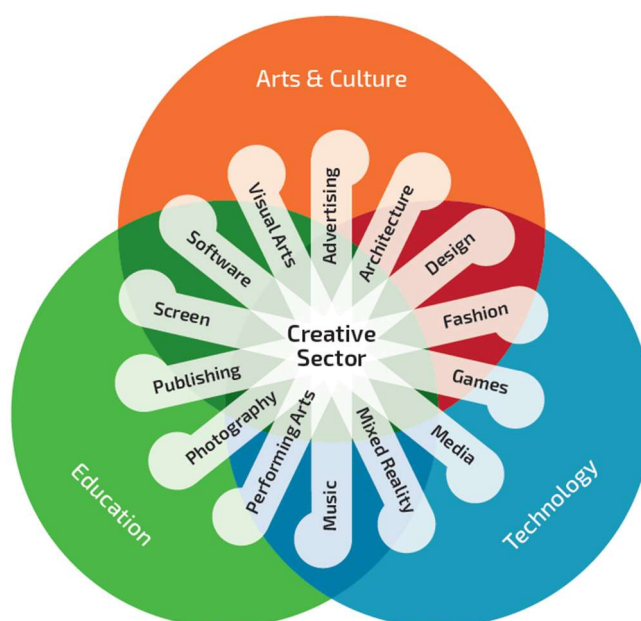
Submission on New Zealand-India Free Trade Agreement negotiations - April 2025

WeCreate is the alliance of Aotearoa's major creative industry associations and organisations, representing 30,000+ Kiwi creators, support people, and creative businesses. The organisation was founded in 2014 to propel growth in the sector and increase its contribution to New Zealand's social, cultural, and economic prosperity.

The export support needs of the creative industries have not been well understood by New Zealand's trade agencies historically and WeCreate has just published a [Creative Export Explainer](#) that sets how, in particular, the screen, interactive, music and publishing industries sell to the world, including case studies. The report also sets out the barriers to creative, and creative digital trade, and makes recommendations for how government might help the sector to overcome these.

As many of New Zealand's creative exports are now digitally distributed, they largely do not face tariffs, nor many other trade restrictions. New Zealand's creative industries and government working together to identify market opportunities, and to develop a more targeted and strategic approach to creative trade with India, would inevitably result in the growth of creative and creative tech exports to India.

Economic opportunities and non-tariff barriers for New Zealand creative businesses to expand trade with India vary by individual creative industry and business (particularly in relation to creative content). Most creative trade with India to date appears to have happened on an ad hoc basis, with individual B2B relationships being the foundation of export deals – this is largely due to a lack of relevant in-depth market intelligence being available, and the creative sector being only occasionally involved in our government's strategic discussions regarding export potential with India. These have tended to focus on more traditional sectors such as dairy, meat, education, tourism and more recently, agritech.



India market characteristics relevant to New Zealand creative exporters

- India's rapidly growing, digital-savvy, and mobile 'middle class' is expected to be double the size of the USA's in the next two years. India boasts the highest data usage per Smartphone user in the world and the connection quality is also excellent (4G and 5G are already available in some parts of the country) – making the Smartphone a key consumption device for both entertainment and sport. English is part of the curriculum in private schools, and is seen as an essential attribute for upwardly mobile Indian people.
- It is a complex market for content creators to address - with over 22 local languages, and multiple cultural and religious permutations. The local screen and music industries are very well-developed and dominate the market, but they can be low budget (and have poor working conditions, and health and safety standards) in comparison with NZ. There is a significant amount of Indian-made and/or dubbed (primarily into Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati and Punjabi) screen content on the local versions of Netflix and other streamers.
- Creative tech is a fast-growing industry in India. For example, India has become a global Visual Effects (VFX) powerhouse over the past 20 years. Starting as a labour-intensive 'work for hire' back office for international productions, India now has a highly skilled VFX workforce playing a pivotal role in the delivering large amounts of VFX work to multinational producers.
- Interactive media/games could be a big opportunity, but very few Indians will purchase a game (although in-game purchases seem to be acceptable), and language issues can apply for those consumers who don't speak English. This is an industry which would particularly benefit from greater market insights on India.
- Copyright is a 'red flag' – illegal streaming and piracy are commonplace, and it can be a slow and arduous process to enforce Copyright through the Indian legal system. Creative content is regulated around religion and politics, but less so regarding sex and violence.
- One of the key risks creative exporters might face is the status of the [WTO Moratorium on Customs Duties on Electronic Transmissions](#). This moratorium has been a significant driver of digital trade and digital exports – and that is clearly where NZ's opportunity is in creative sector trade with India. However, India, Indonesia, and South Africa have been opposing extending the e-commerce moratorium, fearing loss of control over data flows and US Big Tech dominance. India agreed to a two-year extension of the moratorium which will expire in March 2026.
- NZ Story/NZTE are currently undertaking research into consumer perceptions of NZ in India, and what sectors (including tech/games) might have the most potential there.

Industry specific feedback from our membership:

- **Greenstone TV - Director Government & International Relations, CEO Middle East, Tara Pradhan** Greenstone TV currently produce several documentary programmes in the UAE, and they currently have a documentary project in development to be filmed in India, and are exploring the use of the **NZ-India Co-Production Treaty (2011)** to help facilitate this. Greenstone are NZTE Focus customers.
- **NZ Writers Guild Executive Director, Alice Shearman**
NZWG (myself and the Co-Presidents) are heading to India in October 2025 for the International Affiliation of Writers Guilds (IAWG) AGM. I have been having conversations with our colleagues in that territory about our shared interests – primarily about rights and remuneration of screenwriters – and where we can assist each other. NZWG also has Indian screenwriters who work in both territories, one in particular who writes for Netflix. I am also in conversation with Shuchi Kothari (screenwriter/producer - <https://www.nzonscreen.com/profile/shuchi-kothari>) about creative swaps – bringing Writers and Directors from India to NZ (and vice versa) to share creative learning and market differences in storytelling.
- **NZ Society of Authors CE, Jenny Nagle re. book industry:**
Digital services: For writers and publishers in NZ, the biggest opportunities would be accessing a digital freelance workforce, eg: e-book conversions, multimedia enhancements and adaptations, remote design, video book ads, typesetting and editing work.
Printing: Indian printers are competitive with other parts of Asia now, though NZ publishers tend to still use Chinese/Hong Kong printers predominantly, and sometimes those in Singapore and Malaysia.
Book sales and translations: the big publishers still have offices in India promoting books in English. Having spoken with children's publishers from India at the Bologna Book Fair in the past, I was told there is less interest these days in importing children's books in English, as English books and texts are still plentiful, but also seen as a colonial overhang. The focus of children's publishers I met was translations in Indian dialects, and looking to tell their own local stories and content and exporting those to the Indian diaspora.
- **Independent Music New Zealand (IMNZ) General Manager, Dylan Pellet**
In February 2025, IMNZ was supported by New Zealand's Cultural Diplomacy International Programme (CDIP) to attend India International Music Week in Goa. This helped IMNZ to build relationships with Indian music professionals, explore potential collaborations and promote the New Zealand market as a viable cultural exchange proposition.
- **University of Canterbury Digital Screen Campus Director – Sam Witters**
The University is keen to attract Indian students to this \$130m purpose-built campus which has state-of-the art facilities for screen, games and sound production.
<https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/our-campus-and-environment/our-campuses/digital-screen-campus>

Recommendations to further inform the FTA negotiations and grow creative exports to India

- Partner with WeCreate, industry, and creative/creative tech businesses, to develop and implement a more targeted strategic approach to creative trade with India.
- WeCreate convene, with MFAT, a 'round-table' of creative industry representatives who are either already engaging with the Indian market, or who hope to in the near future; to develop more detailed Indian market analysis, and identify opportunities for growing creative exports to India.
- Partner with the New Zealand creative industries to produce more comprehensive and contemporaneous, and on-going, market analysis. Ideally, post a creative/tech trade specialist to New Zealand's Trade Mission in Mumbai.
- Support New Zealand creative industry organisations and businesses to participate in Trade Missions to India, and to attend relevant industry trade events there.

Paula Browning
Chair
Paula@wecreate.org.nz

Victoria Blood
Leader
Victoria@wecreate.org.nz

WeCreate

GROWING OUR CREATIVE SECTOR
www.wecreate.org.nz

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Tātaki Auckland Unlimited	Australia & NZ Screen Association
Christian Copyright Licensing International	Coalition for Books
Code NZ	Commercial Communications Council
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