

Sociodemographic Analysis of the Art District in Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico

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Abstract—This study presents a socioeconomic and demographic analysis of the Art District in Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico, examining its role as a contributor to local economic and cultural development within the creative industries. Through the assessment of demographic variables and economic indicators, the principal enterprises and stakeholders of the district are identified, highlighting their role as a local economic engine. The analysis applies the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) — with focus on class 466313, retail of antiques and artworks — to characterize the sector and contrast its performance with the broader municipal economy of Puerto Vallarta. The findings underscore the district's growth potential as an emergent creative cluster, while emphasizing the need for coordinated public policy to consolidate its economic and cultural impact.

Keywords— *Art district; creative industries; cultural tourism; Puerto Vallarta; urban economy; NAICS 466313.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Creative districts have emerged in the urban-studies literature as territorial clusters in which a high density of cultural and creative establishments coincides with attractive built environments and specialized consumption, generating measurable effects on local economies and on the symbolic identity of cities [1-2]. Although consensus on whether such districts behave as autonomous economic systems or as visible extensions of larger metropolitan clusters is still open [1], there is a growing body of evidence that documents their contribution to employment, productivity, and urban revitalization in both Latin American and global contexts [2-4].

In the case of Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco — a mature beach destination that has based its economy almost exclusively on sun-and-beach tourism — the so-called Art District in the Centro Histórico has gained academic and institutional visibility as a potential mechanism for product diversification, following the precedent of cities such as Bilbao, London, Miami, and Mexico City, where art-led strategies have catalyzed urban regeneration and tourist competitiveness [5-6]. Recent research on the area has begun to document the configuration of a creative micro-economy

organized around galleries, retail of antiques and artworks, and complementary cultural services [5,7].

Despite this progress, the Art District lacks a systematic socioeconomic and demographic baseline that combines spatial delimitation, demographic profiling, and sectoral economic comparison against the rest of the municipality. Without such a baseline, public-policy decisions on creative-district consolidation rely on anecdotal or descriptive evidence rather than on replicable indicators.

Accordingly, this article addresses the following research question: What are the demographic and economic characteristics that define the Art District of Puerto Vallarta as a creative cluster, and how do these characteristics compare with the municipal averages of Puerto Vallarta? The general objective is to conduct a socioeconomic and demographic analysis of the Art District as a foundation for evidence-based cultural and urban policy. The specific objectives are: (i) to delimit the geographic perimeter of the Art District; (ii) to characterize its resident population using the 2020 Census; (iii) to quantify its economic units and contrast their performance against the municipality using the DENU and the NAICS classification; (iv) to identify the principal stakeholders; and (v) to derive policy implications for the consolidation of the district.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section II presents the theoretical framework. Section III describes the methodology. Section IV reports the demographic and economic results. Section V discusses the findings against literature. Section VI presents the conclusions and policy implications.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Creative industries and the creative class

The conceptual foundation of this study draws from the literature on creative industries and the creative class. Florida [3] argues that economic growth in post-industrial cities is increasingly driven by a creative class — workers in design, art, science, and knowledge-intensive services — whose location preferences shape regional competitiveness. Power and Scott [2] complement this perspective by showing that

cultural industries operate as networked production systems whose spatial agglomeration generates measurable economic externalities. UNCTAD and UNDP [6] formalize the creative economy as a feasible development option, especially relevant for emerging economies, while Zaldivar [8] documents its role in post-pandemic economic recovery and social cohesion.

B. Creative districts as urban units of analysis

Frost-Kumpf [6] provides the seminal operational definition of cultural districts as well-recognized, mixed-use areas of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor of urban revitalization. Mercado Celis [1] refines this notion for the Latin American context, distinguishing between Urban Creative Districts (DUC) — urban zones with high density of creative activity — and Cultural-Economic Clusters (CEC) — networked production systems at the metropolitan scale. This distinction is methodologically relevant because it cautions against treating any concentrated cluster of cultural businesses as an autonomous economic system.

C. Creative industries in Mexico

In the Mexican context, Castañeda Rivera and Garduño Bello [9] map the geographic distribution and statistical weight of creative industries, documenting their growing contribution to GDP and their concentration in selected metropolitan areas. The 2021 declaration of the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development by the United Nations General Assembly [10] has reinforced the policy salience of these industries. Within this framework, Puerto Vallarta's Art District represents a sub-metropolitan creative agglomeration whose study contributes to the ongoing debate on whether creative districts in mid-sized Latin American cities behave as drivers or as passive reflections of broader tourism economies [7, 9].

III. METHODOLOGY

This study followed a non-experimental, mixed-methods design combining quantitative socioeconomic analysis with qualitative fieldwork, structured in six sequential stages.

A. Literature Review

A targeted review of the literature on creative districts, creative industries, and urban regeneration was conducted to anchor the empirical analysis in established theoretical categories [1-3, 6].

B. Geographic Delimitation

The boundary of the Art District was operationalized through Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and CAD tools, using INEGI cartographic layers (AGEB, manzanas, and the Marco Geoestadístico Nacional) [8]. The polygon was defined through field validation of gallery, antique-shop, and creative-service concentrations across the Centro Histórico of Puerto Vallarta.

C. Demographic Analysis

Demographic indicators for the delimited polygon were extracted from the 2020 Census of Population and Housing (Principales resultados por localidad — ITER) [11], at the AGEB level. The variables analyzed were: total population, age structure (with emphasis on the 25–44 cohort), educational attainment, and household composition. Each indicator was contrasted with its corresponding municipal-level value to identify deviations that signal cluster specificity.

D. Economic Analysis

Economic indicators were extracted from the Directorio Estadístico Nacional de Unidades Económicas (DENUE) [12], filtering establishments by the Mexican adaptation of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS / SCIAN), with particular focus on class 466313 — Retail of antiques and works of art — complemented by adjacent service classes. Three indicators were computed for both the polygon and the municipality: (i) number of economic units; (ii) average monthly remuneration per worker; (iii) annual labor productivity (gross value of production divided by employed personnel).

E. Stakeholder Mapping

Key stakeholders within the district — gallery owners, retail managers, public-sector liaisons, and ArtWalk organizers — were identified and mapped using a combination of public registries and snowball sampling during fieldwork. The mapping aimed to characterize the institutional ecosystem rather than to produce an exhaustive census.

F. Qualitative Component and Fieldwork

Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders were conducted to triangulate the quantitative results and to capture perceptions of opportunities and constraints. A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis synthesized the qualitative data. Field visits within the polygon allowed direct observation of establishments and verification of cartographic data.

G. Data Processing

Quantitative datasets were processed in spreadsheet software with descriptive statistics (means, percentages, and ratios). Spatial layers were processed in GIS to produce thematic maps of demographic and economic concentration. Comparative tables were constructed to express each district indicator as a percentage of the municipal value.

IV. RESULTS

A. Demographic Findings

Puerto Vallarta covers an area of 68,431.82 ha and, according to the 2020 Census, hosts a total population of 291,839 inhabitants distributed across approximately 86,500

occupied dwellings [8]. Within the delimited polygon of the Art District, the resident population shows a comparatively young profile: 32.2 % of residents are aged 25 to 44, the cohort with the highest engagement potential in cultural and creative activity. With respect to educational attainment, 26.9 % of the resident population has completed lower-secondary education and 26.4 % has completed upper-secondary education or its equivalent. Tertiary education reaches 4.3 % of residents, indicating a modest but non-negligible base of advanced human capital relevant to creative-economy development.

These demographic features — youthful working-age concentration combined with mid-level educational attainment — are consistent with Florida's [3] characterization of areas where the creative class can take root, provided that targeted training and human-capital investments are implemented.

B. Economic Findings

The Art District concentrates 968 economic units, equivalent to 5.83 % of the 16,610 units registered in the municipality of Puerto Vallarta [9]. The sectoral composition is service-dominated: 60 % of the units operate in services (galleries, restaurants, hospitality-adjacent services), 37 % in retail trade (antiques, artworks, decorative crafts), and the remainder in mixed activities. This composition is coherent with the cultural-tourism orientation of the district and with the typology of mixed-use cultural districts described by Frost-Kumpf [6].

Two productivity indicators reveal a structural gap between the district and the municipal average. Average monthly remuneration in the district is MXN \$6,882, against a municipal mean of MXN \$8,301, equivalent to a wage gap of -17.1 %. Annual labor productivity in the district is MXN \$338,593 per employed person, against MXN \$438,529 at the municipal scale, equivalent to a productivity gap of -22.8 %. Table I summarizes the comparative indicators.

TABLE I
COMPARATIVE INDICATORS: ART DISTRICT VS.
MUNICIPALITY OF PUERTO VALLARTA, 2020

Indicator	Art District	Municipality	District / Municipal
Economic units (n)	968	16,610	5.83 %
Avg. monthly remuneration (MXN)	\$6,882	\$8,301	-17.1 %
Annual labor productivity (MXN)	\$338,593	\$438,529	-22.8 %
Service sector share	60 %	—	—
Retail trade share	37 %	—	—

Source: own elaboration based on INEGI [11-12].

C. Stakeholder Profile

The qualitative component identified three stakeholder groups: (i) gallery owners and curators, who constitute the symbolic anchor of the district through the weekly ArtWalk programme; (ii) retailers of antiques and decorative crafts, who depend heavily on cruise-passenger and high-season tourism flows; and (iii) public-sector and tourism-promotion actors, with a comparatively weak articulation toward creative-cluster policy. The SWOT synthesis indicates that the district's principal strength is its concentrated cultural offering, its principal weakness is the productivity and wage gap, its principal opportunity is digital and inter-sectoral diversification, and its principal threat is the competition from neighboring mature destinations and the seasonality of tourism demand.

V. DISCUSSION

The empirical evidence positions the Art District as a recognizable, but still emergent, creative cluster within the broader Puerto Vallarta tourism economy. Three interpretive lines arise from the data.

First, the demographic profile — concentration of working-age population with mid-level education — is a necessary but insufficient condition for creative-class consolidation as theorized by Florida [3]. The district presents the demographic substrate, yet the absence of strong tertiary-education indicators (only 4.3 %) signals that human-capital deepening must accompany any policy aimed at creative-economy upscaling.

Second, the structural wage and productivity gaps (-17.1 % and -22.8 %, respectively) indicate that, despite its cultural visibility, the district's economic core is dominated by microenterprises with limited value-generation capacity. This finding aligns with Mercado Celis [1], who cautions that visible urban creative districts often correspond to small consumption-oriented agglomerations rather than to integrated metropolitan cultural-economic clusters. The Puerto Vallarta evidence reinforces this caution: the Art District is more accurately characterized as a DUC (urban creative district) than as a fully fledged CEC (cultural-economic cluster).

Third, the district's heavy dependence on tourism makes it structurally exposed to external shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital transformation across creative industries [8], and post-pandemic recovery strategies in Latin America emphasize the role of digital platforms, value-chain integration, and human-capital upgrading [4]. The Puerto Vallarta case fits this regional pattern: digitalization and adoption of Industry-4.0 tools are not optional add-ons but conditions for the district's medium-term competitiveness.

These results are consistent with the prior characterization by Zepeda Arce et al. [5] of the area as a tourism-diversification asset, and with the participatory diagnostics of

Odetti et al. [4] regarding the emergence of new centralities in Puerto Vallarta. Compared to international references such as those documented by Frost-Kumpf [6] and Power and Scott [2], the Puerto Vallarta Art District lacks a formal cultural-district designation and the public investment frameworks that have accompanied successful international cases.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This study delivers an empirical baseline for the Art District of Puerto Vallarta, integrating geographic delimitation, demographic profiling, and sectoral economic comparison. The principal scientific contribution is twofold: (i) the documentation of a concrete creative-district configuration in a mid-sized Latin American coastal city, an under-researched typology in the cultural-economy literature; and (ii) the empirical demonstration that visibility and concentration of cultural establishments do not automatically translate into productivity or wage parity with the surrounding economy.

From a policy perspective, three recommendations follow directly from the evidence. First, public investment should target productivity and digitalization in the microenterprises that constitute the bulk of the district's economic base, narrowing the documented 22.8 % productivity gap. Second, training and human-capital programs — articulated with local higher-education institutions — should focus on creative, digital, and managerial competencies, given the limited share of tertiary-educated residents. Third, formal recognition of the Art District as a cultural-tourism polygon within the municipal urban-development plan would activate planning, fiscal, and place-branding instruments that have proven effective in international precedents [2, 6].

The study has acknowledged limitations: the analysis is cross-sectional (2020 INEGI data), the qualitative component is exploratory rather than systematic, and the polygon definition, although operationally validated, remains an analytical construct. Future research should develop longitudinal indicators of cluster evolution, expand the qualitative sample to include consumers and tourists, and test the policy recommendations through ex-ante impact-assessment models.

In sum, the Art District of Puerto Vallarta represents a real but underleveraged creative asset. Its consolidation as an engine of equitable and sustainable economic and cultural development depends on coordinated public-private action, evidence-based planning, and an explicit commitment to closing the productivity and human-capital gaps documented in this work.

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