

 ISSN (O): 2320-5407 ISSN (P): 3107-4928	Journal Homepage: - www.journalijar.com INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR) Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/23031 DOI URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/23031	
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CONFERENCE PAPER

SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH DIGITALIZATION AND MUSIC: APPS AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 04 January 2026

Final Accepted: 08 February 2026

Published: March 2026

Abstract

The global economic landscape of 2025 and 2026 is increasingly defined by the "Orange Economy," a sector where value is generated primarily through creativity, cultural heritage, and intellectual property. Within this framework, music has transitioned from a traditional cultural practice into a technology-intensive, scalable economic engine. The International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) reports that global recorded music revenues reached \$29.6 billion in 2024, marking a decade of consecutive growth fueled by a 69% dominance in streaming.¹ This digital transformation is not merely a shift in consumption but a reimagining of the entire creative process, where mobile applications and affordable electronic devices democratize access to skills, education, and global markets. In India, the momentum is particularly robust, with the media and entertainment sector valued at ₹2.5 trillion in 2024 and projected to reach ₹3.06 trillion by 2027.² This report explores the latest trends and mechanisms through which digitalization in music fosters socio-economic growth today, utilizing primary data from a prominent Indian music education app and secondary insights from global industry reports and academic research.

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Introduction:-

The Global Music Economy: Strategic Scaling and Regional Dynamics:-

The global music market entering 2026 is characterized by a "streaming-first" reality that has achieved unprecedented scale. The \$29.6 billion revenue figure for 2024 represents a 4.8% increase from the previous year, with paid subscription streaming alone crossing the \$20 billion mark for the first time.¹ The growth is underpinned by 752 million paid subscribers globally, a 10.6% increase that signals the maturation of digital adoption in both developed and emerging markets.¹ While North America remains the largest market, accounting for 40.3% of global revenues, the most significant growth rates are observed in emerging regions.¹

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Global Market Segment (2024-2025)	Metric	Growth/Value	Source
Total Recorded Music Revenue	Value (USD)	\$29.6 Billion	¹
Streaming Revenue Share	Percentage	69%	¹
Paid Subscription Revenue	Value (USD)	\$20.4 Billion	¹
Global Paid Subscribers	Total Users	752 Million	¹
Middle East & North Africa (MENA)	Growth Rate	+22.8%	¹
Sub-Saharan Africa	Growth Rate	+22.6%	¹
Latin America	Growth Rate	+22.5%	¹

The rise of "Super Fans" is a defining trend of 2025. In China, music platforms have successfully monetized high-engagement users through "Super VIP" tiers, which offer exclusive content and high-resolution audio at prices five times higher than standard subscriptions.¹ This shift from a volume-based model to a value-based model is essential for long-term sustainability, as it allows platforms to extract more revenue from a fixed user base while providing artists with deeper engagement tools. Furthermore, the supply of music has reached a critical inflection point; in 2025, approximately 51 million new tracks were added to streaming platforms, bringing the total count to 253 million.⁴ This supply pressure necessitates more sophisticated discovery algorithms and AI-driven curation to help emerging artists navigate a hyper-competitive environment.

India's Creative Economy: A Pillar of Strategic Growth:-

India is positioned as one of the most promising music markets globally, driven by a digitally native demographic and resilient domestic demand. The creative economy contributes approximately 8% of India's employment and generates an annual output of nearly ₹3 lakh crore.² The strategic importance of this sector is reflected in the Union Budget 2026-27, which prioritizes institutional capacity and talent development through the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) and the "Create in India" challenge.⁶

The Indian music industry is expected to reach a valuation of ₹7,800 crore (approximately \$889 million) by late 2026, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 13.4%.⁸ While this remains a fraction of Western revenues, the volume of consumption is comparable, with India recording 1.03 trillion on-demand streams in 2023, the second-highest volume globally after the United States.⁸ This transition is supported by a massive internet user base that crossed 100 crore in June 2025, providing a vast addressable market for digital music services.

Indian M&E Segment (2024-2026)	2024 Valuation (₹)	2027 Projected (₹)	Source
Live Entertainment	101 Billion	167 Billion	²
Music	53 Billion	78 Billion	²

Economic Mechanisms: Licensing, Royalties, and the Informal Sector:-

The monetization of music in India is transitioning from a traditional sync-heavy model (film music) to a more diversified digital ecosystem. However, significant challenges remain in converting high consumption volumes into sustainable revenue.

The Licensing Imbalance:-

The Indian music industry is valued at approximately \$319 million (₹2,798 crore) as of 2022, but is expected to hit \$889 million by 2026.⁸ Digital licensing contributes 62% of this revenue, a decrease from 68% in 2023, reflecting a shift toward live events and brand partnerships as creators seek alternative income streams.⁸ Performance royalties, managed by the IPRS, saw a massive 42% growth in 2024-25, reaching ₹741.6 crore.⁸ This surge is attributed to improved royalty compliance by international platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube.⁸

Indian Music Revenue (2024)	Share (%)	Growth Trend	Source
Digital Licensing	62%	Declining slightly	⁸
Performance Royalties	~12%	Rising (42% YoY)	⁸
Live, Artist Mgmt, Brand	13%	Robust Growth	⁸
Sync (TV/Radio)	3%	Stagnant	⁸

A critical insight lies in the "Informal Economy." The unorganized music sector—consisting of street musicians, local bands, and small-scale independent artists—was estimated to be worth ₹10,00,000 crore (\$114 billion) in 2022.⁸ This massive informal sector represents both an economic concern and an opportunity. If digitalization can professionalize even a small fraction of this unorganized talent through micro-licensing and AI-based distribution, the formal industry's value could increase exponentially.

The Impact of Regional and Independent Content:-

The dominance of Bollywood soundtracks (historically 80% of consumption) is beginning to erode as independent artists and vernacular content gain momentum.⁸ Platforms like Gaana have reported a 96% increase in local language streams, with South Indian languages (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada) growing by over 112%.⁸ This trend is powered by a youth-driven demand, specifically from Gen-Z and Millennials, who prioritize authentic, artist-led music over commercial film scores.⁸

Technological Catalysts: Devices and Hardware Manufacturing:-

Socio-economic growth in the music sector is inextricably linked to the hardware that enables it. The "virtuous loop" of music technology involves learning apps pulling hardware demand (instruments), and hardware ownership feeding sustained educational engagement.¹⁵

Global and Indian Instrument Markets:-

The global musical instrument market reached \$20.94 billion in 2025, with Asia Pacific accounting for 40.09% of the share.¹⁶ In India, the instrument market is growing at a CAGR of 10.03%, expected to reach \$255.68 million in 2026.¹⁵ Electronic instruments, such as digital keyboards and synthesizers, lead the Indian market with a 25.98% revenue share.¹⁵

Musical Instrument Market (2025-26)	Market Size (USD)	Growth (CAGR)	Source
Global Market (2025)	\$20.94 Billion	6.54%	¹⁶
India Market (2025)	\$223.88 Million	10.03%	¹⁵
India Market (2026)	\$255.68 Million	10.03%	¹⁵
China Market (2026)	\$3.00 Billion	—	¹⁶
Japan Market (2026)	\$1.32 Billion	—	¹⁶

Technologically advanced instruments, such as Yamaha's PSR-I500, which includes 40 Indian voices and auto-accompaniments, are specifically designed to cater to the Indian educational market.¹⁵ These devices lower the technical friction for students, allowing them to practice complex raga scales alongside modern pop backings on a single unit.

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes:-

The growth of India's electronic music devices is supported by broader manufacturing policies. The ₹1.91 lakh crore PLI scheme has successfully strengthened India's electronics base, positioning the country as a major hub for mobile phones and IT hardware.¹⁷ While specific PLI incentives for musical instruments are not yet as robust as for white goods or smartphones, the overall reduction in import dependence for components (PCBs, display modules) has made consumer electronics more affordable for the creative sector.¹⁷ Electronics goods exports reached \$38.56 billion in FY25, providing the industrial backbone for the Orange Economy's digital tools.¹⁰

Artificial Intelligence Impact: Good or Bad:-

Platforms like Suno and Loudly have democratized production, allowing users to generate high-quality stems and full tracks from text prompts.¹⁹ Suno, valued at \$2.45 billion, reached 100 million users by 2025, demonstrating the massive appetite for AI-driven creativity.²⁰ By late 2025, some platforms were receiving over 50,000 fully AI-generated tracks daily, representing one-third of all new deliveries.²² The benefits are clear: AI-powered tone matching (e.g., Positive Grid's BIAS X) allows musicians to replicate complex guitar tones instantly, and real-time stem separation (Loudly's Stem Splitter) has become essential for DJs and remixers.¹⁹ However there are downsides: these tools also lower the barrier to "low-effort" content, potentially diluting the royalty pool for human artists.

Socio-Cultural Impact: Education, Inclusion, and Well-being:-

Beyond direct economic metrics, the digitalization of music contributes to broader social goals, including education in indigenous languages and public mental health.

UNESCO and Multilingual Education:-

The UNESCO 2025 report Bhasha Matters emphasizes that children learn best in their mother tongue.²⁵ Integrating music and arts into Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) helps preserve linguistic diversity while enhancing cognitive skills.²⁵ In India, which is home to 1,369 languages, digital platforms that provide music education in vernacular languages (e.g., the 112% growth in South Indian language streams) are vital for inclusive literacy.⁸

Mental Health and Social Trust:-

Research from 2025 indicates a complex relationship between digital music and well-being. A study in China revealed that music digitalization significantly enhances residents' subjective well-being by boosting social participation and increasing social trust.²⁷ Digital music acts as a "social tool" that connects users through shared

hobbies and online communities.²⁷ However, the "always-on" nature of digital platforms also poses risks. Pew Research reports that 48% of teens view social media as a negative force for their mental health, citing sleep disruption and harmful social comparisons.²⁸ For musicians, the pressure to maintain a social media presence for career building is linked to higher levels of occupational stress and anxiety.²⁹

The Investment Landscape: Funding and the Creator Economy:-

India's startup ecosystem, the world's third-largest, saw \$10.5 billion in funding in 2025.³¹ AI and deep tech investments rose 58% year-over-year, with a \$1 billion dedicated allocation for the AI ecosystem over the next three years.³²

Funding Snapshot (2025-26)	Statistic	Source
Total India Startup Funding (2025)	\$10.5 Billion	³¹
AI Funding YoY Increase (2025)	+58%	³²
Deep Tech share of VC Funding	~15%	³²
Music VC Activity (Jan 2026)	40+ Active Funds	³³

In the music sector, investors are prioritizing platforms that enable IP licensing and creator monetization. Startups like Hoopr (Music Tech) and Rozana (Rural E-commerce) are successfully attracting seed and series-level funding, indicating a healthy appetite for platforms that can bridge the urban-rural divide.³⁴

Analysis of a Digital Music Education Platform: A Case Study:-

To understand the micro-level impact of digitalization, we analyze primary Google Analytics data from a popular Indian music education app for the period of March 14, 2025, to March 14, 2026.⁵ The app serves as a gateway for learners to engage with traditional North Indian music, providing tools for rhythmic and melodic practice.⁵

User Growth and Acquisition:-

The app attracted 36,281 unique users during the 12 month study period (Mar 2025 - Mar 2026), with approximately 16,300 new users acquired through organic channels and paid advertising.⁵ This growth pattern reflects a steady transition from the "early adopter" phase to mass-market acceptance in tier-2 and tier-3 regions. Acquisition data suggests that even as marketing costs (CPI) in the broader marketplace increased by \$0.40, specialized educational apps remained efficient in reaching target audiences.¹¹

Geographic and Demographic Reach:-

The presence of significant user clusters in the US and Bangladesh highlights the role of music as a tool for cultural diplomacy and diaspora connection. For the Indian diaspora, these apps serve as essential links to heritage, enabling the practice of classical forms that might be otherwise inaccessible in a foreign context.⁵

Geographic Reach (2025-26)	Active Users	Percentage Share	Source
India (IN)	60,936	~66%	⁵
Bangladesh (BD)	1,942	~5%	⁵
Pakistan (PK)	1,294	~3.6%	⁵

United States (US)	934	~2.6%	⁵
Nepal (NP)	798	~2.2%	⁵

The overall gender split was ~70% male, 30% female (non-Google Analytics inferred), indicating good female participation — consistent with findings that digital music education can empower women by enabling home learning (sidestepping social constraints). Age demographics indicate that the platform is primarily used by younger users, with the 18–24 age group forming the largest segment (37.91%), followed by 25–34 users (25.17%). Together, individuals aged 18–34 account for over 63% of total users, reflecting strong adoption among digitally native learners. Older age groups show lower but consistent participation, indicating the platform's potential for lifelong music learning across generations.

Age Bracket (2025-26)	Active Users	Percentage Share	Source
18-24	9014	37.91%	⁵
25-34	5985	25.17%	⁵
35-44	3951	16.62%	⁵
45-54	2690	11.31%	⁵
55-64	1029	4.33%	⁵
65+	1108	4.66%	⁵

Engagement Benchmarks:-

The engagement depth among retained users was high. The average engagement time was 3,708 seconds (approximately 62 minutes) per active user over the year, with 86% of sessions qualifying as "engaged" (lasting at least 10 seconds).⁵ On average, engaged sessions per user were 4.7, meaning most users returned several times. Event data provides specific insights into practice habits: users triggered 6,774,896 `tabla_changed` events and 4,062,840 `pitch_changed` events, averaging hundreds of practice adjustments per user.⁵ This high event frequency suggests that the app is being used as a functional practice tool—a digital music practice app—which is integrated into daily musical discipline.

Device and Technology:-

The device report confirms the app is almost entirely mobile: the top device brands were Samsung, Xiaomi, Vivo, Realme, and Oppo (all Android manufacturers). Combined, the top five brands represent over 20,000 active users. This underlines the importance of affordable mobile hardware in digital inclusion. For example, cheap Android smartphones (e.g. Xiaomi Redmi) have enabled rural and low-income learners to access online music education

Future Outlook: Navigating the 2030 Horizon:-

As the music industry scales toward 2030, several critical trends will define its trajectory. The formalization of the "Informal Economy" will remain the single largest opportunity for the Indian market, potentially unlocking billions in untapped value.⁸ The integration of AI will continue to disrupt production, but the success of the 2026 IT Rules will determine whether this technology empowers creators or marginalizes them.²³ The "Phygital" model of education—combining digital curriculum with physical "Micro-hubs" and Content Creator Labs—will likely emerge

as the sustainable path for EdTech, moving away from the high-CAC, online-only models of the pandemic era.³⁵ Finally, the continued push for higher-quality audio (Lossless and Spatial) by platforms like Spotify will help recapture value from audiophiles and "Super Fans," providing a necessary buffer against the dilution of tracks.¹ In conclusion, the digitalization of music is a comprehensive socio-economic catalyst. By converting cultural heritage into digital "human capital," apps and electronic devices are driving inclusive growth, creating micro-entrepreneurial opportunities for millions, and strengthening India's global strategic influence in the Orange Economy. The synthesis of primary GA4 data with current market trends confirms that well-designed digital music tools are not just artistic outlets—they are foundational components of a modern, resilient service economy.

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