

Key Factors Influencing Iran's Accession to International Copyright Treaties: A Delphi Study

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Abstract

Purpose: The present study aimed to identify and analyze the determinants underlying Iran's accession to international copyright treaties.

Method: To achieve this objective, a combined exploratory and integrative methodology was utilized, integrating meta-synthesis (Sandelowski & Barroso's model) using the Delphi technique. During the meta-synthesis phase, 51 studies were selected. Findings were obtained through open coding, organized into concepts, and arranged into thematic categories. A two-round Delphi process involving 23 experts—including publishers, copyright professionals, software and game developers, web developers, and artists—was conducted to validate the results. The data were analyzed using the mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation.

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Findings: The meta-synthesis revealed 114 concepts, divided into 34 categories across four domains: economic, cultural, political, and legal. In the initial Delphi round, the majority of the categories were deemed to be highly significant, whereas “Religious issues”, “Shortcomings of the Berne Convention,” and “legal/structural challenges” garnered lower consensus. In the subsequent round, expert agreement increased, with “Preparation of legal infrastructure,” “Preparation of managerial infrastructure,” and “Establishment of collective management organizations” identified as the most crucial. The category “limitations of the Berne Convention” was omitted due to a mean score falling below 4.

Conclusion: In summary, 42 out of 43 categories (approximately 98%) attained mean scores of 4 or above, indicating a strong consensus among experts. The establishment of robust legal and managerial infrastructures was highlighted as the most essential factor. These findings provide both theoretical perspectives and practical recommendations for policymakers regarding the development and execution of effective copyright policies.

Keywords: Literary and Artistic Property, Intellectual Property, Publication Rights, Berne Convention, International Treaty Participation

Introduction

Copyright serves as the crucial element of the intellectual property framework, significantly contributing to the protection of literary, artistic, and intellectual creations. This right is acknowledged as a legal privilege for creators and forms the foundational basis for legal safeguards in the areas of publishing and the utilization of intellectual works (Allauddin, Iqbal, & Faisal Shahzad, 2025). In addition to offering a suitable structure for the protection of the moral and economic rights of creators, this legal framework is instrumental in promoting creativity, enhancing knowledge, and fortifying the cultural underpinnings of societies. A primary function of copyright is to create a balance among the interests of authors, consumers, and society, ensuring that the incentives for generating new works are preserved while not excessively limiting public access to knowledge and culture (Husnain, 2025).

On an international scale, the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (1886) marks a significant milestone in the evolution of intellectual property law. This convention was established to standardize protective measures and create a framework for international collaboration and has undergone numerous amendments over the years to adapt the changing global legal contexts. Fundamental principles of the convention, including national treatment, automatic protection, and the independence of protection, have laid the groundwork for the review and development of many national legal systems (Yusuf & Kansil, 2024). The gradual increase in state accession to the Berne Convention underscores its significance and influence within the global context. As reported by the World Intellectual Property Organization, by 2025, the number of member states has reached 182 (WIPO, 2025). This extensive global presence suggests that legal harmonization in the area of copyright, particularly through the Berne Convention, has emerged as a prevalent standard in international relations.

The safeguarding of copyright has consistently been a delicate and controversial matter, fraught with various legal, cultural, and institutional obstacles. This significance is especially evident in nations like Iran, where copyright regulations are largely confined to works released within the country's borders. Such restrictions render the issue of Iran's potential accession- or lack thereof- to international copyright agreements a pivotal concern for stakeholders in the creative sectors, legal professionals, and policymakers. On one hand, Iran's accession to the Berne Convention is regarded as a necessary prerequisite for joining the World Trade

Organization. Conversely, such accession could pave the way for diverse opportunities, including access to global markets, sustainable economic, scientific, and cultural benefits, as well as enhancements in the mechanisms for translating and disseminating scientific and artistic works (Matlabi, 2025). Consequently, decision-making in this domain, which has been a continual focus for cultural policymakers and planners over the last decade, holds considerable importance.

Despite the global trend and the recognized importance of the Berne Convention, Iran has not yet accede to this treaty. This situation has generated considerable scholarly interest in identifying the reasons, obstacles, and facilitating factors influencing the process of Iran's accession to international copyright treaties. Existing research emphasizes various legal and institutional deficiencies and challenges (Mirkarimi et al., 2023; Karimi, 2023), while other studies concentrate on cultural aspects and practical issues faced by stakeholders (Norouzi, 2001; Hosseini, 2010). Furthermore, various studies have explored the country's current capabilities for aligning with international standards and reaping the benefits of accession (Rezvanpanah-Pashte & Ansari, 2022; Ghafarian Kablu et al., 2022; Zamani, 2015).

Consequently, a comprehensive examination of the factors —both those that hinder and those that promote— is crucial for a deeper understanding of the present circumstances and the viability of Iran's accession. This research, utilizing the Delphi method and drawing on expert opinions, seeks to identify and analyze the array of factors that affect Iran's accession to international copyright treaties, thereby laying the groundwork for informed policy-making and practical decision-making in this area.

Literature Review

Some of the research background relevant to the topic is reviewed in this section. These examples include both domestic and international studies, presented chronologically and in two separate parts.

Domestic Studies: Pashootan et al. (2025) conducted a systematic review and identified a set of economic, cultural, legal, and political factors influencing Iran's accession to international intellectual property protection systems. Following this, Matlabi (2024), employed a grounded theory approach based on interviews with experts in publishing, music, software, law, and cultural management, extracted key components related to the outcomes, barriers, and requirements for accession. Karimi (2023)

examined the country's legal structure and policymaking to analyze the reasons behind Iran's ongoing non-accession. In the same year, Jafar Zadeh & Ashna (2023) investigated the acceptance of the Berne Convention from the perspective of cultural security, demonstrating that accession could strengthen national identity and enhance cultural governance. Rezvanpanah-Pashte & Ansari (2022), by comparing Iran's national laws with the requirements of international treaties, identified the strengths and weaknesses of the domestic legal system in aligning with global standards. Soleimani & Seyed Abadi (2017) analyzed the requirements of Iran's membership in the World Trade Organization in relation to copyright treaties. Earlier studies, including Abbasi et al. (2015), explored Iran's position in the international intellectual property protection system and highlighted the challenges of aligning domestic laws with global rules. Sadeghi & Akbari (2014) discussed the advantages, disadvantages, and legal challenges associated with Iran's potential accession. Hosseini (2010), by examining the perspectives of Tehran-based publishers, elucidated their concerns regarding copyright and the need for supportive mechanisms. Musai (2006) analyzed the economic consequences of accession to the World Trade Organization system in the field of literary and artistic property and emphasized its role in developing creative industries. One of the earliest and most influential domestic analyses on intellectual property and Iran's accession to international copyright treaties is Saleh's (2003) expert report titled "Intellectual Property in Iran and the Implications of Iran's Accession to the International Copyright Convention." This report examined the legal status of intellectual property rights in Iran, anticipated the implications of accession to international conventions, and has served as a foundational reference for subsequent research. Norouzi (2001) explored the views of library and information science specialists regarding the advantages and disadvantages of joining the international copyright system, considering the country's cultural and economic capacities. After reviewing the domestic research, attention turns to relevant international studies and analyses.

International Studies: International research has also made significant progress in examining the effects of countries' accession to international treaties. Gupta (2019) and Udoh (2020) compared national laws of various countries with international treaties, assessing the degree of compliance and alignment. Their findings indicate that attention to legal, executive, and policy dimensions of convergence with global

standards has increased over time and taken on a multidimensional trajectory. Deepanshi & Marwah (2021), and Kurt (2021) examined the legal and administrative impacts of countries' accession to the Berne Convention, highlighting the importance of aligning national laws with international requirements and its effect on domestic legal systems. Subsequently, Aloun (2024), Ubanyionwu (2024) emphasized the necessity of harmonizing national legislation with global standards and analyzed the opportunities and challenges associated with accession. Tatarinova & Yessen (2024) identified inconsistencies between domestic laws and international standards as one of the main obstacles to accession. In the most recent studies, Allauddin, Iqbal & Faisal Shahzad(2025), focusing on outputs generated by artificial intelligence, have demonstrated that contemporary legal challenges extend beyond mere accession and legal alignment. Emerging issues, such as the protection of non-human-created works and the determination of their legal status, have also gained prominence.

Despite the considerable body of domestic and international research, no study has systematically identified the factors that influence Iran's accession to international copyright treaties based on expert consensus. Most existing studies tend to be either analytical or descriptive, and they seldom gather expert opinions to guide strategic decision-making. This gap in research underscores the importance of utilizing the Delphi method to pinpoint key factors, assess the views of domestic experts, and establish the priorities for Iran's accession. By adopting this methodology, the current study not only identifies the influential factors and their priorities but also lays a scientific groundwork for future decision-making and policy formulation in the realm of accession to international copyright treaties.

Method

The current research is practical in nature and adopts a qualitative methodology. To fulfill the study's objectives, a dual approach was employed: initially, meta-synthesis was used to systematically gather and amalgamate results from earlier research; subsequently, the Delphi method was applied to confirm and rank the identified categories based on the insights of experts. The application of these two methodologies allowed the researcher to utilize existing scientific data while also evaluating the degree of agreement and consensus among national experts concerning the subject matter being examined.

Meta-Synthesis Phase: In the initial phase, the seven-step framework

introduced by Sandelowski and Barroso (2006) was utilized, which encompasses: formulating the research question, conducting a systematic literature search, identifying eligible sources, extracting data, analyzing concepts, ensuring quality control, and ultimately presenting an integrative model.

To begin with, the primary research question was established, followed by a comprehensive search employing pertinent Persian and English keywords across various domestic academic databases (IranDoc “Ganj”, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, Jahad-e-Daneshgahi, NoorMagz, Magiran, and Civilica) as well as international databases (Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, Springer, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, OpenAlex, and OATD). This search initially yielded 4,937 sources. Subsequent to the elimination of duplicates, irrelevant sources, and those lacking full access, a systematic screening process was implemented: initially, titles were assessed, followed by abstracts, and ultimately, the full texts of the articles were scrutinized. This methodical and phased approach ensured that only 51 pivotal studies with the greatest relevance and quality were chosen for data analysis and extraction. The specifics of the selected studies are detailed in Table 1. For clarity, Persian-language sources are highlighted with a darker background, distinguishing them from English-language sources.

Table 1. Selected Studies for Coding

Title	Author	Publication Date	Source Code
Copyright and international conventions	Sadeghi Moghadam	1988	17
Examination of the moral rights of authors in Iranian law and international conventions	Kermani Nejadbadi	1997	7
The moral rights of authors in Iranian and Islamic law and international conventions	Hazrati	1999	15
A study of the advantages and disadvantages of Iran's accession to the international copyright system from the perspective of library and information science experts	Norouzi	2001	30
Intellectual property in Iran and examining the consequences of Iran's accession to the international convention (copyright)	Saleh	2003	26

Legal consequences of Iran's membership in the World Trade Organization	Amouzegar	2004	5
The necessity and consequences of accepting the copyright agreement	Ghessaa	2004	20
Economic impacts of Iran's accession to the World Trade Organization in the field of literary and artistic property	Musai	2006	3
Intellectual property rights and their economic impacts on Iran's accession to the World Trade Organization	Seyed Ali Roteh	2008	16
Comparison of the international obligations of the World Trade Organization (WTO) with Iranian law in the field of copyright	Haghaninejad	2009	13
The 1886 Berne Convention (Protection of Literary and Artistic Works) and the benefits of Iran's accession to it	Tavasoli Naeini & Jafari	2009	23
A study on the views of publishers in Tehran regarding the status of copyright in Iran and the consequences of Iran's accession to the international copyright system	Hosseini	2010	9
Examining the consequences of Iran's accession to the international copyright system from the perspective of Tehran publishers. Information Research and Public Libraries	Hosseini & Matlabi	2013	2
Views of publishers in Tehran on copyright in Iran	Matlabi & Hosseini	2013	18
Legal impacts of Iran's accession to the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works	Talebnejad	2014	4
Copyright from the perspective of international law and Iranian law	Safavian	2014	22
Advantages and disadvantages of Iran's accession to the Berne Convention	Sadeghi & Akbari	2014	29
The position and challenges of Iran in international protection of literary and artistic property rights	Abbasi, Islam & Akrami	2015	14
The World Trade Organization and Iranian cultural products	Bozorgi et al.	2015	19
Soleimani, H., & Seyed Abadi, A. A. (2017). The consequences of the Islamic Republic of Iran's accession to the World Trade Organization in the field of books	Soleimani & Seyed Abadi	2017	10
The Berne Convention, countries' membership, and the status of Iran in the current situation	Fasih Ramandi	2017	25

Requirements for Iran's accession to the Berne International Convention	Shokri	2018	1
Economic impacts of Iran's accession to the Berne Convention on music consumption	Seif-Asgari Barkosarayi	2018	11
Examination of the factors and legal challenges of the universality of the intellectual property rights system	Mo'in Islam	2018	21
Legal analysis of privileges stipulated in the appendix to the Berne Convention for developing countries	Ani	2019	12
Advantages and legal effects of Iran's accession to the Berne Convention and its annex adopted in Paris, 1971	Mohammadzadeh Vadeghani & Ani	2019	28
The Berne Convention: Dimensions, consequences, and impacts of Iran's accession	Hekmatnia et al.	2021	24
Literary and artistic property in the Comprehensive Bill on the Protection of Literary and Artistic Property Rights and the Berne Convention	Rezvanpanah- Pashteh & Ansari	2022	27
Explaining the perspective on the acceptance of the “Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works” from the viewpoint of cultural security for the Islamic Republic of Iran	Jafar Zadeh & Ashena	2023	6
Examining the reasons for Iran's non-accession to the Berne Convention	Karimi	2023	8
Accession to international copyright conventions in developing countries: Lessons from Iran(	Matlabi	2024	31
International Copyright and the Needs of Developing Countries: The Awakening at Stockholm and Paris	Irwin & Olian	1974	42
Adherence to the Berne Copyright Convention: The Moral Rights Issue	Brown	1987	33
International Copyright from an American Perspective	Leaffer	1990	43
Will the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China Follow the United States' Adherence to the Berne Convention?	Aoki	1990	46
The United States Joins the Berne Convention: New Obligations for Authors' Moral Rights?	Ross	1990	51
China's Accession to the Berne Convention: Bandaging the Wounds of Intellectual Property Piracy in China	Sgambati	1992	36

Intellectual Property Protection through the Berne Convention: A Matter of Economic Survival for the Post-Soviet New Commonwealth of Independent States	Swenson	1992	41
Developing Countries and the International Copyright Regime: The Neglected Issue of Culture Survival	Sundara Rajan	1999	38
Accession to the WTO, Observation of Copyright and the Iranian Book Market	Musai	2011	32
Canadian Copyright: History, Change, and Potential	Bannerman	2011	44
The Berne Convention and the Iranian Law: Negative Implications of the Differences in the Scope of Application	Manghutay	2012	45
The Effects of the Berne Convention on Translations in the Netherlands	Fankhanel	2014	47
Konvevsi bern dan perlidungan hak cipta	Cipta	2016	40
Has creativity died in the Third World? Some implications of the internationalization of intellectual property	Gana	2017	39
The Copyright Law of Iran: An Overview of Recent Developments	Ayoubi	2018	49
Critically Discuss the Continued Relevance of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (1886)	Gupta	2019	37
The Protection of Literary Works under Article 2 of the Berne Convention and its Acceptability in EU Countries	Udoh	2020	50
Berne Convention and Turkey's Participation Process	Kurt	2021	34
A Comparative Study of Copyright Protection in China and the U.S, In the Context of U.S-China Trade Disputes	Zhu	2021	35
Influence of Berne Convention On Copyright Laws In India	Deepanshi & Marwah	2021	48

In the subsequent phase, data extraction was performed through a two-tier coding process: direct codes (keywords and phrases that are explicitly found in the texts) and indirect codes (sentences or statements that are implicitly connected to the research question). Following this, the results were categorized into related concepts, which were then organized into broader classifications. Table 2 presents a sample of the coding and data extraction process, illustrating how the codes were identified and grouped.

Table 2. Sample of Data Coding and Extraction

Classes	Enablers / Obstacles	Category	Concepts	Extracted Code	Source Code
Political Factors	Enablers	Preparation of Political Infrastructures as a Prerequisite for Accession	Drafting a codified policy for the production of cultural and artistic works as a prerequisite for accession	Drafting a codified policy for the production of cultural and artistic works as a prerequisite for accession	31
			Government assistance in establishing international scientific and cultural communication	Providing the groundwork for the presence of foreign publishers and literary agencies in Iran's book fairs, as one of the government's main programs for accession	20 , 9
	Obstacles	The negative impact of economic sanctions on accession	The disadvantage of accession under conditions of economic sanctions	Sanctioning the country will cause serious damage to the publishing industry	8
				Limited access to information and ideas due to sanctions	6

To enhance the credibility of the study, two independent coders with expertise in the research topic were selected, and a calibration session was held prior to coding to align guidelines. Inter-coder agreement was 82%, and an external audit by an expert or supervisor confirmed the validity of the analysis. The findings extracted were systematically organized and analyzed to elucidate the conceptual framework of the categories and factors pertinent to the research subject. The final outcomes revealed that the categories and concepts could be

categorized into four primary domains: economic, cultural, political, and legal. A total of 114 concepts and 34 categories were recognized.

- Economic domain: 14 concepts across 4 categories were identified as enabling factors, whereas 10 concepts across 4 categories were deemed inhibitory factors.
- Cultural domain: 20 concepts across 6 categories functioned as facilitators, and 10 concepts across 3 categories acted as inhibitors.
- Political domain: 11 concepts across 2 categories were recognized as facilitators, while 13 concepts across 5 categories were classified as inhibitors.
- Legal domain: factors were categorized into 8 enabling categories comprising 24 concepts and 2 inhibitory categories containing 12 concepts.

A structured summary of the classification of categories and concepts across the four primary domains is illustrated in Table 3. To aid in analysis and differentiate the nature of the categories, gray-scale intensity coding was utilized in tables where differentiation was necessary: categories linked to enabling factors are highlighted in light gray, while categories associated with inhibitory factors are shaded in dark gray. This method facilitates a faster comprehension of the characteristics of each category while also greatly simplifying the data analysis process.

Table 3. Categories and Concepts Extracted from the Meta-Synthesis Phase

Classes	Category	Concept
Economic Enablers	Preparation of commercial-financial infrastructure	Preparing infrastructure for global music markets
		Preparing financial infrastructure as a prerequisite for accession
	Low accession costs	Minimal accession costs
		Non-obstructive accession requirements

Economic Obstacles	Targeted government subsidies	Redefining subsidies as prerequisite
		Predicting government support as a prerequisite for accession
		Forecasting government financial support for cultural and artistic actors post-accession
		Forecasting government financial support for consumers of cultural products
		Forecasting government financial support as a prerequisite for accession
	Positive economic consequences	Enhanced international trade
		Strengthening culture and arts economy
		Increased investment in culture and arts
		Preparations for WTO membership
		Reducing cultural and scientific monopolies
	Low share of Iran in global markets	Neglect of global market
		Low Iranian market share
	Lack of awareness among cultural actors	Insufficient awareness of economic mechanisms
		Neglect of economic aspects in artistic production
	The state-led nature of the cultural economy	The state-led nature of the cultural economy
	Negative economic consequences	Increased economic pressure
		Rising costs of creative works
		Rising costs of producing creative works
		Economic harm to creative industries
		Dependence on free international works

Cultural Enablers	Preparation of managerial infrastructure	Preparation of managerial infrastructure
	Establishment of collective management organizations	Formation of literary agencies and support councils
		Strengthening literary agencies
	High cultural and artistic capacity	Cultural and artistic capacity for accession
	Willingness of certain publishers to agree	Publishers' willingness to pay royalties for international works
	Positive cultural consequences	Job creation in culture and arts
		Improved international cultural interactions
		Better access to cultural products
		Strengthening cultural security
		Strengthening creative production
		Enhancing culture and arts industries
		Developing translation
		Development of culture and the arts
		Development of cultural and artistic technologies
		Professionalizing publishing
		Global market presence
		Protecting heritage and national assets
		Access to modern technical infrastructure
		Reduction of book-making and enhancement of quality works
Cultural Obstacles	Weakness of domestic publishing and publishers	Weakness of domestic publishing and publishers
	Cultural barriers to supporting cultural and artistic industries	The weakness of the cultural industry as the reason for non-accession
		Absence of global artistic activities
		Personal interests of cultural administrators as an obstacle to accession

Political Enablers	Negative cultural consequences	Negative attitudes of publishers and cultural administrators toward accession
		Decline in the quality of domestic productions due to reduced access to international works
		Strengthening Western cultural dominance
		Reduction of translated works
		Limited access to foreign works
		Limited access to new technologies
	Preparation of political infrastructure	Preparation of political infrastructure
		Recognition of the cultural industry as a prerequisite for accession
		Formulating a structured policy for the production of cultural and artistic works as a prerequisite for accession
		Strengthening the cultural industry as a prerequisite for accession
		Strengthening international cooperation as a prerequisite for accession
		Considering cost-benefit analysis in the accession discussion as a prerequisite for accession
		Government support for establishing international scientific and cultural connections
		Introducing Iran's cultural industry to the world as a prerequisite for accession
	Positive political consequences	Improving international political relations
		Strengthening national and international credibility
		Protecting national and public interests
Political Obstacles	Government neglect of the cultural and artistic sector	Government neglect in supporting creators of cultural works
		Neglect of the cultural industry by government institutions
		Slowness of licensing and publishing processes for foreign works post-accession
	Negative impact of economic sanctions on accession	Detrimental effects of accession under economic sanctions
	Religious issues	Contradiction with religious principles as the reason for opponents of accession
		Alignment with religious principles as the reason for supporters of accession
	Macro-level attitudes as an	Impact of the country's macro-policies on accession
		Government hesitation in decision-making on the international stage

Legal Enablers	obstacle to accession	Political problems and distrust toward Western countries
		Lack of overarching cultural strategies
		Political perspective on the issue of culture
	Negative political consequences	Obligation of the country to support foreign works
		Negative impact on the censorship of works
	Global consensus on international treaties as a factor encouraging accession	Global consensus on international treaties
	Increasing legal awareness among activists and stakeholders	Increasing cultural awareness
		Insufficient awareness of intellectual property laws among Iranian legal professionals
		Insufficient awareness of intellectual property laws among cultural and artistic administrators
		Preparing knowledge and information infrastructures
		Formulating comprehensive educational programs as a prerequisite for accession
		Promoting cultural awareness among stakeholders as a prerequisite for accession
	Flexibility of international treaties for developing countries	Legal independence of countries in protecting works under international law
		Forecasting an appropriate timeframe for accession
		Forecasting support for developing countries under the Berne Convention
		Protecting public interests in international treaties
		Flexibility of treaties for countries
	Preparing legal infrastructures	Amending and updating domestic laws for accession
		Developing a domestic copyright model
		Preparing legal and judicial infrastructures as a prerequisite for accession

		Improving the quality of publishing and distribution contracts as a prerequisite for accession
		Forecasting recourse and waiver laws for intellectual works
		Strengthening legal infrastructures as a prerequisite for accession
		National-level practice as a prerequisite for accession
	Utilizing international experiences in the field of copyright	Utilizing international experiences in the field of copyright
	Existing research support in the field of accession	Presence of strong research support in the field of accession
	Strength of domestic copyright laws	Adequacy of domestic intellectual property laws as the reason for opponents of accession
	Positive legal consequences	Strengthening legal mechanisms
International protection of creators' rights		
Legal Obstacles	Shortcomings of the Berne Convention	The outdated nature of the Berne Convention is the reason for opposition to its accession
		Intensification of international inequality through accession
		The weakness of the Berne Convention due to its disregard for criminal enforcement guarantees
	The existence of legal and structural challenges.	Governmental neglect of laws
		Disregard for the rights of other countries
		Improper implementation of laws
		Weakness of domestic laws as an obstacle to the development of the cultural industry
		Ineffectiveness of laws due to lengthy bureaucracy
		Inefficiency of the law enforcement system
		Shortage of copyright specialists
		Legal restrictions arising from accession
The existence of conflicts between domestic and international laws		

Delphi Phase: Upon the conclusion of the meta-synthesis phase and the identification of categories and key concepts, the Delphi method was utilized to validate the results and enhance the consensus level among experts. This approach facilitated the evaluation of the significance of each category and the gathering of additional viewpoints from specialists. During this phase, a questionnaire was crafted based on the outcomes of the meta-synthesis, comprising both closed and open-ended components. The main categories and classes identified in the meta-synthesis were directly incorporated into the Delphi questionnaire, reflecting the outcomes of the meta-synthesis. The closed component was structured using a five-point Likert scale (spanning from “very low” to “very high”) to assess the importance of the categories, while the open-ended component allowed experts to provide suggestions, further insights, and to propose new indicators.

The participants in this research were chosen from a variety of stakeholder groups and specialists to ensure that diverse perspectives were represented in the final analysis. These groups encompassed publishers, copyright specialists, software developers, video game designers, website developers, and professionals in artistic domains such as music, performing arts, photography, and creative industries. Consequently, the participants embodied a wide array of experience and expertise pertinent to the research subject. The initial round of the Delphi process was carried out by distributing the questionnaire to 25 experts, of whom 23 submitted complete responses. The collected data were analyzed using statistical measures such as mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation, to ascertain the relative importance of each factor based on the mean scores and to evaluate the degree of agreement in expert opinions. The findings from this phase also served as the foundation for revising and enhancing the questionnaire for the subsequent round. In light of the insights and recommendations gathered from the initial round, a modified questionnaire was crafted and subsequently disseminated once more to the same group of 23 experts, resulting in the collection of 22 responses. The analysis of the data indicated that a satisfactory level of consensus had been achieved. Consequently, two rounds of the Delphi method proved adequate to solidify the categories. The results of this procedure not only confirmed the categories but also aided in the identification and prioritization of essential factors.

Findings

In the initial phase of the Delphi study, a questionnaire was crafted, incorporating the categories and subcategories derived from the meta-synthesis stage. This questionnaire was then disseminated to 25 experts in pertinent fields, resulting in the return of 23 completed questionnaires. For each category, statistical metrics such as mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation were computed. The mean was primarily used to assess the relative importance of each category, the standard deviation served as a supplementary measure to evaluate the dispersion of responses, and the CV was employed to determine the level of consensus among experts. Categories that met all three criteria—high mean, low standard deviation, and sufficiently low CV—were retained as having an acceptable level of agreement, whereas categories failing to meet any of these thresholds were carried forward to the next round for re-evaluation. This procedure ensured that the items retained for further analysis were both significant and supported by sufficient expert consensus. Nevertheless, the analysis predominantly concentrated on the mean, given that the responses were largely consistent and minor discrepancies in perspectives had negligible effects on decision-making. The standard deviation and coefficient of variation were included solely to illustrate the extent of variability and to emphasize the dependability of the findings. The computational results from this phase are detailed in Table 4 and formed the foundation for the revision and enhancement of the questionnaire for the second round.

Table 4. Evaluation of Categories in the First Round of Delphi Based on Statistical Indicators

Classes	Category	Number of respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
Economic Enablers	Low accession costs	23	4.52	0.67	0.15
	Preparation of commercial-financial infrastructure	23	4.48	0.67	0.15
	Targeted government subsidies	23	4.05	0.79	0.19

	Positive economic consequences	23	4.42	0.71	0.16
Economic Obstacles	Lack of awareness among cultural actors	23	4.26	0.86	0.2
	The state-led nature of the cultural economy	23	4.61	0.58	0.13
	Low share of Iran in global markets	23	4.39	0.94	0.21
	Negative economic consequences	23	4.09	0.95	0.23
Cultural Enablers	Preparation of managerial infrastructure	23	4.35	0.71	0.16
	Preparation of Cultural Infrastructure	23	4.52	0.51	0.11
	Establishment of collective management organizations	23	4.26	0.92	0.21
	Willingness of certain publishers to agree	23	4.13	0.87	0.21
	High cultural and artistic capacity	23	4.22	0.74	0.17
	Positive cultural consequences	23	4.41	0.71	0.16
Cultural Obstacles	Cultural barriers to supporting cultural and artistic industries	23	4	0.90	0.23
	Weakness of domestic publishing and publishers	23	4.09	0.90	0.22
	Negative cultural consequences	23	4.18	0.92	0.31
Political Enablers	Preparation of political infrastructure	23	4.43	0.90	0.20
	Positive political consequences	23	4.25	0.84	0.19
Political Obstacles	Negative impact of economic sanctions on accession	23	4.43	0.95	0.21
	Religious issues	23	3.7	0.97	0.26
	Macro-level attitudes as an obstacle to accession	23	4.22	0.85	0.20
	Government neglect of the cultural and artistic sector	23	4.35	0.93	0.21
	Negative political consequences	23	4.15	0.84	0.22
Legal Enablers	Global consensus on international treaties as a factor encouraging accession	23	4.39	0.72	0.16
	Increasing legal awareness among activists and stakeholders	23	4.39	0.58	0.13

	Flexibility of international treaties for developing countries	23	4.35	0.83	0.19
	Preparing legal infrastructures	23	4.57	0.51	0.11
	Utilizing international experiences in the field of copyright	23	4.57	0.66	0.15
	Existing research support in the field of accession	23	4.17	0.94	0.22
	Preparation of Supporting Documents for Accession to International Copyright Treaties	23	4.3	0.76	0.18
	Strength of domestic copyright laws	23	4.39	0.72	0.16
	Positive legal consequences	23	4.64	0.62	0.13
Legal Obstacles	Shortcomings of the Berne Convention	23	2.52	0.95	0.38
	The existence of legal and structural challenges	23	3.78	0.95	0.25

Data analysis from the initial phase of the Delphi study revealed that most categories achieved a mean score exceeding 4 (on a scale of 5), indicating a substantial level of agreement and consensus among the Delphi panel members concerning the significance and necessity of these categories within the research framework. Conversely, only three categories received a mean score below 4: “Religious issues” (mean = 3.70), “Shortcomings of the Berne Convention” (mean = 2.52), and “The existence of legal and structural challenges” (mean = 3.78). These three categories were recognized as exhibiting a diminished level of agreement among experts. In contrast, categories that attained mean scores above 4 exhibited strong convergence and consensus among specialists and can be regarded as essential and priority components. Among these, the most prominent factors identified in the first round of the Delphi study included “The state-led nature of the cultural economy” (mean = 4.61), “Low accession costs” (mean = 4.52), “Preparation of legal infrastructure” (mean = 4.57), “Utilizing international experiences in the field of copyright” (mean = 4.57), and “Preparation of cultural infrastructure” (mean = 4.52).

Overall, the findings from the initial phase of the Delphi study suggest that most of the suggested categories received support from the experts, with only a few instances necessitating more thorough investigation and specialized analysis. These instances may be revisited

and evaluated in later phases of the Delphi process. Furthermore, the recommendations and viewpoints shared by participants in the open-ended section, once reviewed and validated for consistency with the research goals, were integrated into the formulation of the second-round questionnaire. The specifics of these items are detailed in Table 5.

Table 5. Categories Proposed by Experts

Classes	Suggestions
Economic Enablers	Increasing the penalties for copyright infringement
Economic Obstacles	Dependence on foreign agencies for the sale of Iranian books
Cultural Enablers	Direct and intermediary-free interaction between Iranian authors and publishers with their foreign counterparts
	Education during the academic period
Cultural Obstacles	Lack of proper training leading to the exploitation of rent-seeking opportunities
Political Obstacles	Insufficient knowledge and illiteracy of officials as an obstacle to accession to global markets
	Lack of trust in Iranian agencies by government officials themselves
Legal Enablers	Increasing the number of skilled and specialized copyright lawyers in the country
	Providing material and moral incentives to successful authors and publishers for respecting copyright laws

In the second phase of the Delphi study, a questionnaire akin to that of the initial phase was developed, integrating the recommendations made in the open-ended responses from the first round. Furthermore, the average scores from the initial round were included next to each category to enable experts to assess with an understanding of the overall perspective. The questionnaire for the second round comprised closed—ended questions utilizing a five—point Likert scale and was distributed to the same group of 23 specialists, with 22 completed questionnaires returned. The analysis of data in this round was performed in a manner similar to that of the first round. The comprehensive results of the data analysis from the second round are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. Evaluation of Categories in the Second Round of Delphi Based on Statistical Indicators

Classes	Category	Number of respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
Economic Enablers	Low accession costs	22	4.45	0.74	0.17
	Preparation of commercial-financial infrastructure	22	4.59	0.50	0.11
	Targeted government subsidies	22	4.10	0.94	0.23
	Increasing the penalties for copyright infringement	22	4.14	0.77	0.19
	Positive economic consequences	22	4.64	0.61	0.13
Economic Obstacles	Lack of awareness among cultural actors	22	4.41	0.73	0.17
	The state-led nature of the cultural economy	22	4.50	0.60	0.13
	Low share of Iran in global markets	22	4.50	0.60	0.13
	Dependence on foreign agencies for the sale of Iranian books	22	4.00	0.82	0.20
	Negative economic consequences	22	4.15	0.77	0.18
Cultural Enablers	Preparation of managerial infrastructure	22	4.77	0.43	0.09
	Preparation of Cultural Infrastructure	22	4.86	0.35	0.07
	Establishment of collective management organizations	22	4.73	0.55	0.12
	Willingness of certain publishers to agree	22	4.32	0.72	0.17
	High cultural and artistic capacity	22	4.09	0.97	0.24
	Direct and intermediary-free interaction between Iranian authors and publishers with their foreign counterparts	22	4.32	0.65	0.15
	Education during the academic period	22	4.27	0.88	0.21
	Positive cultural consequences	22	4.67	0.54	0.11

Cultural Obstacles	Cultural barriers to supporting cultural and artistic industries	22	4.32	0.84	0.19
	Weakness of domestic publishing and publishers	22	4.36	0.73	0.17
	Lack of proper training leading to the exploitation of rent-seeking opportunities	22	4.27	0.70	0.16
	Negative cultural consequences	22	4.09	0.89	0.25
Political Enablers	Preparation of political infrastructure	22	4.86	0.35	0.07
	Positive political consequences	22	4.59	0.62	0.13
Political Obstacles	Negative impact of economic sanctions on accession	22	4.64	0.58	0.13
	Religious issues	22	4.18	0.73	0.18
	Macro-level attitudes as an obstacle to accession	22	4.68	0.48	0.10
	Government neglect of the cultural and artistic sector	22	4.64	0.58	0.13
	Lack of trust in Iranian agencies by government officials themselves	22	4.18	0.85	0.20
	Insufficient knowledge and illiteracy of officials as an obstacle to accession to global markets	22	4.27	0.70	0.16
	Negative political consequences	22	4.20	0.98	0.24
Legal Enablers	Global consensus on international treaties as a factor encouraging accession	22	4.77	0.43	0.09
	Increasing legal awareness among activists and stakeholders	22	4.55	0.6	0.13
	Flexibility of international treaties for developing countries	22	4.77	0.43	0.09
	Preparing legal infrastructures	22	4.86	0.35	0.07
	Utilizing international experiences in the field of copyright	22	4.77	0.43	0.09
	Existing research support in the field of accession	22	4.45	0.67	0.15
	Preparation of Supporting Documents for Accession to International Copyright Treaties	22	4.41	0.59	0.13
	Strength of domestic copyright laws	22	4.18	0.85	0.2

Legal Obstacles	Increasing the number of skilled and specialized copyright lawyers in the country	22	4.45	0.8	0.18
	Providing material and moral incentives to successful authors and publishers for respecting copyright laws	22	4.27	0.77	0.18
	Positive legal consequences	22	4.85	0.39	0.08
	Shortcomings of the Berne Convention	22	3.45	0.96	0.28
	The existence of legal and structural challenges.	22	4.14	0.71	0.17

The analysis conducted during the second round of the Delphi study indicated that several categories received notably high mean scores, such as “Preparation of legal infrastructure” (mean = 4.86), “Preparation of managerial infrastructure” (mean = 4.77), and “Establishment of collective management organizations” (mean = 4.73). Conversely, the category “Shortcomings of the Berne Convention” exhibited the lowest level of agreement, with a mean score of 3.45, and was subsequently excluded from the analysis as it did not meet the consensus threshold. In total, 41 categories, representing 95.3%, attained a mean score exceeding 4; this outcome suggests a considerable alignment among experts in recognizing and validating the essential categories pertinent to Iran's accession to international copyright treaties and their strategic significance in policymaking and decision-making associated with the research subject. As previously explained, the mean was primarily used to assess the relative importance of each category, while the standard deviation and coefficient of variation (CV) served to illustrate the extent of variability and emphasize the dependability of the findings. Nevertheless, the analysis predominantly concentrated on the mean, given that the responses were largely consistent and minor discrepancies in perspectives had negligible effects on decision-making. Accordingly, the category “Shortcomings of the Berne Convention” was excluded because it did not meet these criteria, while the retained categories reflected both high importance and sufficient agreement among experts.

Discussion

This study identified a total of 114 concepts across 34 categories during the initial phase of the Delphi study. Moreover, based on expert recommendations, nine additional categories were incorporated in the subsequent phase to further explore the key enabling factors and obstacles factors for Iran's accession. Overall, the quantitative results indicate a consistently high level of expert consensus, as most categories received mean scores above 4, while only one category fell below this threshold and was excluded from the final evaluation. In this section, the research findings are interpreted and compared with theoretical frameworks and previous studies.

Economic Enablers: The findings reveal a significant agreement among specialists concerning the essential function of economic factors in promoting accession. The elevated means across the categories (spanning from 4.10 to 4.65) imply that these factors are regarded as the most potent motivators by the participants. The leading factor, "positive economic outcomes," with a mean of 4.65, distinctly illustrates that the provision of direct financial advantages and rewards serves as the most compelling incentive for engaging and motivating stakeholders. Furthermore, the notably low coefficients of variation and standard deviations across the categories affirm a considerable alignment in expert perspectives. These results align with theoretical viewpoints in existing literature; for example, Hosseini (2010) highlights that governmental financial assistance and subsidies can alleviate the potential adverse effects of implementing international copyright regulations and avert reductions in cultural investment. Such strategies, by lowering entry barriers and amplifying economic incentives, are crucial in facilitating accession.

Economic Obstacles: The analysis further emphasizes the existence of considerable economic obstacles, as all categories show elevated mean scores (ranging from 4.00 to 4.50), which signifies a strong consensus among experts regarding their obstructive influence. The most significant barriers identified are the "state-controlled nature of the cultural economy" and the "limited share of Iran in the global market for intellectual works" (both scoring a mean of 4.50), which reflect structural limitations stemming from a centralized cultural economy and international seclusion. The low variability in the data (with coefficients of variation between 0.13 and 0.17) suggests a strong agreement in evaluating the intensity of these barriers. These results are

consistent with theoretical frameworks, as Abbasi et al. (2015) illustrate that non-participation in international treaties not only fails to yield significant cost reductions but also isolates the cultural economy, diminishes Iran's share in the global trade of intellectual works, and severely restricts the sector's competitiveness.

Cultural Enablers: The results reveal that participants place significant importance on the essential role of managerial, cultural, and institutional frameworks in supporting accession. Each category within this dimension shows elevated mean scores (exceeding 4.09), indicating a strong agreement regarding their significance. The highest mean scores are linked to the "preparation of managerial infrastructure" (4.77), "establishment of collective management organizations" (4.73), and "preparation of cultural infrastructure" (4.68). The low coefficients of variation, especially in categories related to infrastructure (as low as 0.07), further validate the strong alignment of expert views. These findings align with theoretical frameworks; for instance, Musai (2006) asserts that the establishment of necessary structures for literary agencies and active engagement in the global book market is crucial for enhancing Iran's cultural standing. Likewise, Norouzi (2001) and Sadeghi & Akbari (2014) highlight Iran's relative economic and cultural capabilities, deeming accession to the Berne Convention both reasonable and attainable.

Cultural Obstacles: The analysis reveals that cultural contexts pose considerable challenges. The high mean scores (ranging from 4.09 to 4.36) indicate a strong agreement regarding the obstructive nature of these factors. The most significant barriers identified are the "weakness of creative industries" (4.36) and "cultural obstacles to supporting cultural and artistic industries" (4.32), which emphasize the lack of a professional ecosystem and the influence of traditional or value-based constraints as two primary cultural limitations. The low dispersion of data suggests a strong alignment of expert opinions. These results further corroborate significant deficiencies in the infrastructure of the publishing industry; Sadeghi & Akbari (2014) point out that limited liquidity and the inability of publishers to manage translation and copyright return costs are critical barriers to international engagement and professionalization within this sector.

Political Enablers: The analysis reveals that political factors garnered the highest degree of consensus and support among all facilitating elements. Each item within this category achieved notably

high mean scores, nearing 5, which underscores the essential role of political backing and supportive structures in promoting the issue under investigation. The peak mean was recorded for "preparation of political infrastructure as a precondition for accession" (4.86), accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.35 and a coefficient of variation of 0.07, indicating an extraordinary level of expert consensus on the importance of enacting structural and political initiatives. These results unequivocally confirm the pivotal role of the government in establishing a conducive political environment. The findings are consistent with Matlabi (2024), who asserts that enhancing international collaboration, advancing Iran's cultural sector on a global scale, and developing the necessary political infrastructure for accession represent the government's most strategic actions. This viewpoint emphasizes proactive and long-term governmental strategies aimed at boosting the international competitiveness of cultural industries.

Political Obstacles: The results reveal that macro-level and structural political obstacles serve as significant impediments to the advancement of the issue being examined. The average scores for this category, which range from 4.18 to 4.68, are remarkably elevated, underscoring the pronounced inhibiting influence of these factors. The most notable barriers include "macro-level attitudes as a barrier to accession" (4.68), "negative impact of economic sanctions" (4.64), and "government neglect of the cultural and artistic sector" (4.64). These findings imply that existing policies, external pressures, and institutional neglect constitute the primary structural obstacles imposed by the higher echelons of policymaking. The low coefficients of variation for these items (0.10 to 0.13) suggest a strong consensus among respondents regarding the inhibiting nature of these barriers. These findings are consistent with the theoretical literature concerning the impact of the macro-political environment on the development of the cultural industry. Karimi (2023) identifies sanctions as a significant external barrier, contending that the resulting restrictions on finance, trade, and global market access severely harm the publishing industry and disrupt the production and distribution cycle of intellectual works. Likewise, Rezvanpanah-Pashte & Ansari (2022) highlight that Iran's accession to international conventions under the current circumstances encounters considerable challenges and is not necessarily warranted.

Legal Enablers: The results reveal that, in comparison to other dimensions, legal factors are perceived with the highest degree of consensus and significance among participants. The exceptionally high mean scores for all items (nearly 5) imply that the establishment of a suitable legal and regulatory framework is deemed a fundamental prerequisite for progressing the issue at hand. The item "Preparation of legal infrastructure" holds the top position, with a mean score of 4.86, underscoring the vital necessity of aligning national legislation with international standards. The very low standard deviations and coefficients of variation (0.35–0.43 and 0.07–0.09, respectively) further validate a high level of consensus and the robust reliability of these findings. These outcomes are consistent with theoretical perspectives; for example, Soleimani & Seyed Abadi (2017) contend that compulsory licenses (non-exclusive and non-transferable) for the translation and reproduction of works protected under the Berne Convention for educational, teaching, or research purposes are specifically tailored for developing countries and can facilitate the accession process. Moreover, the significance of "enhancing legal awareness among stakeholders" aligns with the perspective of Saleh (2003), who emphasizes that facilitating accession is not merely a top-down governmental initiative but requires the informed involvement of stakeholders. According to Saleh (2003), continuous awareness-raising among authors, artists, translators, and publishers regarding international intellectual property regulations is a fundamental strategy.

Legal Obstacles: On the other hand, the examination of inhibiting factors reveals that specific domestic legal obstacles are still prominently acknowledged by respondents. Although the 'shortcomings of the Berne Convention' received the lowest rating (mean = 3.45) and is not statistically regarded as a major inhibiting factor, the 'existence of legal and structural challenges' surfaced as the most significant legal barrier, with a mean of 4.14 and a low coefficient of variation (0.17). This outcome implies that domestic legal challenges, rather than the international treaties themselves, represent the primary hindrance to accession. This conclusion aligns with the viewpoint of Jafarzadeh and Ashna (2023), who contend that accession may limit the flexibility of domestic legislation, restrict the nation's autonomy in managing intellectual property, and heighten the potential for conflicts between national laws and international commitments.

Conclusion

To contextualize the contribution of the present study, it is essential to compare its approach with the existing domestic literature. A review of previous research demonstrates that this study offers a notable degree of originality and distinction in terms of both methodology and outcomes. Two key references in this regard are Saleh (2003), which represents one of the earliest domestic efforts in this field, and Pashootan et al. (2025), the most recent domestic study on the subject. While Saleh (2003) adopted a descriptive and legal perspective to examine the general implications of accession and thereby provided an initial conceptual foundation, Pashootan et al. (2025) relied exclusively on meta-synthesis to extract significant categories and concepts from the existing literature. In contrast, the present study employs the Delphi method. This methodological choice enabled the research to move beyond the exploratory nature of earlier analytical or conceptual studies by validating the identified factors through expert consensus. Consequently, the study provides a detailed, consensus-based set of determinants influencing Iran's accession to international copyright treaties, thus offering a robust operational foundation for policymakers. Recognizing these elements can act as a valuable and strategic resource for experts and policymakers in crafting effective policies and making well-informed choices. In order to facilitate accession and fully utilize the nation's potential in the creative and copyright domains, it is crucial to enhance infrastructure, create educational initiatives, increase awareness among stakeholders in the creative industry, and address legal and administrative obstacles. Furthermore, the findings can lay the groundwork for developing long-term strategies in copyright protection and the sustainable advancement of creative industries, while promoting international collaboration and improving domestic standards, thus aiding in the enhancement of Iran's standing on the global stage.

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