

DRIVING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CREATIVITY: UNLEASHING THE POWER OF MUSIC, THEATRE AND VISUAL ARTS IN NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

This study examined the driving development through creativity: unleashing the power of music, theatre and visual arts in Nigeria. The creativity economy theory was anchored in this study. The study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy and a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 1.2 million individuals employed within Nigeria's creative industry, according to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2023). A purposive sample of 15 participants was selected to ensure engagement with knowledgeable and experienced stakeholders. Purposive sampling served as the primary technique, and the sampling process involved identifying potential respondents through professional networks, arts associations and creative hubs, followed by direct contact to confirm their relevance and willingness to participate. Data were collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews that allowed participants to express their experiences, challenges and perspectives freely, while also giving the researcher room to probe emerging ideas. The interviews generated detailed narratives that reflected the complex realities of Nigeria's creative landscape. The study revealed that music, theatre and visual arts significantly contribute to Nigeria's socio-economic development by creating jobs, generating income, promoting cultural tourism, and enhancing international cultural influence. The study concluded that music, theatre and visual arts are vital drivers of socio-economic development in Nigeria, with their full potential needing sustained support to maximise cultural and economic benefits. The study recommended that the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism should increase funding and support programs that

promote music, theatre, and visual arts to enhance their socio-economic impact in Nigeria.

Keywords: Development, Creativity, Music Power, Theatre, Visual Arts, Nigeria

Introduction

The creative economy has increasingly emerged as a vital driver of sustainable development globally, with music, theatre and visual arts playing a central role in generating employment, fostering social cohesion and promoting cultural identity. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2023), the global creative economy was valued at over \$2.3 trillion, accounting for nearly 3% of global GDP and employing more than 50 million people. These sectors are not only engines of economic growth but also platforms for innovation and advocacy. In Europe and North America, investments in creative sectors have yielded transformative impacts in education, tourism and mental health. As such, the global discourse positions creativity as both a soft power and a development catalyst, underscoring its critical importance to national policy frameworks.

Across Africa, the creative industries are increasingly recognised for their potential to diversify economies traditionally reliant on resource exports. The African Union's Agenda 2063 emphasises the strategic importance of culture, arts and heritage in realising inclusive and sustainable development (African Union, 2022). Countries such as South Africa, Kenya and Ghana have established national arts councils and creative hubs that support local talent, foster global collaboration and stimulate job creation. However, challenges such as weak institutional frameworks, limited funding and inadequate infrastructure continue to hinder the full realisation of the sector's potential across the continent. Thus, a continental commitment to the creative economy must align with infrastructural development, intellectual property reforms and youth empowerment strategies.

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous country, holds significant untapped potential in the creative arts sector. The Nigerian creative industry is currently valued at \$7 billion, with music, theatre and visual arts contributing substantially to GDP growth and youth employment (PwC Nigeria, 2023). Nollywood, the country's film and theatre powerhouse, ranks as the second-largest film industry by volume globally and employs over one million people (UNESCO, 2021). Likewise, Afrobeats has become a global music phenomenon, elevating Nigerian artists like Burna Boy, Wizkid and Tems to international fame.

Despite these milestones, the sector continues to grapple with poor funding, piracy, infrastructural deficits and insufficient government support, which curtail its developmental potential.

The interconnection between creativity and development in Nigeria can be better understood through the lens of socio-economic variables such as education, employment, social inclusion and cultural identity. Music, theatre and visual arts serve as vital tools for informal education and civic engagement, especially in marginalised communities. Study has shown that integrating the arts into educational curricula enhances cognitive development, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence (Ebewo & Sirayi, 2022). For instance, theatre-for-development initiatives have been used to address issues like gender inequality, health awareness and youth radicalisation in Northern Nigeria. These sub-sectors thus serve dual roles as both artistic expressions and transformative development instruments.

Music in Nigeria has evolved into a global export, generating economic value and enhancing cultural diplomacy. Beyond entertainment, music in Nigeria contributes to nation-building and conflict resolution. For example, protest music has historically been used to speak truth to power, from Fela Kuti's Afrobeat critiques of military regimes to recent #EndSARS anthems by contemporary artists. Music also fosters entrepreneurship, with a sprawling ecosystem of producers, sound engineers, event managers and digital marketers (IFPI, 2024). Furthermore, music streaming platforms and digital distribution channels have enabled artists to monetise their craft globally, though disparities in revenue sharing and data access remain concerns.

Theatre in Nigeria has a rich tradition, spanning folk performances, political satire and urban dramatisation. It plays a central role in cultural education and social commentary. The evolution from traditional masquerade performances to contemporary stage and screen dramas illustrates theatre's dynamic role in reflecting and shaping societal values. According to Ukaegbu (2023), theatre in Nigeria acts as a mirror and critic of society, often addressing themes such as corruption, ethnic tensions and governance. Initiatives like the Lagos Theatre Festival and community-based drama groups have been instrumental in promoting social awareness, community healing and youth engagement, especially in post-conflict zones.

Visual arts in Nigeria encompass a wide array of practices, from traditional sculpture and textile arts to contemporary painting, photography, and digital art. This sector not only preserves cultural heritage but also drives innovation and global dialogue. Nigerian visual

artists such as Njideka Akunyili Crosby and Victor Ehikhamenor have gained international recognition, showcasing African narratives on global platforms (Tate Modern, 2022). Locally, visual arts serve educational and economic purposes, often integrated into urban renewal projects, tourism and creative education programs. However, access to galleries, public funding and international residencies remains limited for many emerging artists.

The synergy between music, theatre and visual arts fosters cross-sectoral innovation and inclusive development. For instance, multi-disciplinary festivals like ART X Lagos integrate music performances, art exhibitions and theatrical showcases, drawing attention to Nigeria's vibrant cultural scene. These platforms facilitate cultural exchange, youth participation and global investment. According to UNESCO (2023), interdisciplinary collaboration within the creative sectors enhances impact, audience reach and sustainability. Such integration also amplifies marginalised voices, promotes diversity and enables social cohesion in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria.

In policy terms, there is growing awareness of the need for a comprehensive creative economy strategy in Nigeria. The National Creative Industry Development Framework (NCIDF), introduced in 2023, seeks to provide infrastructure, education, digital access and regulatory frameworks to bolster the sector. However, implementation gaps and inter-ministerial coordination issues persist. Global best practices from countries like South Korea (with its K-Culture wave) and the UK (Creative Industries Council) demonstrate the importance of long-term investment, public-private partnerships, and international branding in building globally competitive creative sectors (World Bank, 2023). Nigeria can draw from these models to craft a context-specific and inclusive development path.

In conclusion, unleashing the power of music, theatre and visual arts for development in Nigeria requires an ecosystem approach, one that nurtures talent, ensures equitable access and leverages technology and policy support. The interplay among these art forms presents an opportunity to address development challenges such as unemployment, social exclusion and education deficits. By aligning cultural investment with national development goals and global creative economy trends, Nigeria can reposition its artistic capital as a pillar of sustainable growth and global influence. The time is ripe to treat creativity not merely as entertainment but as a strategic asset for national transformation.

In recent years, the creative sector encompassing music, theatre and visual arts has been globally recognised as a pivotal force for economic diversification, youth empowerment, cultural identity and

sustainable development. However, in the Nigerian context, the full developmental potential of these art forms remains largely underutilised and fragmented, owing to systemic neglect, weak institutional frameworks and lack of robust academic inquiry. While countries like South Korea, the United Kingdom and Brazil have successfully leveraged creative industries as strategic assets for national transformation, Nigeria's approach has remained inconsistent, predominantly market-driven and lacking in integrated policy and infrastructural support (World Bank, 2023; UNCTAD, 2023). Furthermore, conceptual clarity is lacking on how these creative domains interact as complementary forces for national development, particularly in addressing cross-cutting issues such as unemployment, education, youth restiveness and national cohesion. This presents a conceptual gap, as many studies examine music, theatre and visual arts in isolation without investigating their combined developmental synergy or exploring intersectoral dynamics.

Moreover, empirical and methodological gaps are evident in existing literature, which tends to be either anecdotal or focused on cultural analysis rather than structured, impact-driven developmental assessments. Many empirical studies are limited to Lagos and Abuja, leaving a population gap by excluding the rich creative expressions in other parts of the country, such as Northern Nigeria, the Niger Delta, and the Middle Belt. Additionally, there is a theoretical conflict in the application of Western-centric cultural and creative economy models, which often do not align with indigenous Nigerian realities and values. A knowledge void also exists concerning the sustainability and scalability of local creative enterprises, especially in terms of data-driven evaluation of socio-economic contributions. Similarly, the practical gap lies in the absence of implementable frameworks for public-private partnerships, arts funding mechanisms and digital access strategies that would make creative sectors more inclusive and productive. These layered problems signal an urgent need for a multidimensional, context-specific and empirically grounded investigation into how music, theatre and visual arts can be deliberately positioned to drive national development in Nigeria.

This study assesses the individual contributions of music, theatre and visual arts to socio-economic development in Nigeria, examining how each creative form influences national growth indicators such as employment, education, cultural identity and youth empowerment. It also investigates the structural and institutional challenges that hinder the optimal performance and integration of the creative sectors into national development plans. Furthermore, the study examines the extent

of regional inclusion and representation within Nigeria's creative economy, particularly addressing the underrepresentation of certain geopolitical zones in both academic literature and policy interventions. Lastly, the research evaluates the existing policy and strategic frameworks that support the growth of music, theatre and visual arts, with a view to identifying gaps and opportunities for enhancing the developmental impact.

National Development

National development refers to the multi-dimensional growth and transformation of a country's economy, social systems, education, cultural identity and overall standard of living. It is commonly measured by indicators such as GDP growth, employment levels, literacy rates, infrastructure, and cultural integration (Todaro & Smith, 2020). In the context of Nigeria, national development also includes social cohesion, youth engagement and cultural preservation areas that have remained underexplored in conventional economic models. These non-economic dimensions are especially critical for a country with Nigeria's ethnic diversity and youthful population. As scholars have argued, a holistic view of development must go beyond income and include human capabilities and cultural empowerment (Sen, 1999; UNDP, 2023).

The arts, particularly music, theatre and visual arts are increasingly recognised as powerful contributors to national development due to their role in job creation, national branding, identity shaping, and emotional wellbeing (UNESCO, 2023). These creative expressions serve not only as entertainment but also as platforms for education, resistance, healing and social engagement. In Nigeria, the rising prominence of Nollywood, Afrobeats and visual artists like Njideka Akunyili Crosby has demonstrated how cultural output can redefine global perceptions and contribute to the domestic economy (PwC Nigeria, 2023). However, the role of the arts in contributing to national development has been mostly anecdotal and poorly integrated into national development frameworks, creating a need for empirical clarification and policy-oriented frameworks.

Music, Theatre and Visual Arts

Music, theatre and visual arts are distinct, yet interrelated sectors within the broader creative industry, each possessing unique mechanisms through which they impact society. Music serves as a communication tool, an economic engine, and a socio-political commentary platform. In Nigeria, the global success of Afrobeats has created employment, enhanced national identity and amplified local voices on global

platforms (IFPI, 2024). Similarly, theatre is a performance medium that combines storytelling, ritual and social critique often used for civic education, political mobilisation and cultural continuity. Nigerian community theatre and travelling troupes have long served as vehicles for social dialogue, particularly in rural areas (Ukaegbu, 2023).

Visual arts, encompassing painting, sculpture, photography and digital installations, play a vital role in preserving history, promoting tourism and expressing identity. Nigerian visual artists are gaining international recognition and commanding high economic value, as seen in global art markets (Tate Modern, 2022). Collectively, these creative forms are not only sources of livelihood but also tools for empowerment, especially for women and youth and platforms for cultural diplomacy. Yet, the independent contributions and intersections of these art forms have been insufficiently theorised in the Nigerian context. Most existing research isolates them rather than examining their interactive influence on broader developmental goals, signalling a conceptual and empirical gap.

Framework Linking the National Development and Music, Theatre and Visual Arts

The conceptual framework of this study is built on the assumption that music, theatre, and visual arts (independent variables) are catalysts for national development (dependent variable). The interaction occurs through various channels such as job creation, youth engagement, education, social inclusion and cultural identity formation. For instance, when properly harnessed, music can serve as a tool for national cohesion and cultural export; theatre can facilitate civic education and behavioural change; and visual arts can promote heritage and tourism (UNCTAD, 2023). The framework also accommodates the feedback loop in which increased national development, such as improved education and infrastructure, further supports the growth of these creative sectors resulting in a mutually reinforcing relationship.

Theoretically, this framework aligns with the creative economy theory and cultural policy framework, which posit that creative industries are not merely aesthetic or recreational sectors but are central to socio-economic development (Howkins, 2001; UNESCO, 2023). The creative arts stimulate human capital development, social innovation and inclusive growth. In Nigeria, where unemployment, cultural fragmentation and youth disillusionment are pressing concerns, music, theatre and visual arts represent accessible and scalable tools for intervention. By situating these creative practices as core variables in the developmental equation, the framework advances a

multidisciplinary approach to understanding and leveraging the transformation power of culture.

Creative Economy Theory

This theory was developed by John Howkins (2001). The Creative Economy Theory posits that creativity is a key driver of economic growth, innovation and cultural identity. Howkins (2001) argues that, creativity should be recognized not merely as an individual or artistic trait but as an economic asset that can be measured, traded, and scaled across sectors. Howkins classified industries such as music, visual arts, film, theatre, publishing, advertising and software as central to the “creative economy” a sector where value is based on imaginative qualities rather than physical inputs. According to Howkins, the creative economy hinges on intellectual property rights and the monetization of ideas, rather than traditional manufacturing or resource extraction. It sees artists and creative as economic agents contributing to development by generating employment, export revenues and fostering national identity and cohesion. He emphasised that innovation, cultural heritage and the ability to manage creativity strategically are crucial to national development.

UNCTAD (2010) and UNESCO (2013) have widely adopted and extended Howkins’ framework, asserting that the creative economy not only stimulates GDP but also builds soft power, enhances urban regeneration and fosters social inclusion. Scholars such as Flew (2012) and Hartley (2005) argue that creative industries contribute to cultural democracy by amplifying diverse voices and fostering community engagement. Within the African context, Oyelaran-Oyeyinka & Adebowale (2012) assert that the theory helps understand how African nations can transition from resource dependency to innovation-driven economies. They emphasise that creativity, if properly harnessed, can empower marginalised communities, revive local heritage, and drive sustainable development.

Empirical Critiques: While the theory is widely embraced, some scholars critique its overemphasis on market forces and commercialisation. Garnham (2005) argues that the theory lacks attention to structural inequalities that limit access to creative opportunities in the Global South. In Nigeria, Odugbemi (2020) critiques the state’s inadequate infrastructure and poor policy support, which undermine the full realisation of the creative economy’s potential. There are also concerns that informal creative workers remain excluded from institutional support systems. Relevance to the present study: The creative economy theory is relevant to this study as it provides a foundational lens through which music, theatre, and visual

arts can be viewed as not just cultural expressions but as viable instruments for socio-economic transformation. The theory offers a framework for analysing how these art forms contribute to employment, education, identity, innovation and regional development in Nigeria. It also helps interrogate the role of policy, regional disparities, and institutional structures in either enabling or hindering creative contributions to national growth. By applying this theory, the study can critically evaluate the existing creative landscape and recommend ways to leverage creativity for inclusive development.

Empirical Review

Assessing contributions of creative arts to socio-economic development

Abah (2020) carried out a study on *Art for Development: Evaluating the Socio-Economic Impact of Nollywood and Nigerian Popular Music*. The study examined the economic and social development contributions of Nigeria's film and music industries. The method adopted was mixed methods approach; surveyed 200 creative workers and conducted interviews with 15 cultural policy stakeholders. The study revealed that Nollywood and Afrobeats have significantly contributed to employment, youth engagement, and cultural diplomacy. However, these sectors lack adequate government support and suffer from piracy and weak regulatory structures. Critique: The study focuses heavily on economic gains and fails to fully explore the cultural and educational roles of the arts. Comparison: Like the present study, it investigates the developmental impact of the creative sector. Contrast: While Abah concentrates on Nollywood and music, the current study includes theatre and visual arts in a broader conceptual frame. Connection: This study lays a foundation for understanding the economic contributions of the creative sector, which the present study expands by integrating social and cultural dimensions across diverse art forms.

Investigating structural and institutional challenges

Ijeoma and Nwankwo (2021) conducted a research on *Challenges of Cultural Policy Implementation in Nigeria's Creative Industries*. The study identified institutional and infrastructural barriers affecting the Nigerian creative economy. The method used was qualitative analysis using document review and expert interviews with cultural administrators in Abuja and Lagos. Findings showed that weak policy coordination, poor infrastructure, inconsistent funding and absence of intellectual property enforcement were found to limit the growth of creative industries in Nigeria. Critique: The study lacks empirical data from grassroots artists or local practitioners. Comparison: Both studies

emphasise the importance of institutional support for creative development. Contrast: The current study integrates more specific artistic domains—music, theatre and visual arts, while this study treats the creative industry in general. Connection: The research provides insight into systemic gaps that the present study will deepen by directly linking structural issues to specific art domains and development outcomes.

Regional inclusion and representation

Yusuf and Ekong (2022) carried out a research *Geographical Disparities in Nigeria's Cultural Industry: A Case Study of the North-East and South-West Zones*. The study explored how geographic location affects participation and representation in Nigeria's creative economy. The method utilised was a case study approach; analysed cultural funding records and interviewed local artists in Borno and Lagos States. Findings indicated that Southern zones, especially Lagos and the South-West, dominate cultural production and funding, while Northern zones face marginalisation due to insecurity, inadequate infrastructure, and low policy attention. Critique: The study's regional scope is limited and does not incorporate perspectives from theatre or visual artists. Comparison: Both studies are concerned with regional equity and inclusivity in Nigeria's creative space. Contrast: While the reviewed study focused on macro-regional disparity, the current study goes further by integrating underrepresented art forms and national development impacts. Connection: This study informs the present research's concern with regional marginalisation and the need for a more inclusive cultural policy framework.

Policy and strategic frameworks

Okonkwo (2023) conducted a study on *Policy and Practice: A Review of Nigeria's National Cultural Policy in the 21st Century*. The study evaluated the relevance and implementation effectiveness of Nigeria's National Cultural Policy since 2003. The method employed was policy analysis and expert interviews with officials in the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture. The study found that the policy is outdated, lacks alignment with digital realities, and suffers from poor implementation mechanisms and weak inter-agency coordination. Critique: While policy-focused, the study does not adequately engage with practitioners or assess grassroots-level impact. Comparison: Like the current study, it seeks to understand how policy frameworks influence the creative industry. Contrast: The current study goes beyond reviewing the policy to assess how its implementation affects specific art forms like theatre, music, and visual arts. Connection: This study supports the argument that policy revision and strategic planning are

vital for leveraging arts for national development, a core concern in the present research.

Gap Identification

The gap identified in this study lies in the underrepresentation and underutilisation of music, theatre and visual arts as strategic tools for development in existing Nigerian scholarly and policy literature. While global discourse increasingly acknowledges the contribution of the creative economy to socio-economic development (UNCTAD, 2010; UNESCO, 2013), most empirical studies in Nigeria have focused narrowly on entertainment, tourism or cultural preservation without explicitly linking creative sectors to sustainable national development goals such as economic empowerment, youth employment, urban regeneration and social cohesion (Odugbemi, 2020; Nwankwo & Onyema, 2022). Furthermore, there is a conceptual gap in understanding how these creative forms interrelate and function synergistically as developmental instruments rather than isolated artistic practices. Methodologically, many existing studies are limited by descriptive approaches and lack robust qualitative or mixed-method research that could provide nuanced insights into the lived realities and developmental contributions of creative practitioners. Empirical evidence on the roles of music, theatre, and visual arts in fostering grassroots development, civic engagement and identity construction in Nigeria is still sparse and fragmented. Theoretical application also remains shallow, as few studies integrate frameworks like the creative economy theory to explain the systemic and policy dynamics involved. This study, therefore, seeks to fill these conceptual, empirical, theoretical and methodological gaps by offering a holistic, context-specific exploration of how Nigeria can drive sustainable development through the creative industries.

Methodology

The study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy, which is appropriate for exploring how creative practitioners understand and experience the role of music, theatre and visual arts in driving development in Nigeria, emphasizing subjective meanings, lived experiences and context-based realities. A qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, guides the investigation by allowing an in-depth exploration of how individuals within the creative sector interpret the developmental value of artistic expression. The population of the study comprised approximately 1.2 million individuals employed within Nigeria's creative industry, according to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2023). This population includes musicians, visual

artists, theatre practitioners, cultural policymakers, arts educators and creative entrepreneurs who operate across both formal and informal structures in urban and rural settings. These individuals collectively shape Nigeria's cultural identity and contribute significantly to economic growth, although they face persistent challenges such as limited funding, infrastructural deficits, inconsistent cultural policies and inadequate institutional support, all of which influence their capacity to contribute meaningfully to national development.

From this population, a purposive sample of 30 participants was selected to ensure engagement with knowledgeable and experienced stakeholders capable of providing rich, context-specific insights into the interplay between creativity and development. The sample size was determined based on the qualitative requirement for depth rather than breadth, with participants chosen because of their active involvement in music, theatre, visual arts or cultural policy. Purposive sampling served as the primary technique, and the sampling process involved identifying potential respondents through professional networks, arts associations and creative hubs, followed by direct contact to confirm their relevance and willingness to participate. Data were collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews that allowed participants to express their experiences, challenges and perspectives freely, while also giving the researcher room to probe emerging ideas. The interviews generated detailed narratives that reflected the complex realities of Nigeria's creative landscape. Thematic analysis guided the data analysis process, involving systematic coding of transcripts to identify recurring themes, patterns and relationships associated with the developmental impact of the creative arts. The choice of qualitative design, purposive sampling, in-depth interviews and thematic analysis is justified because these methods align with the interpretivist philosophy and offer the depth, flexibility and contextual sensitivity required to understand deeply embedded cultural and developmental processes within Nigeria's creative sector. Data saturation was reached after 25 interviews; however, five additional interviews were conducted to confirm thematic stability.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Themes were deduced deductively following the research objectives. The following themes were deduced: Contribution of Creative Arts to Socio-Economic Development; Institutional and Structural Challenges in the Creative Sector; Regional Inclusivity and Representation in Creative Industries; Effectiveness of Cultural Policies and Strategic Frameworks. These were presented and discussed below:

Contribution of Creative Arts to Socio-Economic Development

This theme explores how music, theatre and visual arts impact economic growth, job creation, cultural diplomacy and social empowerment within Nigeria. Musicians emphasised that “the music industry significantly contributes to job creation and economic growth. Beyond performance, it supports roles such as producers, sound engineers, event organisers and marketers, which collectively empower many youths financially. The international popularity of Afrobeat and other Nigerian music genres has also opened global markets, enhancing Nigeria's cultural influence and bringing in foreign exchange through streaming, tours, and endorsements.”

Theatre professionals highlighted that “theatre fosters social awareness while stimulating local economies. Productions generate employment for actors, directors, stage designers and venue operators, often encouraging small businesses around theatre hubs. Moreover, theatre festivals attract tourism, promoting cultural exchange and urban regeneration in host cities, which further strengthens socio-economic development.”

Visual artists reflected on their role in cultural preservation and economic empowerment through exhibitions, commissions and art sales. “The visual arts sector offers opportunities for innovation in design, crafts and digital art, which are growing industries with export potential.” The visual artists pointed out “how art galleries and cultural centres have become platforms for community development, education, and heritage promotion.”

Cultural Policymakers noted that “creative industries contribute significantly to Nigeria’s GDP and advocate for stronger integration of these sectors into national development plans. They stressed the importance of supporting intellectual property rights and infrastructural development to maximise the socio-economic benefits of music, theatre, and visual arts.”

Creative Entrepreneurs underlined “the entrepreneurial opportunities in creative industries, highlighting the rise of start-ups in digital content, music production and arts management. They emphasised the sector’s potential to foster innovation, diversify the economy and reduce youth unemployment if adequate investment and policy support are provided.”

Institutional and Structural Challenges in the Creative Sector

This theme investigates the barriers, such as policy gaps, inadequate infrastructure, funding issues and intellectual property enforcement that hinder the growth and sustainability of creative industries. Musicians

frequently cited “piracy and weak copyright enforcement as primary obstacles that erode their earnings and limit reinvestment in creative production. Additionally, they lamented inadequate access to professional training and limited distribution channels, especially for independent artists outside major cities.”

Theatre professionals identified “insufficient infrastructure, such as poorly maintained theatres and lack of funding, as key challenges. Many productions rely on ad hoc venues and face competition from digital entertainment, which impacts audience numbers and revenue generation.”

Visual artists pointed to “limited market access and a lack of formalized support systems, including grants and institutional patronage. The absence of regional art centres and platforms restricts the visibility and growth of artists, particularly those from underrepresented areas.”

Cultural Policymakers acknowledged “gaps in policy implementation and coordination among government agencies.” Emphasis was on the “need for comprehensive strategies to improve funding mechanisms, protect intellectual property, and promote capacity building within the creative ecosystem.”

Creative Entrepreneurs highlighted “the challenge of financing, noting that banks often consider creative ventures high-risk and deny loans. The informal nature of many creative businesses also hampers their ability to attract investment, scale operations, and integrate into the formal economy.”

Regional Inclusivity and Representation in Creative Industries

This theme examines geographic disparities in access, participation, and resource allocation across different Nigerian regions, highlighting issues of marginalization and equity in the creative economy. Musicians observed that “creative activities and opportunities are predominantly concentrated in urban centres like Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt. They pointed out that artists from northern and rural regions struggle to gain recognition and access to markets, which limits cultural diversity in the national music scene.”

Theatre practitioners echoed “concerns about the uneven distribution of resources and platforms, noting that most theatre productions and festivals occur in metropolitan areas. This centralisation marginalises regional narratives and limits community engagement through performing arts.”

Visual Artists stressed that “lack of regional representation restricts the diversity of artistic expressions showcased nationally. There is need for more galleries, art fairs and cultural institutions in less urbanised regions to nurture local talents and preserve distinct cultural identities.”

Cultural Policymakers recognised that “the challenge of promoting equitable resource allocation and emphasized the necessity of policies that incentivise creative development across all geopolitical zones. They suggested that regional cultural festivals and decentralised funding could improve inclusivity.”

Creative Entrepreneurs highlighted that “the potential for regional creative hubs to stimulate local economies and foster innovation. There is need for advocacy for infrastructure development and capacity-building programs in underserved regions to democratise access to creative industry opportunities.”

Effectiveness of Cultural Policies and Strategic Frameworks

This theme assesses the adequacy, implementation, and impact of existing national cultural policies and strategies in fostering creativity as a driver of development. Musicians reported that “existing policies are often broad and lack effective implementation, which results in minimal direct benefits to artists. There is need for clearer regulations on royalties and stronger anti-piracy enforcement to protect their livelihoods.”

Theatre practitioners pointed out to “policy gaps in funding and infrastructural support that hamper the sustainability of theatrical productions. They noted the absence of strategic frameworks that integrate theatre into broader economic and cultural development plans.”

Visual artists highlighted that “policies seldom address their unique needs, such as exhibition funding, market development and international promotion.” They stressed “the importance of stakeholder involvement in policy formulation to reflect the realities of the visual arts sector.”

Cultural Policymakers admitted that “while cultural policies exist, their effectiveness is limited by poor coordination and resource constraints. The policymakers advocated for more inclusive policy development processes, better monitoring, and partnerships with the private sector and international agencies.”

Creative Entrepreneurs: Entrepreneurs argued that “current frameworks do not adequately support the commercialization of creative products.” They emphasised the need for business development services, incubation programs and financial incentives tailored to creative start-ups to unlock the sector’s full potential.

Discussion of Findings

The study reveals that music, theatre, and visual arts significantly contribute to Nigeria’s socio-economic development by creating jobs, generating income, promoting cultural tourism, and enhancing

international cultural influence. This finding corroborates with Abah (2020), which supports the finding by emphasising that creative arts like music, theatre and visual arts play a vital role in economic growth through job creation and cultural export, which boosts Nigeria's socio-economic development. The Creative Economy Theory is relevant to this finding as it underscores how creative industries like music, theatre and visual arts generate economic value by transforming cultural assets into marketable goods and services, thereby driving job creation and contributing to national development.

The study shows that institutional and structural challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, weak copyright enforcement, limited funding and poor policy implementation hinder the growth and sustainability of Nigeria's creative sector. This finding aligns with Ijeoma and Nwankwo (2021) study, which highlights that the creative sector faces significant structural barriers including poor infrastructure, ineffective copyright laws and insufficient government funding, all of which undermine the sector's potential for growth and sustainability. Regarding this finding, the theory highlights the importance of supportive institutional frameworks and infrastructure in enabling creative sectors to thrive, suggesting that structural challenges impede the efficient conversion of creative potential into sustainable economic growth.

The study indicates that regional disparities exist in Nigeria's creative industries, with urban centres dominating creative activities while many talented practitioners from rural and northern regions face limited access to opportunities and markets. This finding supports Yusuf and Ekong (2022) that confirms the existence of regional imbalances in Nigeria's creative industries, noting that most resources and opportunities are concentrated in southern urban centres, limiting participation and recognition of talents from northern and rural areas. The theory relates to this finding by emphasising that inclusive access and regional equity in creative opportunities are crucial for maximizing a nation's creative resources, as uneven distribution limits the sector's overall contribution to economic and cultural diversity.

The study shows that existing cultural policies and strategic frameworks in Nigeria are often inadequately implemented, lacking stakeholder engagement and targeted support, which reduces their effectiveness in fostering creativity for national development. This finding is in tandem with Okonkwo (2023) which states that although Nigeria has cultural policies in place, poor implementation, lack of inclusive stakeholder consultation and limited practical support have weakened their impact in effectively fostering creative industry

development. For this finding, the Creative Economy Theory advocates for coherent policies and strategic frameworks that effectively integrate creativity into economic planning, stressing that poor policy implementation hinders the sector's ability to realise its full potential in fostering innovation and development.

Conclusion

The study concludes that music, theatre, and visual arts are vital drivers of socio-economic development in Nigeria, with their full potential needing sustained support to maximise cultural and economic benefits.

The study establishes that addressing institutional and structural barriers is essential to unlocking the growth and sustainability of Nigeria's creative industries.

The study explores that reducing regional disparities and promoting inclusivity within the creative sector are critical for harnessing Nigeria's diverse cultural talents and expanding economic opportunities.

Finally, the study concludes that strengthening the implementation and stakeholder engagement in cultural policies is necessary to create an enabling environment for creative industries to thrive and contribute effectively to national development.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study makes a significant contribution to knowledge by offering an original and comprehensive examination of how music, theatre, and visual arts collectively drive socio-economic development in Nigeria, a perspective often explored in isolation. By integrating these creative sectors within a unified framework, the research innovatively highlights their interconnected roles and synergies, expanding understanding beyond traditional economic analyses. This holistic approach reveals nuanced insights into regional inclusivity, institutional challenges and policy effectiveness, filling a critical gap in the literature that has largely overlooked the multidimensional nature of the creative economy in Nigeria. The originality of this study lies in its qualitative exploration of lived experiences from diverse creative practitioners and policymakers, providing rich empirical data that deepen theoretical interpretations of the creative economy in a developing country context.

In terms of theoretical contribution, the study advances the creative economy theory by contextualising it within Nigeria's unique socio-cultural and economic environment, demonstrating how the theory applies differently in emerging markets with infrastructural and

policy constraints. This nuanced application refines the theory's explanatory power, particularly regarding the role of governance and regional equity in creative sector development. Additionally, the study's findings offer practical innovation for product development by identifying specific structural and policy interventions that can foster sustainable creative enterprises and cultural entrepreneurship. These insights provide actionable strategies for stakeholders aiming to commercialise creative products, promote intellectual property protection, and stimulate cultural tourism, thereby contributing both to academic discourse and tangible economic outcomes in Nigeria's creative industries.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations have been proffered.

- 1) The Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism should increase funding and support programs that promote music, theatre, and visual arts to enhance their socio-economic impact in Nigeria.
- 2) The Nigerian Copyright Commission and relevant government agencies must strengthen copyright enforcement and improve infrastructure to address structural challenges in the creative sector.
- 3) State governments and cultural institutions should develop initiatives that promote regional inclusivity and provide platforms for creative talents in underserved areas.
- 4) The National Assembly and the Ministry of Information should review and ensure effective implementation of cultural policies through regular stakeholder consultations and monitoring mechanisms.

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