AFRICA'S CREATIVE FRONTIERS

The Business of Fashion, Music and Film Production

EDITED BY

OGECHI ADEOLA

Africa's Creative Frontiers

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Africa's Creative Frontiers: The Business of Fashion, Music and Film Production

EDITED BY

OGECHI ADEOLA
University of Kigali, Rwanda



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

To the Glory of God,
the Creator and the Owner of all Creativity and Creative Works.

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About the Editor

Ogechi Adeola is Professor of Marketing and Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Kigali, Rwanda. She is also an Adjunct Professor at Torrens University Australia. She has published widely in top-tier journals. Her co-authored papers have won multiple international Best Paper Awards (2016–2019), and she received the Emerald Literati Award for Outstanding Paper in 2022. In 2025, she was recognised on the prestigious Stanford University–Elsevier Top 2% Scientist List, a global ranking that identifies the world's most influential researchers based on impact and productivity. She has edited numerous management-themed books, including the seminal two-volume *Casebook of Indigenous Business Practices in Africa*, published by Emerald Publishing in 2023. Her work continues to shape business strategy, policy development, and inclusive growth in Africa.

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About the Contributors

Oluyemi Theophilus Adeosun is an experienced professional in academia and industry. He holds a BSc in Economics (University of Ilorin), MSc in Economics (University of Lagos), MBA (Obafemi Awolowo University), and PhD in Economics. A Council Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria, he is certified in Global and Senior Professional Human Resources. He has published 52 papers on innovation, entrepreneurship, labour migration, and development, and is a 2022 Emerald Literati Award recipient.

Isaiah Adisa is a Doctoral Researcher at King's Business School, King's College London, in the Department of Human Resource Management and Employment Relations. He has co-edited six management-themed books and published numerous academic articles. He has also provided consultancy services for organisations in the health, education, and platform-based sectors. His core interest is in work and employment relations.

Deogratias Bugandwa Mungu Akonkwa holds a PhD in Economics and Management Science from Solvay Brussels School. He is a Professor at Université de Goma and Université Catholique de Bukavu. He coordinates several development projects and has published extensively in marketing, gender, entrepreneurship, and financial inclusion.

George Kofi Amoako is Professor of Marketing and Director of Research, Innovation, and Consultancy at Ghana Communication Technology University. He is an Honorary Professor at Durban University of Technology, a Chartered Marketer with CIM-UK and CIM-Ghana, and holds a PhD from London Metropolitan University. Widely published and award-winning, he is ranked among the top 3% of marketing scholars in Africa (AD Scientific Index 2025).

Gideon Awini is a Lecturer at Tamale Technical University and holds a PhD from the University of Ghana Business School. A peer reviewer for several journals, including the *Journal of Sport Management*, his research focusses on digital marketing, blockchain, financial services, sports marketing, and brand management.

Stephen Mahama Braimah is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Ghana Business School in the Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship. He

previously held senior roles in petroleum, automobile, shipping, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industries. He is also a speaker and human capital development consultant. His research interests include marketing, branding, strategy, tourism, and hospitality.

Woelinam Kwame Dziewornu-Norvor is a PhD candidate at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. He holds an MA in Communication Studies and a BFA in Theatre Arts and Dance. His research explores African performance, digital storytelling, media representation, and cultural production, with current work on Ghanaian YouTubers as cultural interlocutors.

Amaechi Kingsley Ekene (PhD) is a Post-doctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Youth in Development at the University of Venda, South Africa. He previously lectured in the Department of African Studies at the same university. He holds a joint Bachelor's degree in Philosophy from the University of Ibadan and the Pontifical University, Rome, a Master's in Sociology of Religion from the Norwegian School of Theology and Social Sciences, and a PhD in Religious Studies from University of South Africa (UNISA). His research explores African indigenous business models, entrepreneurship, religion, and gender.

Ihunanya Erondu is a Research and Teaching Assistant at Lagos Business School, Pan-Atlantic University. She holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Banking and Finance. Her research interests include climate and energy finance, fintech, indigenous entrepreneurship, and sustainability. She also mentors students and is passionate about impactful teaching.

Olaniyi Evans is an Economic Researcher and University Lecturer at Pan-Atlantic University in Lagos. He holds a PhD, MSc with Distinction, and a First-class BSc, all in Economics from the University of Lagos. He has received notable awards for his scholarly contributions, including the Emerald Literati Award and the University of Lagos Certificate of Excellence. As an Educator, he is the inspired author of several best-selling textbooks and a substantial number of scholarly articles.

Paul Katuse is a Faculty Member at the United States International University, Kenya. He has consulted for public and private sector organisations. His interests lie in global issues, organisational change, and reforms in higher education, particularly in quality assurance and the strategic alignment of institutions.

George Kimathi is an Associate Professor of Applied Mathematics and Vice Chancellor of the University of Kigali, Rwanda. His work focusses on mathematical modelling and data analysis with interdisciplinary applications. He is committed to academic excellence and innovation in higher education.

Lukman Lasisi is a Seasoned Economist with a degree in Agricultural Economics from Obafemi Awolowo University. He has worked as a Research Associate at

Lagos Business School and the Centre for Econometrics and Applied Research, specialising in market research and academic publishing.

Sheneni Felix Maiyaki is a Research and Teaching Assistant at Lagos Business School, Pan-Atlantic University. His research explores innovation, technology adoption, and sustainability in business. He also contributes to the Tech-Leap Initiative and has professional experience in procurement and operations within agriculture and Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sectors.

Mary Raphael Marcel is a Lecturer at Sokoine University of Agriculture, specialising in consumer sciences, textiles, and fashion. A prospective MA Fashion Design graduate from the University of Sunderland (UK), she has published on education and design, including national identity attire, and developed vocational education resources in Tanzania.

Emmanuel Mogaji is Associate Professor of Marketing and Head of the Marketing, Operations, and Digital Group at Keele Business School, UK. His work spans advertising, branding, communication, digital strategies, and ethics. A prolific author, he has published over a dozen books and many articles on branding and higher education.

Chinedu Ndigwe is a Research Associate and Teaching Assistant at Lagos Business School. He holds a Bachelor's in Sociology from Covenant University and a Master's degree in Media and Communication at Pan-Atlantic University. Her research interests include media/organisation representation, sustainability, advertising, marketing communications and brand management. He formerly worked as an Energy and Environment Journalist at BusinessDay Media Limited, with over 460 published articles on energy, environment and entrepreneurship.

Franklin N. Ngwu is Associate Professor in Strategy, Governance, and Risk Management at Lagos Business School and Director of the Public Sector Initiative. He holds a PhD in Law and Economics of Banking Regulation, and post-graduate degrees from the University of Manchester and Cardiff University. He also holds a BSc in Sociology.

Prince Obinna Njoku is a Post-doctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Geography and Environmental Management, University of Johannesburg. His research promotes sustainability through indigenous African ideologies. His interests include zero-waste frameworks, landfill gas emissions, and socio-environmental community-led solutions.

Emmanuel Nii-Ayi Solomon is an award-winning Ghanaian tour guide and playwright who recently completed his PhD at the University of Ghana Business School. He leads Cool Trips & Tours and founded Village Minds Production. He holds an Higher National Diploma (HND) in Tourism and an MPhil in Marketing. His work promotes Ghana's tourism and uses theatre for social advocacy.

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Foreword

I am pleased to write the Foreword to *Africa's Creative Frontiers: The Business of Fashion, Music and Film Production*, a volume that boldly explores the continent's evolving creative economy. This important work highlights the talent, resilience, and entrepreneurial spirit that fuel African innovation across fashion, music, and film production, and new frontiers such as content creation.

Africa's creative economy is the heartbeat of our culture, the expression of our soul, and the engine of a future we are actively crafting. From the vibrant runways of Dakar to the sound studios of Nairobi and the film sets of Lagos, the continent is alive with vision and voice. Having spent decades at the centre of Nigeria's film industry, I have witnessed one of Africa's most transformative cultural stories: the rise of Nollywood. Yet, what moves me most today is not only Nollywood's growth but how similar revolutions are unfolding across the continent. In music, fashion, film, and digital content, African creators are reclaiming their narratives and reshaping how the world sees us.

With nostalgia, I recall how this creative wave began. Of course, African creativity has always been with us: folktales under moonlit skies, travelling theatre troupes, village skits, and music passed down through generations. We have always had storytellers, music makers, and fashion artisans expressing our identity with flair and purpose. What I refer to here is the first wave of what would later be known as Nollywood, during the home video era, when these long-standing cultural expressions began to crystallise into a structured, commercial industry. It was a remarkable time. Films were produced on modest budgets, dubbed onto VHS tapes, and distributed through a network of video clubs and rental stores that brought Nigerian stories into homes across the country and beyond. There were no streaming platforms, no film schools, and no formal studios – just creativity, entrepreneurial instinct, and a powerful connection with audiences keen to see their lives and aspirations represented on screen.

I remember this era vividly, as I had the privilege of co-producing *Violated* in 1996, a romantic drama that resonated deeply with audiences and helped shape the trajectory of homegrown Nigerian cinema. That grassroots movement laid the foundation for what is now one of the world's leading film industries. It also catalysed parallel shifts in music and fashion across Africa, just as the digital era began to accelerate with unprecedented speed and visibility. In its early days, Nollywood was driven by passion and raw storytelling, yet it lacked the formal business structures to support its explosive potential. What we quickly realised was this: we were serving a largely ignored audience. And by offering them stories

they could identify with, we unlocked overwhelming loyalty and a growing appetite for more. What once seemed impossible – that Nollywood would grow to rank among the three largest motion picture industries in the world by output – is now a reality, a miracle of sorts. We did it, and we are still in the game.

This book captures that spirit, bold, unapologetic, and forward-looking. It does not merely describe a renaissance, it maps it. With insight and clarity, the volume explores the business models, socio-cultural dynamics, digital transformations, and policy frameworks shaping Africa's creative economy today. What makes it particularly compelling is its integrative lens. By bringing fashion, music, and film into conversation, the book highlights their intertwined creative, commercial, and cultural dynamics. It reminds us that behind every beat, every stitch, and every scene lies not only a compelling narrative but also a business opportunity, a story of resilience, and a powerful assertion of identity.

From Netflix's impact on African cinema to the evolution of sustainable fashion and the global rise of Afrobeats, the chapters reflect how Africa is no longer a peripheral player in the global creative economy. It is leading with authenticity, innovation, and confidence. And as we step into an era shaped by artificial intelligence, global streaming, and the attention economy, African creatives are again rising to the moment. The world is watching, listening, and engaging with African content like never before. This, I believe, is only the beginning.

This book is a blueprint that speaks not just to the present but to the next generation of African storytellers, designers, and musicians who will inherit this momentum and take it further. If we continue to nurture our talent, invest in our platforms, and protect our intellectual property, the future of Africa's creative industries will not just be bright, it will be unstoppable.

Professor Adeola and her contributors have curated a vital resource for policymakers, investors, creatives, and scholars alike. I am confident that this book will spark new conversations, influence strategic decisions, and, most importantly, inspire a generation of African creatives to build, scale, and own their narratives. Let this be both a celebration and a call to action.

Charles Igwe
CEO, Nollywood Global

Preface

Africa's creative economy is rooted in deep cultural heritage, sustained by innovation, and accelerated by digital transformation. Across fashion, music, and film, a new generation of African creators is reimagining the continent's cultural narratives while fuelling economic opportunity across the continent. Yet, despite growing global recognition, the creative industries in Africa remain underexplored in scholarly literature, and their full potential is yet to be realised in many policy circles. This gap between promise and policy makes it essential to frame the creative economy not only as a cultural movement but also as a serious contributor to economic development, innovation, and global influence. As Africa moves towards diversified economic pathways, the creative economy emerges as a key lever for job creation, youth empowerment, entrepreneurial opportunities, and sustainable growth.

Fashion, Music, and Film production are at the heart of Africa's creative economy – serving as powerful engines of expression, innovation, and economic inclusion. As the continent moves towards more diversified economic pathways, the creative economy emerges as a key lever for job creation, particularly through engagement in the increasingly influential attention economy, alongside youth empowerment, entrepreneurial opportunity, and sustainable growth. It also provides a platform for the formalisation of informal creative labour, especially among women and young people who dominate the sector's informal base.

Sustainability is becoming a defining concern, especially within fashion, where circular economy principles and environmentally conscious production practices are aligning cultural industries with global sustainability goals. The music industry, in particular, has played a central role in shaping identity, promoting cross-border engagement, and expanding Africa's global cultural footprint. From Afrobeats to Bongo Flava, African music genres have become powerful tools of expression, entrepreneurship, and international influence. The continent's film industry, led by Nollywood and supported by emerging cinema cultures in countries like Kenya and South Africa, continues to gain recognition for its storytelling prowess and contribution to cultural diplomacy. While digital platforms have expanded the reach of African creative content, challenges such as limited internet access and uneven infrastructure remain barriers to full inclusion. Nevertheless, the continent's creative industries benefit from growing transnational collaborations and global visibility – sometimes amplified by the African diaspora and international partnerships, including initiatives by platforms such as Spotify, YouTube, and Netflix, in partnership with UNESCO.

This book, *Africa's Creative Frontiers: The Business of Fashion, Music and Film Production*, brings together the perspectives of academics, researchers, and practitioners to examine the intersections between culture, commerce, and innovation in Africa's creative economy. While the book focusses on key sectors such as fashion, music, and film, typically referred to as creative industries, it also engages with the wider systems, networks, and socio-economic dynamics that define the creative economy. Thus, the volume offers a lens not only into the industries themselves but also into how they function within broader economic and cultural ecosystems across Africa.

Structured in four thematic sections followed a concluding part, the book begins with an introductory section that explores overarching trends, challenges, and opportunities across the continent's creative landscape. It then moves into three domain-specific sections that examine the distinct trajectories of film, fashion, and music – each reflecting the vibrancy, ingenuity, and entrepreneurial spirit that defines Africa's creative frontiers.

Contributors to this volume explore diverse topics such as Nollywood's evolving business models, the circular fashion movement in East Africa, the digital disruption of film and music distribution, and the strategic use of content creation to promote tourism and cultural heritage. The chapters also highlight real-world initiatives – from Terra Kulture in Nigeria to *Fashionomics* and Nollywood's cross-border influence in South Africa, as well as innovative digital content distribution platforms like Netflix – that are shaping new pathways for the continent's creative economy. The book draws on examples from the impact of the creative industry in various regions, including *West Africa (Nigeria*, *Ghana)*, *East Africa (Kenya*, *Tanzania)*, *and Southern Africa (South Africa)*, reflecting the geographic diversity and cultural richness of Africa's creative sectors.

The book is organised as follows:

Part I introduces the creative economy landscape, highlighting both opportunities and constraints, while also linking it to broader sectors such as tourism. *Chapter 1* by Ogechi Adeola examines Africa's creative economy through global frameworks, regional challenges, and sustainable opportunities, highlighting its potential contribution to sustainable development. *Chapter 2* by Isaiah Adisa, Ihunanya Erondu, Lukman Lasisi, and Franklin N. Ngwu explores how tourism can be reimagined and revitalised through the lens of creative work, such as content creation.

Part II delves into Film and Visual Storytelling. *Chapter 3* by Oluyemi Theophilus Adeosun and Sheneni Felix Maiyaki examines business models within Nigeria's movie industry, offering a critical analysis of Nollywood's structure. *Chapter 4* by Amaechi Kingsley Ekene and Prince Obinna Njoku considers the popularity of Nollywood in South Africa, highlighting its cross-border socio-economic appeal. In *Chapter 5*, Olaniyi Evans and Ogechi Adeola discuss the disruptive influence of digital platforms like Netflix on film production and distribution in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Chapter 6* by Emmanuel Nii-Ayi Solomon, Stephen Mahama Braimah, Gideon Awini, and Woelinam Kwame Dziewornu-Norvor identifies key barriers and offers policy solutions within Ghana's performing arts sector.

Part III turns to Fashion and Visual Arts. *Chapter 7*, authored by Mary Raphael Marcel, presents sustainable approaches to circular fashion in Tanzania, highlighting their potential to elevate the national fashion industry. *Chapter 8*, by Ogechi Adeola, George Kimathi, Deogratias Bugandwa Mungu Akonkwa, Emmanuel Mogaji, and Olaniyi Evans, explores the intersection of tradition and innovation in a circular fashion across Africa, emphasising its role in advancing a more sustainable fashion ecosystem on the continent. *Chapter 9* by Chinedu Ndigwe and Isaiah Adisa presents a case study of Terra Kulture in Nigeria, examining how it transforms cultural elements into economic value.

Part IV is dedicated to Music and Creative Soundscapes. *Chapter 10* by George Kofi Amoako offers a conceptual model for marketing Africa through music, with a focus on Ghana's music industry. *Chapter 11*, by Paul Katuse, evaluates the marketing viability and outreach of Kenya's music industry. *Chapter 12*, by Ogechi Adeola and Olaniyi Evans, examines Nigerian music's influence on the African creative economy, focussing on innovation and cultural fusion.

Part V focusses on the synthesis of the volume and offers strategic policy direction. *Chapter 13*, authored by Ogechi Adeola, concludes the volume with strategic insights and actionable recommendations for advancing Africa's creative economy across film, fashion, and music.

Together, these chapters reflect the multifaceted nature of Africa's creative economy, illustrating how cultural expression, innovation, and enterprise intersect across regions and sectors to shape new development pathways. This structure demonstrates that the book explores Africa's creative economy through the lenses of fashion, music, film, and cross-cutting cultural sectors, highlighting both its transformative potential and the systemic challenges it faces. By bridging theory, empirical research, and lived practice, this volume aims to inform not only academics and students but also policymakers, investors, and cultural stakeholders seeking to engage more meaningfully with the creative sector. Above all, it invites reflection on how Africa can shape its own models of creative growth – models that are culturally authentic, economically viable, and globally impactful. This book aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on Africa's creative industries and to inspire further research, dialogue, and initiatives that unlock their full potential.

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Acknowledgements

Creativity lies at the heart of Africa's identity. I am deeply grateful to all the contributing authors who joined me on this journey to document and celebrate the continent's creative spirit and rich heritage. Your contributions have enriched this volume and ensured it stands as an enduring testament for posterity.

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Part I

Introduction and Cross-cutting Themes

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Chapter 1

Africa's Creative Economy: Global Frameworks, Regional Challenges, and Sustainable Opportunities

Ogechi Adeola

University of Kigali, Rwanda

Abstract

Africa's creative economy, encompassing industries such as arts, culture, design, media, film, music, and fashion, has gained increasing prominence in recent years. Despite its strong potential for job creation and economic growth, the sector faces persistent challenges that hinder its full development. This introductory chapter examines the current state of Africa's creative economy, identifying critical gaps, constraints, and emerging opportunities. It provides an overview of the creative economy concept, key definitions, and classification models, with a focus on the African context. The chapter also discusses Nigeria's Nollywood film industry, illustrating both its global success and ongoing structural challenges. In general, key issues across Africa's creative sectors include piracy and weak copyright enforcement, informality, limited infrastructure and technical expertise, and insufficient government support. However, opportunities for growth lie in the continent's youthful and expanding population, vibrant creative talent, African-inspired innovations, increasing urbanisation, advances in artificial intelligence (AI), and the potential for digital technologies to unlock access to global markets. The chapter emphasises the need for more research and scholarship on Africa's creative economy, as well as government policies and initiatives to support the sector's growth. Recommendations include strengthening intellectual property (IP) protection, nurturing creative talent through education, improving access to finance, and developing context-specific models for the creative industries in Africa. The chapter concludes by highlighting the importance of

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recognising the creative economy's value and harnessing its potential for inclusive and sustainable development across the continent.

Keywords: Creative economy; Africa; challenges; opportunities; sustainable development; Nollywood; informal sector; digitalisation; intellectual property rights

1. Introduction

The concept of the creative economy has gained prominence over the past three decades, particularly through the work of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2008), which helped to elevate global attention to the industry. Initially referred to as the 'arts and cultural industry', it has since evolved into what is now widely known as the creative economy. This relatively new and rapidly emerging sector generates income through the creation, development, and commercialisation of IP, and is now recognised as one of the fastest-growing economic sectors globally (Franco & Njogu, 2020; Joffe, 2013). Between 2002 and 2015, the global creative economy more than doubled in size, reaching $509 billion, with growth rates up to four times higher than those of the manufacturing sector in many countries (Franco & Njogu, 2020; UNCTAD, 2018). By 2020, global exports of creative goods and services were valued at $524 billion and $1.1 trillion, respectively, accounting for 3% of total global goods exports and 21% of total services exports (UNCTAD, 2022). The UNCTAD Creative Economy Outlook 2024 highlights the sector's continued expansion, driven by digital platforms and AI, with streaming services representing 67.3% of global music revenues (UNCTAD, 2024). However, the report also raises concerns about market concentration and the need for more sustainable and inclusive models of growth.

In Africa, the creative economy is gaining momentum, although it still represents a modest share of the continent's gross domestic product (GDP). Africa's creative exports accounted for only 2.3% of total exports in 2020, an improvement from less than 1% in 2010 (UNCTAD, 2022; UNDP, 2023). International agencies such as UNESCO and UNIDO have increasingly focussed on Africa's creative industries, particularly film and music, which are growing in both revenue and prominence. For example, digital streaming revenue in Africa is projected to reach $500 million by 2025, up from $100 million in 2017 (UNCTAD, 2022; World Bank, 2021). With a young and rapidly growing population – where 70% are under 30 years old – the continent's creative economy has significant potential to drive employment, promote social cohesion, and fuel economic transformation (UN, 2022; World Bank, 2022).

In recognition of this potential, multilateral financial institutions have begun major investments in the sector. In May 2024, Afreximbank announced a $1 billion Africa Film Fund to support film production and infrastructure development (Nairametrics, 2024). Similarly, the African Development Bank (AfDB) has

committed $614 million to Nigeria's creative industries, projecting the creation of 6 million jobs and an economic impact of $6.4 billion (BusinessDay, 2024). These initiatives underscore the growing recognition of Africa's creative economy as a pillar of future development.

Despite its promise, Africa's creative economy faces substantial challenges, including widespread piracy, informality, inadequate infrastructure, and limited government support. For instance, piracy rates in the continent's film sector are estimated at 90%, resulting in revenue losses of up to 75% in some cases (UNESCO, 2023). The informal nature of many creative enterprises, combined with weak regulatory frameworks, further constrains sectoral growth and professionalism. Nonetheless, opportunities for expansion lie in the continent's youthful population, accelerating urbanisation, and the transformative potential of digital technologies to connect African creatives with global markets. Addressing these challenges and harnessing emerging opportunities will require targeted policy measures, strategic investments, and robust research to unlock the full potential of Africa's creative economy for sustainable development.

This chapter is structured as follows: it begins by exploring the evolving concept of the creative economy, including its definitions and global classification models. It then discusses the core challenges facing Africa's creative industries, using case studies such as Nigeria's Nollywood. The chapter proceeds to examine the opportunities for growth, focussing on digitalisation, youth participation, and policy innovation, before concluding with actionable recommendations to leverage the creative economy as a catalyst for inclusive and sustainable development in Africa.

2. Understanding the Creative Economy: Definitions, Classifications, and Frameworks

2.1. The Evolving Nature of the Creative Economy

Defining the creative industry is complex and evolving, as there is no universally accepted definition (Levickaitė, 2011; UNCTAD, 2022). Traditionally, the term referred to arts-related activities such as dance, music, film, fashion, and culture – areas historically identified as 'cultural industries' or the 'cultural economy' (Markusen et al., 2008). Different countries and organisations have interpreted the term to suit their specific policy, academic, or economic purposes. For instance, Queensland University of Technology (QUT, n.d.) defines the creative economy as industries and occupations that generate wealth and employment through the exploitation of IP. The Inter-American Development Bank refers to it as the 'orange economy', which transforms ideas into goods and services protected by IP rights (Benavente & Grazzi, 2017; UNCTAD, 2022).

UNCTAD's inaugural Creative Economy Report in 2008 refrained from providing a fixed definition of the creative economy. Instead, it framed the creative economy as the full cycle of creation, production, and distribution of goods and services that use creativity and intellectual capital as their primary input. The report further described creative industries as knowledge-based activities

spanning a wide array of sectors, including arts, culture, business, and technology, that generate trade revenue and rely on IP rights. These activities encompass both tangible products and intangible services with cultural, artistic, and economic value. This broad characterisation was reaffirmed in UNCTAD's 2022 report, which reinforced the central role of creativity and intellectual capital in economic production, without restricting the concept to the arts alone.

Despite definitional variances, a common thread emerges: the creative economy is driven by human ingenuity, cultural expression, and the commercialisation of IP. Several scholars (e.g., Howkins, 2007; Newbegin, 2014) argue that it is fundamentally powered by individuals who monetise their talent and ideas. Similarly, Esan (2011) and Madichie and Hinson (2022) emphasise that its foundation is in shared cultural experiences, artistic identity, and active audience engagement. These features position the creative economy as a dynamic and continuously evolving space, one that reflects the values, skills, and innovations of its contributors.

2.2. Distinguishing Creative Industries from the Creative Economy

Although often used interchangeably, 'creative industries' and 'creative economy' are not synonymous. Most literature views creative industries as a narrower category in the broader creative economy. Creative industries typically refer to content-producing sectors with deep cultural or artistic roots, such as publishing, visual arts, performing arts, music, and film, where IP, creative talent, and aesthetic production are central. In contrast, the creative economy encompasses a wider array of activities involving innovation, design, and knowledge-intensive processes. These activities often produce significant cross-sectoral impacts via connections with technology, education, tourism, infrastructure, and digital platforms (Hartley et al., 2012).

A widely cited classification by the QUT (n.d.) categorises the creative economy into seven interconnected sectors: advertising and marketing, architecture and design, software and digital content, film and broadcasting, music and performing arts, publishing, and the visual arts. This broader framing illustrates how creativity intersects with commerce and technology to drive both economic transformation and social change. It also illustrates how digital platforms have blurred the lines between traditional creative outputs and emergent innovation-driven services. Recognition of this distinction is indispensable for both policymakers and researchers, as it influences strategies for the measurement of creative outputs, investment in talent, and the design of institutional support structures for sustainable creative development.

2.3. Global Classification Models of Creative Industries

Although the creative economy is a broad concept, several classification models have been developed to delineate its core components, referred to as the creative industries. These models differ in their theoretical orientation and purpose, each based on specific criteria such as cultural value, symbolic meaning, economic

output, or IP. Among the most prominent are the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) model, the Symbolic Texts model, the Concentric Circles model, and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Copyright model (see Table 1.1). The DCMS model emphasises creative output as a source of economic value. The Symbolic Texts model highlights meaning and expression. The Concentric Circles model focusses on cultural proximity. The WIPO model concentrates on copyright dependence. Collectively, these frameworks provide analytical tools for evaluating the creative sector.

In parallel with these frameworks, UNCTAD (2008) developed its own classification system, proposing a nine-sector typology that includes traditional cultural expressions, visual arts, performing arts, publishing, audiovisual content, new media, and creative services. This approach reflects the diversity and evolving nature of creative activities globally, particularly in developing countries. Howkins (2007) expanded this taxonomy further by identifying 15 sectors within the creative economy, including software, research and development, toys, and games, highlighting the increasingly diverse and innovation-driven nature of creative economic activity. These varying classifications underscore the need for context-sensitive models that accurately capture the full range of creative production, from grassroots cultural expression to high-value innovation-driven activities.

2.4. Integrating Cultural Dimensions: UNESCO's Framework

Many global classification models for the creative industries are based on economic output and IP. However, UNESCO's (2009) Cultural Domains Framework introduces a culturally grounded alternative that broadens its definitional scope. It distinguishes between cultural domains (e.g., heritage, performance, visual arts, media, and design) and related domains (e.g., tourism and sports), recognising both tangible and intangible cultural expressions. Unlike the market-centric frameworks of WIPO or DCMS, UNESCO emphasises cultural identity, heritage preservation, education, and social cohesion. This makes it particularly valuable in places like the Global South, where creative economies are often intertwined with communal life, indigenous knowledge systems, and developmental priorities such as youth engagement and nation-building. As illustrated in Table 1.2, UNESCO (2009) categorises the cultural and creative sectors into cultural domains, related domains, and cross-cutting elements, each with distinct subdomains and activities.

By centring cultural meaning and social value, UNESCO's framework provides policymakers with a holistic lens for designing inclusive strategies that align economic objectives with cultural sustainability.

3. Contextualising Global Models in African Realities – The Business of Music, Fashion, and Film

To be effective, global classification models and creative economy trends must be interpreted within specific regional contexts – particularly in Africa, where distinct socio-economic and cultural dynamics shape creative industries. These

Table 1.1. Classification Systems for the Creative Industries from Different Models.

UK DCMS Model	**Symbolic Texts Model**	**Concentric Circles Model**	**WIPO Copyright Model**
Advertising	***Core cultural industries***	***Core creative arts***	***Core copyright industries***
Architecture	Advertising	Literature	Advertising
Art and antiques market	Film	Music	Collecting societies
Crafts	Internet	Performing arts	Film and video
Design	Music	Visual arts	Music
Fashion	Publishing		Performing arts
Film and video	Television and radio	***Other core cultural industries***	Publishing
Music	Video and computer games	Film	Software
Performing arts		Museums and libraries	Television and radio
Publishing	***Peripheral cultural industries***		Visual and graphic art
Software	Creative arts	***Wider cultural industries***	
Television and radio		Heritage services	***Interdependent copyright industries***
Video and computer games	***Borderline cultural industries***	Publishing	Blank recording material
	Consumer electronics	Sound recording	Consumer electronics