

Empowering the Creative Economy: A Pathway to Innovation and Economic Transformation

White Paper

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List of Acronyms

1. AI – Artificial Intelligence
2. AR – Augmented Reality
3. DRM – Digital Rights Management
4. DSTv – Digital Satellite Television
5. GII – Global Innovation Index
6. IP – Intellectual Property
7. KTA – KTA Annual Symposium
8. LVMH – Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy
9. MaXhosa – A South African fashion brand known for knitwear
10. NFT – Non-Fungible Token
11. NRG Radio – A Kenyan media company
12. UCC – Uganda Communications Commission
13. UFMI – Uganda Federation of Movie Industry
14. URSB – Uganda Registration Services Bureau
15. USD – United States Dollar
16. VR – Virtual Reality
17. WIPO – World Intellectual Property Organization

Background

This White Paper has been borne out of the Day 2 of the 7th KTA Annual Symposium whose concept note is relayed herein:

The concept underlying intellectual property (IP) is the protection and commercialization of one's ingenuity. This is premised on the theory that those who innovate and create should be rewarded. In turn, the public benefits from this ingenuity as it lays the building blocks for further innovation and creativity.

Recognizing crucial role IP plays in development, Uganda, a least developed country aiming to transform from peasant to a modern and prosperous country within 30 years adopted the National Intellectual Property Policy in 2019. This policy aims to build a robust IP ecosystem that fuels innovation and creativity, driving sustainable development.

The Policy focuses on creating an IP infrastructure that supports creativity, developing skilled professionals for the IP sector, and encouraging utilization of the IP system. Significant progress has been made in this regard as trademark registrations have steadily increased, from an average of 1,626 in 2019 to 2,186 in 2022.

Despite the progress, the level of innovation and creative outputs in Uganda remains relatively low compared to other developing nations such as Kenya. In the 2023 Global Innovation Index (GII), Kenya ranked 100th out of 132 economies featured in GI 2023, while Uganda stood at 121st, with Uganda performing below the regional average in Creative outputs.

This challenge is not unique to Uganda. Least developed countries (LDCs) contribute a small fraction of global IP applications.

TA United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report suggests that LDCs need to tailor their IP strategies to their specific needs, development stages, and economic structures. The report emphasizes exploring alternative IP rights suited to LDC contexts, such as those related to traditional knowledge and agriculture. Additionally, considering the large informal sector in LDCs, more flexible and less formal IP protection mechanisms could be explored.

This year's symposium will explore how Uganda can strengthen its IP approach by "localizing" it to Uganda's needs and realities, particularly in the digital era. The event will delve into how Uganda's IP strategy can leverage key sectors like art, music, literature, culture, and the informal sector.

A key focus will be on how IP and technology can be harnessed to preserve Uganda's rich cultural heritage. In this vein, the Symposium will host a digital art exhibition which will a digitized version of the the cultural museum (Eriijukiro) found at the Igongo Cultural Center, Mbarara.

This will showcase a collection of art, crafts and photos that represent norms, customs, traditions and the history of the people of Southwestern Uganda.

In line with the theme, we will also examine how legal frameworks can be used to facilitate cultural preservation and the how to address the socio-economic complexities that may emanate this.

The three-day symposium is set to take place from the 23rd to the 25th of October and will include roundtable discussions and panel discussions on topics exploring how we can align IP with Uganda's creative and technological fields and adapting IP systems for these sectors.

While the concept of traditional IP might seem distant for many Ugandans, the symposium aims to bridge this gap. Through this Symposium, we seek to create a supportive environment where innovation and creativity can flourish in the digital space.

This would entail:

- Developing IP laws and regulations that are relevant to the Ugandan context, considering factors like traditional knowledge, local creative industries, and the digital landscape.
- Creating awareness and education programs to inform creators and innovators in Uganda about IP rights and how to utilize them effectively in the digital economy.
- Establishing efficient and accessible IP registration systems that cater to the needs of Ugandan creators and businesses.
- Addressing specific challenges faced by Ugandans in protecting and commercializing their intellectual property online.

Objectives:

- 1.To examine how intellectual property rights can be contextualized for Uganda's realities.
- 2.To explore how intellectual property and technology can be used as a tool to preserve cultural heritage.
- 3.To digitize the cultural artifacts housed at the cultural museum (Eriijukiro) found at the Igongo Cultural Center, Mbarara.
- 4.To lobby for a law to protect and preserve Uganda's cultural heritage. 4. To expound on the challenges faced by creatives in protecting and commercializing their creations and understanding how policy and regulations can address these challenges.

1. Executive Summary

This white paper emerges from significant dialogue at the KTA Annual Symposium 2024, focusing on the challenges and opportunities within Uganda's creative sector. Recognized as a vital driver of economic growth and cultural exchange, the creative economy faces substantial hurdles, including funding constraints, limited visibility, and inadequate foreign partnerships.

Ugandan creatives struggle to access international markets due to insufficient foreign investment and a lack of structured platforms that connect them with global stakeholders. The discussions highlighted these issues, emphasizing the urgent need for improved infrastructure and support systems.

Despite these challenges, there are promising opportunities for growth. The rise of digital platforms allows Ugandan artists to reach global audiences directly, bypassing traditional barriers. Strategic partnerships and increased government involvement could enhance funding and infrastructure, fostering initiatives like content production hubs. The potential of digital assets, particularly NFTs (non-fungible tokens), was also explored as a means for artists to gain financial independence and mitigate traditional distribution challenges.

Intellectual property (IP) protection is critical for safeguarding artists' rights and encouraging investment in the creative sector. However, existing IP challenges across music, film, and fashion industries hinder artists' ability to control and monetize their work. This white paper advocates for stronger enforcement mechanisms against piracy, particularly in the music and film sectors, where illegal distribution significantly undermines revenue potential.

Thus, this white paper serves as a call to action for policymakers and stakeholders to implement necessary reforms that will empower Ugandan creatives. By addressing the outlined challenges and leveraging emerging opportunities, Uganda can enhance its cultural presence on the global stage while fostering sustainable economic growth in its creative economy.

2. Introduction

The creative economy globally is increasingly recognised as a significant driver of economic growth, cultural exchange, and innovation. For Uganda, integrating into this global market brings both opportunities and challenges that can shape the nation's creative sector for sustainable growth. The evolving dynamics of the creative economy offer a chance for Uganda to define a distinct cultural and economic presence on the international stage, but this requires a concerted effort to address current challenges and exploit emerging opportunities.[1]

2.1 Challenges for Ugandan Creatives on the Global Stage

Ugandan creatives face significant hurdles on the international stage due to funding constraints, limited visibility, and inadequate foreign partnerships. While Uganda has a dynamic, creative community, funding remains a major barrier, with financial support mostly coming from local and government sources. The lack of foreign investment, compounded by an underdeveloped venture capital environment for creative industries, limits the ability of artists to scale their projects to meet international demand. This financial gap reduces the potential for innovative projects and restricts the international reach of Ugandan creativity.

The British Council[2] points out that foreign sponsorship for creative endeavours is minimal, limiting Ugandan projects' access to larger markets. This lack of foreign sponsorship is exacerbated by the absence of structured platforms to connect international investors with local creative talents. Without mechanisms for matchmaking between global stakeholders and Ugandan creatives, local artists find it challenging to tap into the larger funds needed to compete internationally.

Platforms like Netflix, DSTV, and Showmax, provide exposure for Ugandan content, yet they fall short of establishing Uganda as a notable player globally. The fragmented nature of content distribution further complicates matters. Ugandan content often lacks the robust production budgets and marketing campaigns necessary to capture substantial audience shares in international markets. Consequently, Ugandan creatives must contend with an uneven playing field where the global distribution channels are dominated by well-financed competitors from regions with more established creative industries.[3]

[1] United Nations Economist Network, New Economics for sustainable development <[Read More](#)> Accessed 23rd November, 2024

[2] Ayeta Anne Wangusa et.al, Mapping the Current Landscape of the Culture and Creative Industries in Uganda, 2023 <[Read More](#)> Accessed 23rd November, 2024

[3] Hivos, people unlimited, The Status of the Creative Economy in Africa

Discussions during the KTA symposium highlighted these challenges further. Participants, including Daudi Kalungi of AfriArt Gallery, stressed the lack of infrastructure for showcasing Ugandan art internationally. He explained how limited demand and infrastructure pushed him to pioneer Ugandan art's representation globally, but visa and banking challenges limit participation in international exhibitions. The high costs associated with securing visas, the complexities of foreign banking systems, and the international currency exchange difficulties place Ugandan creatives at a disadvantage when seeking to expand their presence abroad. During the symposium, Kenneth Muhangi, a Partner at KTA Advocates highlighted how legal bottlenecks, such as visa restrictions and high banking fees, significantly hinder the ability of Ugandan artists to exhibit internationally.

2.2 Opportunities for Growth and Recognition

Despite these challenges, there are burgeoning opportunities for Ugandan creatives. The growth of digital platforms and the rise of collaborative international projects open doors for Ugandan artists to showcase their work to global audiences. Digital platforms eliminate many traditional barriers to market entry, providing artists with an unprecedented ability to directly reach consumers without relying on intermediaries who may have financial and logistical constraints. Leveraging these platforms with strategic partnerships could help Ugandan creatives break into international markets.[4]

Increased government and private sector involvement could further enhance funding, infrastructure, and exposure, setting a foundation for long-term success on the global stage. Public-private partnerships could foster initiatives such as the creation of content production hubs, which would significantly reduce the costs associated with producing internationally competitive content. During the KTA symposium, Natasha Karungi, a visual artist, emphasised how digital platforms like Instagram and Twitter have enabled her to reach international audiences. However, she also noted the gaps in knowledge and skills for using these tools effectively, advocating for formal education in digital artistry within Uganda.

Moreover, a significant opportunity lies in the realm of digital assets, particularly NFTs (non-fungible tokens). In the symposium discussion on leveraging digital tools, it was also noted that the entry point into platforms like NFTs has decreased significantly. NFTs provide artists with new opportunities for tracking ownership, creating transparency in digital art transactions, and ensuring that artists benefit financially from the appreciation of their work. Natasha Karungi highlighted the importance of community building and digital interaction for growth in this niche market, noting her interactions with international art figures due to her involvement with NFTs. For Ugandan artists, embracing the NFT market not only provides a route for financial independence but also mitigates some of the traditional challenges of distribution, piracy, and ownership.

[4] Alexander Oluka, The impact of digital platforms on traditional market structures, 2024

3. Intellectual Property (IP) and the Digital Creative Economy

IP protection is essential for any thriving creative industry, safeguarding artists' rights and encouraging investment.[5] In Uganda, IP challenges persist across the music, film, fashion, and content creation sectors, often limiting artists' ability to control and monetise their work. The lack of enforcement, coupled with limited legal literacy among creatives, results in a vulnerable, creative sector where artists struggle to protect their creations from exploitation.

3.1 Music Industry: Battling Piracy

The Ugandan music industry has experienced rapid digital growth, which, while offering broader reach, has also amplified piracy issues. Music is frequently shared without compensation for artists, despite Uganda's membership in international copyright agreements like the Berne Convention and WIPO Copyright Treaty.

Enforcement of these treaties remains limited, leaving musicians vulnerable. The lack of appropriate enforcement mechanisms undermines artists' incentives to create and reduces potential revenue streams that could be reinvested into the sector.

Notable Ugandan artists, such as Angela Katatumba[6], have pursued legal recourse to protect their intellectual property, yet the costs associated with such battles often deter others.

The legal process in Uganda is both lengthy and expensive, which makes it inaccessible to many artists who are already struggling financially. Addressing piracy in Uganda's music sector requires stronger IP enforcement mechanisms, affordable legal resources to protect artists' work, and a proactive role by digital platforms in ensuring compliance with copyright laws.

Kenya's music industry has rapidly evolved, leveraging digital platforms and unique sounds to capture both local and international audiences. Genres like gengetone, afro-pop, and gospel dominate the scene, with artists such as Sauti Sol, Nyashinski, and Nadia Mukami achieving notable success. Digital streaming platforms like Boom play and YouTube have been instrumental in helping artists monetise their music and reach global audiences. The country also hosts popular music events such as the Koroga Festival, which celebrates African music and culture. However, challenges like inadequate intellectual property rights enforcement and piracy persist[7]. The government and private sector have taken steps to address these issues, including initiatives to strengthen copyright laws and foster talent through programs like the Kenya National Music Policy. Kenya's music sector exemplifies the potential of African creativity to achieve economic and cultural influence on a global scale.

[5] Eric Guichard, "How protecting intellectual property rights in African music, film, and fashion can create opportunity and wealth." < [Read More](#) >

[6] Angella Katatumba -v- The Anti-Corruption Coalition of Uganda (ACCU) (H.C.C.S No. 307 Of 2011)

[7] Richard Boadi, "Intellectual Property Rights in Kenya," 2009

The KTA symposium's discussions also highlighted the urgent need for policy reforms to better support musicians. Geoffrey Ekongot from Black Canvas Media pointed out the outdated nature of the Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act of 2006[8], which does not adequately accommodate current digital developments. He advocated for stronger copyright protections and the reinstatement of the private copy levy on devices used to consume music. Implementing a digital rights management (DRM)[9] system across platforms would also significantly enhance the ability to track usage and enforce payments, making it possible for artists to better control the dissemination of their work.

3.2 Film Industry: Ongoing Piracy Struggles

The Ugandan film industry faces piracy at a comparable scale to the music industry, with counterfeit DVDs and illegal downloads proliferating. Although the Uganda Federation of Movie Industry (UFMI) has attempted to combat this, enforcement challenges and the digital nature of piracy undermine these efforts. The fluid nature of digital content means that once a single copy is leaked, it can be distributed widely, cutting off potential revenue for filmmakers.

Uganda's Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act of 2006 provides legal protection, yet inadequate enforcement renders it ineffective. The adoption of the Kampala Protocol[10] and similar treaties has improved the regulatory framework, but more resources are needed to curb piracy. Enhanced cross-border collaboration could also help limit the illegal distribution of Ugandan films internationally. Collaborative agreements with neighbouring countries can help ensure that infringing copies are seized before they spread, and a regionally harmonised enforcement approach would make it more challenging for pirates to find safe havens for their activities.

Nigeria's film industry, Nollywood, is the second-largest globally by volume, producing over 2,500 films annually. Renowned for its quick production cycles and relatable storytelling, Nollywood generates approximately \$600 million in revenue annually and employs thousands. Streaming platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime have amplified its global reach, with films such as *Lionheart* and *The Wedding Party* garnering international acclaim.

The industry has also expanded into high-quality productions, evidenced by increased budgets and partnerships with foreign studios. Despite these successes, Nollywood faces piracy, inadequate infrastructure, and funding challenges. Government-backed initiatives like Project ACT Nollywood attempted to provide grants and training to enhance production quality and capacity. Nollywood exemplifies how African storytelling, infused with cultural authenticity, can achieve significant economic and cultural impact while shaping a distinct African narrative for global audiences.

[8] Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act, < [Read More](#) > Accessed 23rd November, 2024

[9] < [Read More](#) >

[10] Kampala Protocol: What you need to know about the Protocol on the voluntary registration of copyright and related rights < [Read More](#) > Accessed 23rd November, 2024

Filmmaker Nabwiso Mathew, during the symposium, emphasised the importance of establishing a formal film policy that protects Uganda's cultural identity and ensures sustainable growth. He highlighted challenges such as the high costs associated with filming locations and the limited availability of skilled scriptwriters. These challenges result in films that often cannot compete with international productions, both in terms of quality and narrative depth. Addressing these issues requires not only better enforcement of IP rights but also a comprehensive approach to improving the skills and resources available within the film industry.

3.2.1 Case Study of Bollywood, India's Hindu Film Industry.

As illustrated, a major problem in the battle against piracy in low-developed countries lies in the effective enforcement of existing laws and regulations. India's film industry presents an excellent benchmark for comparison because it represents a relatively similar consumer demographic to Uganda's and a per capita income of USD 2700[11], not too far from Uganda's USD 1190. Bollywood represents roughly 43% of India's film industry and has experienced extensive growth over the last few decades, recording almost 1.3 billion dollars in box office revenues in 2023.[12] Its growth has not been without challenges. It is estimated that piracy is responsible for losses of up to \$230 million in Bollywood.

Losses that represent almost 20% of industry revenue whose impact goes beyond revenue loss into unemployment and tremendous decline in the motivation and spirit of the film industry stakeholders demand that a solution be found. While it is still a major issue, industry players have attempted to curb the high levels of piracy through various attempts to improve enforcement of the laws and regulations in place to combat piracy.

In India, Bollywood has successfully implemented four key strategies to combat piracy, which could serve as a model for Uganda's film industry. The first strategy involves legal action against offenders, supported by the imposition of penalties such as jail terms of up to and years and heavy fines for unauthorised recording and distribution of films. This approach has been effective in disrupting piracy platforms like Tamil Rockers and Movierulz, significantly reducing their impact.

The second strategy centres on raising public awareness about the importance of consuming legal content. Bollywood has leveraged campaigns involving actors and filmmakers to educate audiences about the harms of piracy and the benefits of supporting legitimate platforms. Aamir Khan, for instance, has frequently used his influence to promote legal avenues[13] for film consumption. Such efforts have driven an increase in subscriptions to streaming platforms like Netflix India, Amazon Prime Video, and Hotstar between 2020 and 2023, showcasing the effectiveness of awareness campaigns.

A third and particularly creative strategy involves industry-driven anti-piracy campaigns. A notable example is the film URI – The Surgical Strike, whose producers uploaded a fake "pirated" version of the movie. Instead of showing the film, the video delivered a message about the harms of piracy and guided viewers to legitimate platforms. This innovative approach not only educated audiences but also reinforced the ethical consumption of media.

[11] International Monetary Fund DataMapper < [Read More](#) >

[12] Vineeta Deepak, "Bollywood's \$1.3 billion comeback year in 2023 was one of its best of all time" Fortune Magazine, < [Read More](#) > Accessed 24th November 2024

[13] Gaurav Laghate, "Mumbai Film Fest partners AA Khan in anti-piracy drive," Business Standard < [Read More](#) > Accessed 24th November, 2024

The fourth strategy is collaboration with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to block access to pirated content. The Indian government, working with ISPs, has blocked over 1,300 piracy websites. Dynamic blocking orders allow ISPs to quickly disable new domains created to host pirated content[14]. For example, ISPs were instrumental in limiting the spread of pirated versions of films like Kabir Singh and War, safeguarding their commercial performance.

Bollywood presents itself as a beacon of hope for Uganda's film industry because even with the growth of sophisticated methods of digital piracy, there are ways to combat this piracy and protect the stakeholders of Uganda's film industry that requires collaborative input from the government of Uganda, the industry players and the consumers of Uganda's film industry.

3.3 Fashion Industry: Protecting Unique Designs

In Uganda's emerging fashion industry, IP issues are less about piracy and more about imitation. Designers often lack protection for their unique styles, as fast fashion and counterfeit imports flood the market. While Uganda has trademark laws, many designers are unaware of their rights or lack the resources to enforce them.

This lack of awareness is compounded by the informal nature of much of the fashion industry in Uganda, where designs are often shared within community networks without formal registration or legal protection.

To empower designers, it is crucial to improve awareness of IP rights and streamline the registration process with the Uganda Registration Services Bureau. Developing a support network that educates designers about IP could bolster the industry, promoting originality and sustainable growth.

Bakeine Martin, a fashion industry expert, highlighted during the KTA symposium the challenges of launching a ready-to-wear brand, including high fabric taxes and limited manufacturing infrastructure. He stressed the need for policies that support the use of indigenous materials like Bark Cloth and Banana Fibre, which could enhance both sustainability and international market access.

South Africa's fashion industry is a thriving cultural force, blending traditional aesthetics with contemporary designs. Major cities like Johannesburg and Cape Town are [fashion hubs](#), hosting events such as South African Fashion Week and the AFI Cape Town Fashion Week, which spotlight local and international talent.[15]

Designers like Thebe Magugu, the first African to win the prestigious LVMH Prize, and Laduma Ngxokolo, known for his iconic MaXhosa knitwear, have gained global acclaim. The sector benefits from a growing middle class, robust retail networks, and cultural tourism, though it faces challenges like limited access to manufacturing infrastructure and global competition.

[14] India and Website Blocking: Courts Allow Dynamic Injunctions to Fight Digital Piracy, < [Read More](#) > Accessed 24th November, 2024

[15] Onyekwelu, S "5 top fashion tourism destinations in Africa" Business Day < [Read More](#) > Accessed 23rd November 2024.

Government initiatives such as the South African Clothing and Textile Competitiveness Programme[16] aim to boost production and competitiveness. South Africa's fashion industry not only showcases its cultural diversity but also underscores the nation's creative potential in global markets.

The promotion of indigenous materials not only supports the local economy but also differentiates Ugandan fashion on the international market. By cultivating a brand identity rooted in sustainability and cultural authenticity, Ugandan designers can carve out a niche in a highly competitive industry. This approach requires substantial investment in local textile production and processing capabilities, which would reduce reliance on imported fabrics and provide a stable supply chain for the industry.

3.4 Content Creation: Digital Opportunities and Threats

Digital platforms provide Ugandan content creators with global exposure but also increase the risk of unauthorised use. While Uganda has signed international agreements to protect digital content, enforcement remains inconsistent. Many content creators, such as YouTubers, vloggers, and digital artists, find their work repurposed or plagiarised without due credit or financial compensation. This has been a significant deterrent to the growth of digital creative industries within the country.

The accessibility of legal resources is limited, and public awareness about IP rights is low. Addressing these gaps could involve implementing educational programmes and more affordable legal aid for content creators. Improving enforcement would help protect their rights, enabling them to focus on creativity rather than potential legal battles. Participants at the KTA symposium highlighted the importance of creating a cultural content development fund to support artists focusing on Ugandan traditions and identities. This would provide financial backing for authentic cultural representations, thereby elevating Uganda's profile on the world stage.

Furthermore, digital content creators could benefit from structured partnerships with tech companies to ensure better monetisation of their work. Collaborations with platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram could lead to the establishment of local offices or partnerships that provide support for IP issues specific to Ugandan creators. Such partnerships could also facilitate training programs that empower creators with the skills needed to navigate and capitalise on the digital marketplace.

4. Policy and Regulatory Framework

An effective policy and regulatory framework can foster a robust creative industry by establishing clear rules around the ownership, protection, and monetisation of creative works. Uganda's policies provide a foundation but require strengthening to meet the dynamic needs of the creative sector. A flexible policy environment that evolves in response to technological changes is essential for the creative industry to remain competitive.

[16] Clothing and Textile Competitiveness Programme (CTCP) < [Read More](#) > Accessed 24th November 2024.



4.1 Uganda's National Culture Policy

Uganda's National Culture Policy, introduced in 2006[17], acknowledges the role of cultural integration in national development. This policy outlines support for institutions like the Uganda National Library and the Uganda National Cultural Centre, fostering a creative environment. However, the implementation of this policy has been inconsistent, and the lack of adequate funding has limited its impact.

The reinstatement of traditional cultural institutions in 1993, such as the Buganda kingdom, also supports Uganda's creative ecosystem. By promoting cultural heritage, the policy fosters unity and social stability, enabling the creative sector to flourish within a vibrant national identity. The emphasis on cultural heritage as a unifying force has helped mitigate some of the socio-political challenges that arise in diverse communities, providing a stable foundation for artistic expression.

During the KTA symposium, Julianne Mweheire from the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) spoke about UCC's initiatives to boost local content. She emphasised the need for a unified approach integrating music, fashion, and cultural activities to drive national growth and innovation. Mweheire highlighted the success of initiatives like the Uganda Film Festival and the Content Development Support Program, which provide grants and mentorship to local creators. Such initiatives are steps in the right direction, but their scalability and sustainability require broader institutional support and increased budget allocations.

4.2 Recent Projects and Initiatives

Initiatives like the Aschberg programme and the Open Digital Roadmap Project are recent efforts to bolster Uganda's creative sector. These projects, incentivised by the Creative and Cultural Industries Bill (2015)[18], promote artist recognition through workshops, consultations, and digital platforms. They serve as a testament to Uganda's commitment to advancing the creative economy, offering pathways for artists to thrive. However, these initiatives are often limited in scope, benefiting only select groups of artists, and they require expansion to reach a broader audience across the creative sectors.

The UNDP's Inclusive Growth & Innovation Programme[19] also supports young creatives, commemorating World Creativity and Innovation Day to spotlight the industry's potential. This initiative promotes job creation and skills development, with a focus on long-term economic impact. By targeting youth, these programs not only harness the creative energy of the younger population but also help mitigate the problem of youth unemployment in Uganda, which remains a significant socio-economic challenge.

[17] Civil Society Alternative Report on the ESCR – Uganda, 2010

[18] UNESCO "Fostering Artistic Resilience: Uganda and Rwanda Unveil Transformative Initiatives with support from the Aschberg-UNESCO programme." < [Read More](#) > Accessed 25th November, 2024

[19] UNDP, "Inclusive Growth and Innovation" < [Read More](#) > Accessed 25th November, 2024

The KTA symposium's discussions also underlined the need for cohesive support across different government agencies to streamline and simplify processes for creatives. Rasheeda Nalumoso from the British Council noted that fragmentation among agencies often hinders effective support, impacting intellectual property policies and funding. A unified approach, where various government bodies collaborate under a single framework, could enhance the efficiency and reach of support systems for the creative industry.

Additionally, Eugene Kavuma from Kampala Design Week underscored the importance of infrastructure development, citing the lack of creative hubs and formal spaces for exhibitions as significant barriers to growth. He pointed to the potential of private sector partnerships, similar to the Ramoma Gallery initiative in Kenya, where private developers provided ground-floor space for artistic exhibitions. Creative hubs not only provide physical spaces for artists but also serve as incubators for talent, fostering collaboration and innovation.

5. Nurturing a Thriving Creative Ecosystem

To build a sustainable and inclusive creative ecosystem, Uganda's policies must ensure cultural accessibility, adaptability, and support for innovation. This involves a comprehensive framework addressing key areas to make creative works accessible, protect artists' rights, and foster growth. A thriving ecosystem is one where creativity is not only celebrated but also effectively monetised, with clear pathways for creators to gain financial independence.

5.1 Cultural Accessibility

Broad access to cultural and creative works is crucial for a thriving creative sector. This includes digitising cultural archives and making them accessible online. Digital access to cultural materials not only serves educational purposes but also inspires new creative works that draw upon Uganda's rich cultural heritage. Collaborations with tech companies can enhance engagement through VR and AR experiences[20], allowing audiences to interact with Uganda's cultural heritage in innovative ways.

Furthermore, making cultural assets available digitally can attract international interest, positioning Uganda as a destination for cultural tourism. Virtual museum tours, online exhibitions, and interactive storytelling can all serve to widen the reach of Uganda's culture beyond its geographical boundaries. However, the digitisation process requires substantial investment, both in terms of technology and the training of personnel to curate and manage digital archives.

[20] Afiya Dembe H., The Integration of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) in Classroom Settings, 2024

5.2 Continuous Regulatory Updates

The creative economy's regulatory framework must evolve alongside technological advancements. Regular consultations with stakeholders, including artists, tech companies, and cultural institutions, ensure policies address emerging challenges. Uganda can look to frameworks like Creative Commons Licensing to balance accessibility and IP protection, enabling creators to control their work's monetisation while promoting digital sharing. Such licensing frameworks provide a flexible approach to copyright, giving creators the choice to retain certain rights while allowing their work to be freely used or adapted by others.

During the KTA symposium, panellists underscored the importance of updating the Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act to accommodate digital developments. They called for a more inclusive approach that protects digital creators and encourages fair compensation. This requires the development of a multi-stakeholder task force to guide policy formulation, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered and that policies are relevant to the current and anticipated future landscape of digital creativity.

5.3 Data-Driven Policy Reviews and Pilot Programmes

Using data analytics to assess regulatory effectiveness can help identify improvement areas. Data-driven reviews allow policymakers to understand which areas of the creative economy are flourishing and which require intervention. This evidence-based approach ensures that resources are allocated efficiently and that policies are tailored to the specific needs of the sector.

By piloting policies within controlled environments such as regulatory sandboxes, Uganda can test new approaches before full-scale implementation, reducing unintended impacts and ensuring practical application. These pilot programs provide valuable insights into how creatives interact with regulatory changes, allowing adjustments to be made in response to real-world feedback. This iterative process of policy formulation is crucial for fostering an environment where creativity is nurtured rather than stifled by bureaucracy.

6. Investment Opportunities and Resource Allocation

Financial support is essential to develop a sustainable creative economy. Strategic investment enables artists to create and reach audiences, fostering diversity and innovation across Uganda's cultural landscape. The creative economy cannot thrive on talent alone; it requires structured financial systems that provide access to capital for both established and emerging creatives. The lack of a tailored investment strategy has kept much of Uganda's creative potential dormant, emphasising the need for comprehensive resource allocation that aligns with the specific dynamics of creative work.

6.1 Establishing Cultural Funds and Grants

Governments can establish cultural funds to support creative projects, offering grants to help artists overcome financial barriers. In the U.S., the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) exemplifies this model, providing grants across disciplines to enhance cultural access. Similar initiatives in Uganda could empower artists and foster creative innovation. Establishing a national cultural fund would create an institutionalised support mechanism that reduces artists' reliance on inconsistent and often politically driven funding opportunities.

A well-structured cultural fund in Uganda should be governed by an independent body to ensure transparency and impartial allocation of resources. The creation of such a fund would not only address financial needs but also contribute to nurturing artistic ambition and stability. This body could be tasked with not only managing funds but also providing mentorship and advisory services to grant recipients, helping them maximise the impact of the financial support they receive. Such holistic support would ensure that the funding leads to sustainable creative enterprises rather than one-off projects. Moreover, these grants should be adaptable, supporting a wide range of creative disciplines from visual arts to digital content creation, thus fostering an inclusive approach to creativity.

6.2 Tax Incentives

Tax incentives for companies investing in the arts can drive private-sector involvement, providing mutual benefits. This model allows businesses to support the creative sector while demonstrating social responsibility. For example, the UK's Film Tax Relief[21] encourages film investment, which Uganda could adapt to boost its film industry. These incentives could be expanded to include other creative sectors, thereby encouraging more diverse forms of artistic expression.

Panellists during the KTA symposium also proposed tax incentives for artists as a way to support Uganda's art industry. Reduced taxes, tax credits for art purchases, and exemptions for non-profit art organisations were cited as ways to stimulate demand and create jobs. To further develop this idea, Uganda could consider providing tax holidays for start-ups within the creative sector, enabling new ventures to stabilise financially before bearing the full weight of taxation. Such a tax policy framework would need to be sensitive to the unique earnings patterns of creatives, which are often irregular and highly variable, ensuring that taxation does not become a prohibitive burden.

[21] < [Read More](#) >

6.3 Micro Grants for Emerging Creatives

Microgrants, such as those provided by the [Awesome Foundation](#)^[TIR1], can support small-scale creative projects without significant financial strain. Uganda could establish similar programmes to enable independent artists to explore new ideas and projects, fostering a culture of innovation. Microgrants are particularly beneficial in encouraging risk-taking, as they provide funding without the expectation of substantial returns, thus giving artists the freedom to experiment and innovate. This type of funding plays a crucial role in allowing artists to break free from the constraints of commercial pressure, facilitating the pursuit of artistic vision and innovation.

These microgrants could also be targeted towards marginalised groups, ensuring inclusivity within the creative industry. Women, rural youth, and artists with disabilities often face greater barriers to entry into the creative economy. Targeted microgrants would not only provide them with financial resources but also serve as a signal of support, encouraging greater participation and representation in the creative industries. Such an inclusive funding mechanism can catalyse diversity and ensure that all voices contribute to the national cultural narrative, thus enriching the creative landscape of Uganda.

6.4 Public-Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships in creative hubs and educational programmes offer resources and infrastructure for artists to grow. For example, Factory Berlin in Germany supports start-ups and artists through public and private funding. Establishing similar hubs in Uganda could provide creatives with essential resources, networking opportunities, and mentorship, fostering an environment where artists can thrive. Such creative hubs would act as incubators, allowing artists to access professional-grade equipment, co-working spaces, and collaborative environments that foster creativity and innovation.

The establishment of these hubs would not only provide physical resources but also facilitate cultural exchange and cross-disciplinary innovation. Bringing together different types of creatives in one space can foster unexpected collaborations that push the boundaries of traditional art forms. During the symposium, Hon. Minister Balaam emphasised the importance of establishing partnerships and sponsorships to support young Ugandan creatives.

[TIR1] This chapter is now inactive in Kampala. An inactive chapter is one that has not given a grant in six months.

He urged development partners and NGOs to contribute to youth empowerment initiatives and stressed the need for financial literacy to sustain grant funding. Financial literacy is particularly important, as many creatives lack the skills necessary to manage their finances effectively. Without this knowledge, even well-funded projects can fail due to poor financial management, highlighting the need for educational support alongside financial investment.

7. From Canvas to Commerce: Strategies for Growth

Empowering Uganda's creative economy to transition from cultural expression to a viable commercial industry requires targeted strategies that enhance commercialisation, training, and market access. Leveraging digital platforms, regional collaboration, and investment can stimulate growth and increase competitiveness in the global market. By positioning creativity as both an economic driver and a cultural asset, Uganda can ensure that the creative economy contributes meaningfully to national development.

7.1 Leveraging Digital Platforms

Digital platforms present both an opportunity and a challenge for Ugandan creatives seeking commercialisation. Collaborating with international platforms offers financial benefits and global branding but raises concerns about cultural dilution and loss of ownership.

Uganda's Creatures Animation Studios exemplifies this in their contribution to Disney's Kizazi Moto, an African sci-fi anthology available on major streaming platforms. Ensuring that partnerships with global platforms include provisions for cultural preservation is essential to prevent Ugandan culture from being misappropriated or commercialised in ways that do not benefit local communities.

Digital platforms also allow creatives to bypass traditional gatekeepers, which has democratised access to audiences. However, the success of digital distribution requires strong branding and marketing strategies. Simply uploading content is not enough; creatives need to understand how to optimise content for search engines, harness social media algorithms, and engage with audiences through interactive content. Meanwhile, fostering regional collaborations could present a viable alternative. By leveraging cultural similarities within East Africa, Ugandan creatives can build a regional market, although this requires overcoming logistical and infrastructural challenges.

Regional platforms could serve as a stepping stone for Ugandan artists to access broader international markets while still retaining cultural authenticity. For instance, East African streaming services could offer curated collections of Ugandan music, films, and visual arts, providing exposure that is culturally contextualised.

In the age of artificial intelligence (AI), preserving cultural specificity remains a unique advantage for African artists. The deep cultural expression inherent in Ugandan art provides a competitive edge that can be maintained despite AI's growth. Emphasising cultural authenticity and originality will help Ugandan creatives differentiate their work from machine-generated content. AI tools can also be harnessed by Ugandan artists to enhance creativity, such as by automating repetitive tasks, thereby allowing artists to focus on higher-level creative processes. AI-assisted creation should be seen as a tool to augment human creativity, providing Ugandan artists with an opportunity to blend traditional techniques with cutting-edge technology to create something truly unique.

7.2 Building a Support Ecosystem: Training and Finance

A thriving creative industry must be supported by training, access to finance, and clear market pathways. Educating artists about their legal rights, particularly in IP, is essential to safeguarding^[22] their interests and commercialising their works effectively. Training programs should focus not only on artistic skills but also on entrepreneurial capabilities, including business planning, marketing, and financial management. Artists need to be equipped with the knowledge to negotiate contracts, manage royalties, and protect their intellectual property to ensure they derive maximum value from their creations.

The financial ecosystem must involve both public and private contributions, providing grants, loans, and microfinance solutions tailored for creatives. Government involvement can help de-risk private sector contributions, fostering a supportive financial environment for artists. Access to finance for creatives is often limited due to the perceived risks associated with investing in the arts. A government-backed guarantee scheme could alleviate some of this risk, encouraging banks and other financial institutions to lend to creatives. Additionally, investment readiness programs could prepare artists to pitch their projects effectively to potential investors, bridging the gap between creative talent and financial capital.

During the KTA symposium, the need for structured business and financial management training for artists was emphasised. Hon. Minister Balaam advocated for such training to be included as part of broader initiatives, equipping artists with the skills necessary for economic sustainability. Moreover, vocational training programs that are tailored specifically to the creative industries could ensure that the workforce is adequately prepared for the unique demands of this sector. These training initiatives should also incorporate digital literacy, as many artists need to understand how to effectively use online platforms for marketing, networking, and selling their work.

7.3 Enhancing Market Access

Enhancing market access for creatives requires promoting cross-industry collaborations. For instance, collaborations between interior designers and visual artists or tourism companies and musical artists could create new commercial avenues. These partnerships foster creativity and provide practical opportunities to showcase and commercialise creative outputs. Cross-industry collaborations can also lead to innovations that redefine industry boundaries, such as integrating technology and traditional art forms to create immersive experiences for audiences.

[22] < [Read More](#) >



Efforts to harmonise taxation and regulations across the East African region can also create a broader market for Ugandan creatives. By reducing trade barriers and aligning standards, Ugandan artists can easily access neighbouring markets, thus broadening their commercial opportunities. Julianne Mweheire from UCC also highlighted UCC's partnerships with the Uganda Tourism Board[23] to facilitate international exposure for local films, showcasing the impact of cross-sector collaboration in enhancing market access. The tourism industry can also serve as a key partner for the creative sector, leveraging Uganda's rich cultural heritage to enhance the tourist experience and providing a market for local creatives to showcase and sell their work.

Market access also requires investment in distribution channels that reach international consumers. Developing online platforms that sell Ugandan art, music, and crafts directly to a global audience would bypass many traditional barriers to market entry. However, logistical challenges, such as shipping and digital payment systems, must be addressed to ensure a smooth transaction process for international buyers.

Addressing these issues may involve partnering with global e-commerce platforms or creating regional fulfilment centres that can handle distribution more efficiently.

8. Legal & Policy Recommendations

We hereby suggest the following actionable legal and policy recommendations.

8.1 The story of the Ugandan Creative

Challenges and Opportunities for International Recognition

- Establishment of Art spaces for exhibitions and promotion of creative arts.
- Ease Visa processing for artists travelling to showcase their art.
- Ensure robust banking systems are in place to process international transactions.
- Establishment of a Ugandan digital platform for showcasing Digital Art like NFTs. e.g Open Sea.
- Implementation of policies in Uganda that designate Art as a valuable asset that can be used as collateral for a loan.
- Similarly, that the economic rights in Intellectual Property can be used as collateral for a loan in a financial institution.

8.2 The Music Industry

- Robust enforcement of IP laws and other innovative approaches to prevent piracy of music.
- Solutions to address the rise of free access to music through various digital platforms which apparently diminishes the perceived value of music among consumers.
- Integration of basic intellectual property education into the school curricula at all levels. By introducing students to the concepts of copyright, trademarks, and other intellectual property rights from an early age, we can instil a sense of appreciation for the creative process and its associated rights.
- Establish sustainable taxation mechanisms for the music industry.

[23] Uganda Tourism Board "UTB, UCC seal deal to promote Uganda as film and tourism destination." < [Read More](#) >
 Accessed 26th November 2024

8.3 The Film Industry

- Comprehensive Film Policy; There's urgent need for a well-defined film policy that serves as a crucial framework for safeguarding Uganda's unique stories and cultural identity from misrepresentation and commercialization abroad. Such a policy would
- provide the necessary direction for the growth of the film industry.
- Ensuring conserved sites are available for free for use in film production.
- Collaborations between film and private sector to build National Film Hubs.
- Using IP as collateral for loans in banks.
- Tax holidays or reductions on world class film equipment being imported into the country.
- A crack down on piracy. Clarity on the nature and legality of derivative works such as voice overs on movies by Video Jockeys. (Firimu enjogerere)

8.4 The fashion and design

- There's need to refine current trade policies in Uganda to better support locally made fashion products, particularly indigenous fabrics like Bark Cloth, Banana Fibre, and Hides and Skins from Ankole Cattle. Such refinements would promote sustainable practices and enhance local and international distribution.
- Policies that safeguard indigenous fabrics.
- Adopting new technologies and sustainable practices, including eco-friendly petrochemicals, can improve production efficiency and product quality.
- Expanding initiatives like the Uganda Export Promotion Board to include dedicated funding streams for fashion designers, which could assist with production, marketing, and export costs.
- Create an association and launch Uganda Fashion Awards.

8.5 Content Creation

- Offering partial guidance for regulating digital content. However, participants suggested that refining this law is essential to enhance its effectiveness in holding intermediaries accountable for facilitating the spread of misinformation and disinformation.
- Address gaps in intermediary liability in Uganda.

9. Conclusion

The creative economy holds vast potential for Uganda's economic and cultural development. Addressing challenges like IP protection, funding, and regulatory frameworks can empower Ugandan creatives to innovate and succeed on a global stage. Effective policies and investments can build a resilient, inclusive, creative ecosystem, transforming Uganda's cultural sector into a pillar of the nation's economy.

By embracing comprehensive cultural accessibility, adaptive regulations, and strategic financial support, Uganda can unlock the creative sector's full potential, fostering a vibrant, economically prosperous, and culturally rich society. This commitment to nurturing creativity will pave the way for future generations of artists, innovators, and leaders, positioning Uganda as a key player in the global creative economy.

A thriving creative ecosystem will not only showcase Uganda's rich cultural heritage but also create jobs, stimulate innovation, and foster social cohesion. By aligning policies, resources, and strategies with the unique needs of the creative community, Uganda can transform its creative economy into a model of cultural and economic resilience.

The transition from cultural expression to commercial viability is not straightforward, but with sustained investment in infrastructure, skills development, and market access, Uganda can foster a creative sector that is not only vibrant but also economically sustainable.

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