

“Creative industries in Nigeria are not large enough to absorb many new entrants to the labor market.”
-Christoph David WEINMANN



Image Source: A plenary session of the Africa-Asia Youth Forum (AAYF) in Addis Ababa, July 28-30, 2022, on “Strengthening the Role of Youth in Ensuring a Sustainable Africa-Asia Partnership.” The meeting was held at the African Union Headquarters and organized by O-YES Global Foundation. Photography Courtesy of Daniel Uwadia, Edo State Government, Nigeria. All rights reserved ©.



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Nigeria's creative present - an employment analysis

With three official languages next to English and over 500 languages in total, Nigeria has an immense cultural variety that could be tapped and activated for creative industry development. If issues of income distribution and poverty were better addressed, with a working age population of 111 million the country would even have the critical mass to develop its economy including the creative industries on the basis of its own domestic market. Nigeria's film industry, as one example, is the only one in Africa that has emerged without any support and also reaches into foreign markets. Despite being part of the informal economy, its contribution to GDP is officially listed.¹ But how much employment actually is „creative“ and are there any barriers to growth?

Since the “discovery” of the “creative economy” our analyses of the same are muddled. Believing we cannot manage what we cannot measure, we have created a diversity of taxonomies to allow us to view the creative economy from different

angles in the quest for understanding this new “sector.”² Yet countries in the Global South barely manage to produce the variety of data we would like to see regularly collected. Our measuring efforts even make no halt before analytical boundaries and would like to add all “creative labor” employed in “uncreative industries” to the count of all persons employed in the creative industries when “closing out the job register”: we are following the approach of a “creative trident.”³

Instead of launching special surveys, we collected information along the international standard classification of occupations (ISCO-08), an established taxonomy available for quite a while, applied in labor force surveys in many countries. In line with modern standards of labor statisticians (ICLS-2013) which also include degrees of underemployment (part-time work), this approach should allow us to better monitor the evolution around decent work⁴ (forms of employment, wage levels) over time and deliver more accurate and reliable information about creative industry employment which usually is widely missing in lower-income countries.

The SIFA study on Employment and Labor in the Creative Industries,⁵ based on information collected in 2022, shows that (pre-covid-19) roughly 6% of the labor force is employed in occupations attributable to creative industries.⁶ However, where job generation is of concern, that is not enough considering the size of a labor market that sees some 5 million new entrants every year.⁷ It amounts to only 3.2 million people, 59% of whom females and 41% males.⁸

The female share is boosted by rather high numbers of females among hairdressers and beauticians (who constitute 29% of the creative industries' employment in Nigeria) and in the fashion-linked garment and textile production (27% respectively). In the most well-known occupations of the creative industries “creatives and performing artists” (4%) and “handicraft workers” (7%), the proportions between the sexes are at par. Broadcasting technicians, software developers, sports, or printing trade workers are still more likely to be males.⁹

In many countries, hairdressers and beauticians are not counted as part of the creative industries, and garments and textile workers are not considered to belong to the core creative industries.¹⁰ So if we applied stricter criteria, we could be left with 1.4 million creative jobs only.¹¹

Beyond the collection of standard occupational data, we have found that it is more rewarding for understanding the nuts and bolts of the creative industries to move from “overall” analyses to “sub-sector” analyses. Needs of creative industry sub-sectors may be entirely different from each other even though they are all grouped under the same heading. Nigeria's fashion industry can directly plug into centuries of tradition and a host of patterns and symbols that continuously inspire new creations, recreate local identities, and are good for entering niche markets abroad. Games development is at infant industry stage, slowly developing both local and “international” content while competing with games long estab-

lished by international giants. Nigerian's novel writing skills are an asset that will help, but skilled software professionals are the key bottleneck and, as elsewhere in the region, the risk of brain drain persists. The esports sub-sector is at a nascent stage, but Nigerian gamers have already broken into international competitions.

One of the most important constraints for growth are skills. A creative business can create the environment for creative work. But it cannot by itself bridge a major hard skills gap. Technical levels need to be raised by education and skills providers so conversion needs for businesses are reduced.

Given that, apart from the film industry and fashion, many creative economy activities in Nigeria are still at emergent levels, accelerated digitalization and creative hubs fostering sub-sector growth and their inter-linkages will also be important.

References

1. Cf. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) 2016, Formal and Informal Sector Split of Gross Domestic Product 2015, Abuja: NBS, and NBS various years. GDP data 2010-2020.
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3. Cf. Higgs, P., and S. Cunningham 2008, Creative industries mapping: Where have we come from and where are we going? Creative Industries Journal 1(1): 7-30.

4. See [link](#).

5. See [link](#).

6. Own estimates.

7. World Bank 2019. Nigeria Economic Update, Fall 2019. Washington: World Bank: 8-9.

8. Own estimates.

9. Own estimates.

10. Cf. inter alia: Federação das Indústrias do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (Firjan) SENAI 2019, Mapeamento da Indústria Criativa no Brasil, Rio de Janeiro: Firjan SENAI. Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) 2018. 2018 Cultural and Creative Industries Monitoring Report, Berlin: BMWi. Liang, S.S. and Q.F. Wang 2020. Cultural and Creative Industries and Urban (Re)Development in China, Journal of Planning Literature 35(1): 54-70. United Kingdom Department for Culture, Media, and Sport 2016, Creative Industries: Focus on Employment, Annex A.

11. Own estimates.