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## **I. Introduction**

When one talks about information and communication, he/she refers to the classic schematic mode of communication characterized by the transmission of information in the form of a message. The information from the source is encoded as message, transmitted through a communication channel and finally received and decoded, thus completing the cycle of communication. In the last decades, this communication cycle has progressively been enriched and profoundly transformed by the use of technology (Philip, 1998).

Technology has completely revolutionized the traditional mode of communication by near and far enlarging the channels through which transmit the message. With the arrival of Radio, television, print media, electronic media, tele-conference, audio-visual and many others such as the internet, multiple social media platforms like twitter, what sup, Facebook, blogs... communication has been made faster and easier to an extent that through these various media, information sharing across the globe has become instant and the audience has widened considerably.

The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to foster business development and investment has never been wider to an extent that information sharing itself has become a profitable business and a marketing tool at the same time (African Business Magazine , 2014). Example, Facebook, Inc. is probably the miracle of the century as far as information and communication sector is concerned. All over the world, in our homes, offices, businesses and on our computers, tablets and smart phones we are constantly using Facebook to get in touch with friends and relatives but also to get our businesses and projects out to the world in vivid audio-visual message.

Cultural and creative industries are broad and rich concepts, especially when one has Africa in mind. They include but are not limited to films, television, literature and a host of other activities such as music, dance, drama, fine arts, plastic arts, creative games, creative expressions and many more. These are products of various cultures and lived experiences of different people. This sector has proven to be resilient in the face of global economic and financial crises that have affected our work and businesses in the current decade. Combining the dynamism of cultural and creative businesses with the technological development, this can bring about the desired effects to our respective countries and the East African Community at large.

## **II. EAC cultural context**

Cultural and creative industries in Partner States of the EAC are varied and rich in cultural values, expressions, creativity, talent and business opportunities. Their potential has not yet been fully discovered nor exploited. They are still fresh ground ready for harvest. Given the geographical, social and economic situation of each Partner State, the produce of cultural and creative industries tend to stagnate within urban centers such as Kampala, Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, Kigali and Bujumbura where various artists and art centers are located. Few art and creative businesses manage to penetrate up country where the vast majority of our populations live. It is a challenge to cultural and creative businesses to harvest the talents laying in our respective villages but also even if you wanted it, you cannot simply create employment for the population of rural areas due to lack of basic infrastructure (Studios, Theatre houses, cultural centers...)

East African cultural industries include but are not limited to drama, dance, creative arts, fashion and design, music, film, plastic arts, fine arts, literary arts and gaming. Each one of these various

disciplines represents an avenue for talented young artists for creative imagination and expressions. Art is not only their passion, but also their work. It is through arts that these young artists hope to earn a living.

Cultural and creative business in Africa and in EAC in particular still face major challenges that include lack of basic infrastructures as mentioned above, lack of enforced intellectual property laws, limited audience, lack of investments in arts and entertainment, lack of professional skills in art and entertainment just to mention a few. These challenges impede the commercialization of artistic products. It is a challenge to most East African artists to collect their due royalties for there are many issues related to copyright protection. African cultures have not been at the center stage in the development and peace building agendas. Lack of such a consideration has played down the level of investment in the process of the country's development.

There is firm evidence of the potential of the culture sector to contribute to national economy and to the development (Felipe Buitrago Restrepo, 2013). In Asia, for instance, creative industries have played a significant role in the emergence of mature economies. It has been acknowledged that the most efficient and beneficial approach to integrate culture in development is to formalize production of cultural goods and services around various centers and clusters of industrial activity. Therefore, it is only within the regulated structures of a formal environment that the resources and skills of traditional knowledge, for example, might be best transformed into the desired economic activity with its associated opportunities and benefits (African Business Magazine , 2014). Today, in EAC, there has been an activity of mapping cultural and creative industries yet to be finalized. It is a noble step in the right direction.

### **III. Cultural and creative business in Africa and in the East African Community in particular**

Africa's contribution to this vast industry, unfortunately, is negligible. While the continent has a deep pool of talent, experiences, reputation and creative imagination, it lacks the infrastructure and capacity to commercialize its creative talent and reap the vast fortunes that are lying in wait. In recent times, there has been much talk about the potential of the creative and cultural industries to contribute to Africa's economic growth and thus to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals which resonate loudly with the East African region.

Numerous studies in the global north have affirmed that design, music, craft, film and television, fashion, publishing, heritage, cultural festivals and related components of the creative and cultural industries are key drivers of job creation, foreign exchange earnings, income generators and catalysts and supporters of other industries such as leisure, printing, tourism and transport.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) undertook global studies and issued two definitive reports in 2008 and 2010 highlighting the contribution of the creative industries across the globe, revealing too the resilience of the sector in the face of the economic downturn. The 2010 report states: "In 2008, the eruption of the world financial and economic crisis provoked a sharp drop in global demand and a contraction of 12% in international trade. However, world export of creative goods and services continued to grow, reaching \$592 bn in 2008 – more than double the 2002 level – indicating an annual growth rate of 14% over six consecutive years (UNCTAD, 2008).

The reports also reveal, however, that Africa's share of the global creative economy stands at less than 1%, with the key contributors to this 1% being North African countries and South Africa.

These findings point both to underinvestment in the creative and cultural industries on the continent and to its potential for growth. The 2010 UNCTAD report states: “This growth is a confirmation that the creative industries hold great potential for developing countries that seek to diversify their economies and leapfrog into one of the most dynamic sectors of the world economy (UNCTAD, 2010).”

In this context, the dynamic relationship between investment, technology, entrepreneurship and trade, can be operationalized. Despite the recent developments in music and other creative industries in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya, particularly the increasing demand for live music, films, active galleries and exhibition spaces for visual artists and increasing opportunities for performing arts, they are yet to contribute significantly to Partner States’ GDPs.

Numerous studies have pointed out that in recent economic and financial crises, where many productive sectors such as oil, energy, automobile and so forth have severely suffered (up to 40% recession in some sectors) while the creative industry only suffered a 12% recession in 2009. It was also realized that creative trade in service grows 70% faster than creative goods all because creative service transactions are increasingly happening through internet. For instance, large film industries such as Hollywood, Bollywood and Nollywood produce about four thousand films a year or eighty (80) films a week. Their box office sales, a year, is estimated in billions of dollars. Video games represent 70% of electronic tablets usage, 25 billion song downloads at 0.99 cents US\$ a piece, and 50 billion mobile phone applications all from Apple’s iTunes (Felipe Buitrago Restrepo, 2013).

It is about time that Africa and EAC in particular, seize the opportunities of technology present in all Partner States. Recent studies show that out of a population of 122.6 million of the EAC, 49.6

million have at least one mobile subscription; that is an estimated 40% mobile penetration (in Rwanda we are slightly above 68%). These statistics indicate vast opportunities in EAC for Small and Medium Enterprises in user interface design and development and customized applications development to enhance service delivery to 49.6 million mobile subscribers in EAC. With an increased mobile penetration in deep rural areas, there are fresh ground for exploitation in various sectors such as education, health, entertainment, electronic payment, e-commerce, information sharing, advertisement, online artistic platforms and so forth (TRANSFORMING EAST AFRICAN ICT SECTOR BY CREATING A BUSINESS ENGINE FOR SMEs, 2011).

Today Africa has the highest growing mobile subscription rate in the world representing a massive opportunity for cultural and creative business and trade services. Africa is renowned for being a sleeping giant in terms of art and culture. The rich variety of cultures and creative imagination of African population remains untapped for cultural and creative trade and service. This rich cultural variety remains largely unknown to the world.

The information and communication technology, of which past African generations were not privy of, can be a crucial tool and a channel for productive exploitation of the creative imagination and cultures of Africa. With the current mobile subscription, the use of internet and other social media such as Facebook, what's up, Twitter, Google and many others, the rich heritage of African people can be put to a productive use. These are increasingly used for marketing, sales, customer support service and product development worldwide, but the trend has not yet spread to Africa and in particular to the EAC cultural and creative entrepreneurs.

If the 40% of mobile subscribers in EAC could all have access to various cultural and creative business and trade services within EAC, it would represent a wider market with limited

transportation burdens. Imagine what 49.6 million subscribers could generate if they all had access to download a song at a cost as low as 10 Ksh per piece. It is in this regard that the use of ICT represents a tool for unlocking business opportunities both for cultural and creative entrepreneurs and for practitioners.

#### **IV. Reference to best practices in other regions**

There is a tendency to confine discussions and initiatives related to ICT to computers and the internet. Not enough attention is placed on the significance of other communication technologies such as radio, television, cable, satellite, and digital multimedia production facilities. For the purposes of the entertainment sector, the importance of all aspects of Information and Communications Technologies is even more critical. In a study carried out in 2008 on the Jamaican music industry conducted by UNDP and UNCTAD (UNCTAD, 2008), the findings indicated that music and entertainment contributed more value to the national tourism product than any other input, including Hotels. Tourism is by far the biggest foreign exchange earner in Jamaica and most Caribbean nations, and with that kind of input from the music and entertainment sector, the case for entertainment in any ICT for development program is a very strong one.

In addition to that, the greatest challenge in a proposed synergy of the tourism, entertainment and media sectors is likely to be the altering of the *modus operandi* of our traditional media. Our traditional media operators, unlike operators in tourism and entertainment, have not competed well so far in the international markets. In fact, when compared with tourism and entertainment, there is almost no presence at all of local media as a major player in the international market. This is not only true in Jamaica it is also true in our EAC communities. With the exception of the

innovative efforts of some local producers of video content for subscriber cable channels, (most of whom are based in Nigeria and South Africa), the traditional approach of local media has been to act primarily as channels for foreign content, rather than as facilitators of the production and delivery of domestic content for regional and international consumption. The electronic media entities in Africa have not been able to devise ways of extending their reach beyond the shores of the continent. The role of media in providing a platform for the promotion and expansion of African entertainment, culture and tourism needs to be reviewed for purposes of creating business opportunities. At the risk of blowing our own trumpets, there are African festivals like Jamafest, Fespad and Fespaco which have embarked on initiatives to further the objective of securing greater media involvement in the development of the leisure industries. The importance of the audio-visual sector to the development of modern economies has been clearly demonstrated. Let us take a quick look at some recent regional and international trends:

- There is an increasing government support, and strategic collaborations between the telecommunications and entertainment sectors. For example, in 2001, the EU allocated ONE BILLION Euros to the audio-visual sector to fund its policy strategies aimed at facilitating development of indigenous content and providing the European broadcast industry (public, private and community sectors) the capacity to compete in the global marketplace. Several major telecoms operators in Europe have also entered into joint ventures or major sponsorship arrangements with producers, promoters and distributors of entertainment products and services with a view to diversifying their revenue streams.

- Another trend is clear in the combination of online promotion activities with traditional advertising, thus providing an increasingly less expensive and more effective method of promoting products and services from the leisure industries. Tourism plants such as hotels and

other attraction venues around the world have been paying more attention to providing entertainment products and services to their guests with ICT applications playing a major role.

- Over the last five to ten years a tremendous amount of research has been done and interest demonstrated by several international development assistance agencies in the areas of ICTs and the leisure industries. This has produced a wealth of information and has also helped to sensitize stakeholders to the significance of these sectors to social and economic development.
- The development of music festivals and the use of music as a major tool for promoting tourism has reached an upper level in the west especially due to the use of ICT enabled marketing and customer relations.
- We need to also take note that in recent years millions of US dollars have been spent annually by Jamaican and other Caribbean tourism interests on television advertising in North America and Europe to promote tourism. These trends elsewhere give food for thought to the development of cultural and creative industries in EAC.

## **V. ICT and improved service delivery in the Republic of Rwanda**

In Rwanda, vision 2020 established the use of ICT as one of the pillars of economic and social development that will see the Republic of Rwanda uplifted to the middle income economy in the year 2020. For this vision to become a reality, the Republic of Rwanda has massively invested in the use of ICT at various levels. This through the following:

1. Taking ICT tools to the people by providing the necessary ICT infrastructure where needed; for instance
  - Broadband in all Imirenge (sectors) of the local administration

- Providing teleconference facilities and high speed (4G) internet connection to all the 30 Districts of the country
  - Provision of laptops (the One Laptop per Child Project) in different primary schools
  - Provision of handset mobile phones to all community leaders (Imidugudu) for health and security purposes
2. Use of ICT to reinforce communication so as to unlock far distant areas in Rwanda
- Increased communication enables people to participate in different areas of development (Education, Health, Security, Trade and Commerce)
  - Reduction of communication costs and time (reduced cost of travels)
  - Availability of new market opportunities for business among women and youth
  - Communication and business made more attractive through the use of social media such as Facebook, twitter, whatsapp and blogs
3. The availability of e-commerce and e-payments
- Availability of MTN Mobile money, Tigo cash and Airtel money
  - Availability of e-commerce platform such as Kaymu, Gurisha, e-soko
  - Availability of online real estate platforms such as Lamudi
  - Availability of payment platforms for services like water, energy...
  - Availability of employment information platforms such as Job in Rwanda, Tohoza and Umurimo
  - Availability of the first Rwandan music streaming platform (Inyarwanda.com)...
  - Availability of ICT innovation centers such as K-Lab, Think... that facilitate young ICT researchers, developers and entrepreneurs to develop IT& ICT software, platforms and businesses in the context of Rwanda
  - Availability of “vision program” that aims to increase the penetration of smart devices in rural areas of Rwanda and hence increase the access to internet to rural areas in Rwanda
  - Availability of online distant learning “I-ya kure”
  - Availability of Rwanda online program that aims to facilitate online services and applications to be submitted, processed and collected through ICT

## **VI. ICT development efforts in EAC**

It is imperative to integrate the sector of culture in the ongoing regional integration project so that our cultural and creative diversity be part of our ongoing integration process. Fetching from our respective Partner States' identity and experiences and placing those various and marvelous cultural expressions on a common platform for exhibition and entertainment, would allow thousands of cultural and creative practitioners to have access to the regional market.

As a region, we need to identify ICT infrastructures that are needed to widen the market for our cultural and creative products; we need also to harmonize the technologies used in our respective Partner States so that whenever a cultural or creative entrepreneur crosses borders he/she does not get limited by different technologies or lack of information. Such an initiative would even enable us, as a region, to tackle once for all the issues of intellectual property rights.

It is clear that the use of ICT in cultural and creative business is beneficial to practitioners, their audiences and to Governments; but in our respective states, we have ICT infrastructures, services and facilities that are not optimally utilized since they are still largely unknown and some of our people are still digitally illiterate (for instance, most ATM machines can be used to deposit and withdraw money but they are mostly used to withdraw than to deposit. In Rwanda people prefer to queue up in the bank for their deposits).

Thus, as a region we need to create more ICT awareness programs especially in rural areas so that people may discover the benefits of ICT. We also need to educate our cultural and creative entrepreneurs, practitioners, merchants and many more about the use of ICT in their businesses. We need to show them the impact of the use of ICT in their entertainment and creative activities.

## VII. Challenges

Despite the progress made, challenges still persist; we are still facing historical challenges:

- Colonial mentality still persists
- Mindset change is slow and impedes or hampers positive attitudes towards the discovery and use of ICT for business among older generations
- Effects of genocide, violence, conflicts... (People are afraid of new experiences...)
- Lack of basic ICT infrastructure and poor state of ICT infrastructure where they are
- Under investment in the use of ICT in art and culture
- Digital illiteracy
- Low penetration rate of smart devices<sup>1</sup>, internet connections and use of ICT in the rural areas compared to cities
- High cost of internet connection

## VIII. Recommendations

Each Partner State in EAC should realize that ICT is necessary if we want to reap the benefits of development:

- To put policies that build ICT infrastructure in place
- To integrate culture and entertainment sector among the projects of regional integration
- To integrate the use of ICT in cultural and creative events and to transform these various events into regional opportunities for cultural exchange and creative development hubs
- To launch regional ICT awareness campaigns
- To start regional cultural and creative portal that facilitates information sharing and streaming
- Identify common challenges to all Partner States so as to develop regional solutions to the problems of our cultural and creative industries

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<sup>1</sup> A **smart device** is an electronic **device**, generally connected to other **devices** or networks via different wireless protocols such as Bluetooth, NFC, WiFi, 3G, etc., that can operate to some extent interactively and autonomously.

## **IX. Conclusion**

Africa is a legend of cultural expressions and diversity. In the west, famous artists of all times are mainly from Africa or have African origins. Think of Bob Marley, Nina Simone, Yanick Noah, Sonia Roland and Michael Jackson and to these renown artists, add world class African artists like Miriam Makeba, Chaka Chaka, Lucky Dube, Jonny Clegg, Djimon Hounsou, Sharon Theron, Manu Dibango, and many more! These legendary artists became famous because they managed to get their art to the world to appreciate, and it did.

Today, our villages and States all have similar legends that are just not yet known. We also have an answer to this problem: we have technology, we have mass media and we have television and radios. It is up to us and our States to integrate technology to culture and entertainment. If Africa today does not seize the opportunity of ICT and use it to its advantage, our cultures shall be consumed into more popular western cultures. Yes the challenges are many, but Africa, today, has what is required to change but there is need for an understanding and a will to move with time. ICT is a blessing to that positive change; East African Communities have to embrace ICT and climb on its bandwagon certainly reap the cultural and creative art benefits.

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