

Positioning the Nigerian Virtual Artists for 'Glocal' Relevance: Issues and Prospects

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Abstract

This paper investigates the effects of globalization on the Nigerian cultural and creative industries from the prism of the Nigerian virtual arts and assesses how well the virtual arts sector of the creative industries is doing in the global market. The heightened interest in artworks emanating from the country has been attributed, to a large extent, to globalization driven by the emergence of new media technologies. This has made it possible for practitioners and creative workers to access markets hitherto inaccessible to them. Leveraging document analysis and a critical review of extant literature, this paper makes a critical appraisal of the activities in the virtual arts subsector of the cultural and creative industry. While virtual arts have done well in terms of global market penetration and development within the past decade, its' contributory potential to the Nigerian economy is far from fully tapped. The incidence of illicit trade, issues with valuation, and lack of requisite infrastructure and legislation are all factors that have been identified as impinging on the growth of this sub-sector.

Keywords: Cultural Industry; Creative Industry; Creative Economy; Visual Arts; Creative Arts; Nigerian Arts

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1.0 Introduction

The African continent represents a cultural mosaic made possible by linguistic diversity and a fast-growing youthful population. Within the continent exists cultural riches rearing to be embraced by the myriad opportunities inherent in new media technologies and commercially viable markets. The cultural and creative industries led by the music and film sector are today seen as the driving force in the growth and development of many African nations (Ernst & Young, 2015). Significant aspects of African culture in dance, arts, and music have influenced industrial activities in the creative sector worldwide. Still, the question is whether the continent has the capacity to package these cultural activities into commercially viable goods that can meet global demands (Kwanashie, Aremu, Okoi, & Oladukun, 2009). For instance, several museums across the world are adorned with African art, which contributes to the economic development of such countries. However, African museums are hardly economically viable as they hardly attract visitors.

In recent times, the cultural and creative industries have attracted so much attention locally and internationally. This can be attributed not just to the digitization and subsequent interconnection with new media technologies but also because they represent sources of innovation and their contributory potential to economic growth and development (De-Miguel-Molina, Hervas-Oliver, Boix, & De-Miguel-Molina, 2012). Cultural and creative industries promote the shift to new models of sustainable development based on a green and smart economy. They are becoming a critical strategy for the new European development plan for 2020 (Lazzeretti & Capone, 2015).

The cultural and creative industry in Nigeria thrives on a rich cultural heritage inherent in the diverse cultural and ethnic nationalities within the nation. The industries incorporate several fast-growing industry sub-sectors with great potential for developing the country by exploiting cultural traditions in the form of arts, dance, literature, music, film and other diverse creative endeavours. According to UNCTAD, the creative industries represent the most dynamic industry sectors of the world today. However, sadly, most developing nations are still struggling to harness the economic potential of their creative economies in job creation, export earnings and revenues (UNCTAD, 2008).

In a globalized world where nations depend on each other for development, the perception is that Nigeria has the creative capacity to contribute to the world economy by leveraging its rich creative economy. However, a critical challenge is an ability to mobilize and harness individual creativity for economic growth. Existing policies focus not only on preserving the nation's cultural heritage but also on promoting such for societal well-being. The citizens have been encouraged to revisit age-long cultural and creative practices that have the potential to contribute to national growth. Though the contributory potential might be low, it is believed that it

can stimulate rural industrialization. For instance, the emergence of small-scale fashion houses across the country is driven by individual creativity and is viewed as a boost to the small and medium enterprise sectors. By sensitizing the masses to the need for a creative economy, the government can stimulate growth in the industry (Kwanashie, Aremu, Okoi, & Oladukun, 2009).

As a result of the changes in the global environment, there is subtle pressure on the Nigerian government to hasten its developmental processes in response to globalization. While reforms have been initiated, such reforms focus more on the modern and established sectors of the economy to the detriment of the budding cultural and creative industries. Analysts believe that the traditional and cultural industries should play a more significant role in this development process (Kwanashie, Aremu, Okoi, & Oladukun, 2009). With new media technologies, the cultural and creative industries' potential to extend beyond the country's shore has been greatly enhanced. Operators and creative individuals now find it easy to reach out to a considerable number of customers across the globe at the click of a button. Globalization has thus facilitated the export of Nigeria's creative products to world markets. This paper seeks to understand the driving force behind the increasing popularity of the Nigerian visual arts sub-sector and assess their place and potential in the global markets.

2.0 The Concept of Globalization

Globalization is seen as a multifaceted phenomenon because it affects the social, political and economic segments of society. This multidimensional nature, therefore, makes it difficult to define globalization. According to the World Trade Organization (2008), globalization is seen as integrating capital, investments and labour markets of a specific society within the global market (as cited in Kilic, 2015). The 21st century has been characterized by activities that support the concept of globalization. Today, the most prominent car travel establishment (Uber) does not own a single car, while a company that provides lodging for tourists in 340,000 cities across 190 countries (Airbnb) does not own a single room that it calls its own. One of the world's largest retailers, with over US\$100 billion in sales, does not own a single retail shop. Uber, Airbnb, and Amazon represent an ever-growing category of global enterprises that never existed a few decades ago but have thrived on digitization in an increasingly connected world (Manwani, 2016).

Through globalization, individuals, organizations and governments across different nations interact with each other on trade, investment and culture, leveraging information technology. In international communications, discussions on globalization have taken centre stage and form a critical part of theoretical debates (Madikiza & Bornman, 2007). Several occurrences in the 1970s triggered interest in globalization. The most prominent was the emergence of a new global economy characterized by a paradigm in production methods, financing as well as in consumption (Robinson, 2007). Then there was the emergence of cultural diffusion from the Western Nations to other parts of the world, leading to cultural homogeneity. The third factor was the institution of global organizations and multilateral agencies like AU, NATO, UNESCO, UNICEF, UN and many others. Finally, globalization was triggered by massive migration from third-world countries to the developed world with the attendant diffusion of culture, identity, and formation of new societal hierarchies (Robinson, 2007).

Globalization can be viewed from three different perspectives: cultural, economic and political (Rantanen, 2005). Cultural globalization emerged from the imperialistic strategy of the Western Nations and is expressed as cultural homogeneity where societal values, consumer goods, and services suffer from the overbearing influence of Western lifestyles (Thussu, 2000). This has further been influenced by the emergence of new media, which facilitates interconnections across nations and the spread of Western cultures through the global media. From an economic perspective, globalization incorporates the emergence, development, and spread of economic integration and capitalism. Politically, globalization refers to the changes in the positions and functions of nation-states. This was because of the porous nature of state borders which encourages the free flow of capital and information. The formation of super-national organizations like NATO, AU, and the UN has further made control of borders more difficult. The implication is the emergence of a global village where people are subject to multiple political contexts.

To position itself well in the global space, Nigeria has adopted a liberalization policy hampered which has been hampered by unstable macroeconomic management, suboptimal technological expertise, and poor credit facilities. Thus, despite the liberalization policy of the economy, performance in external trade has been stagnant and, indeed, not encouraging (Onwuka & Eguavoen, 2007).

3.0 Defining the Cultural and Creative Industries

Etymologically, the term cultural and creative industries can be traced to two distinct sources. The term cultural industries were initially used by Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) to refer to commercial entertainment emanating from an industrial process. They include film, recorded music, broadcasting, and publishing and are different from the subsidized "arts", which include museums, galleries, visual arts and performing arts. This viewpoint aligns with the policy initiatives on cultural industries of UNESCO, the Council of Europe (Garnham, 1990) and the French Cultural policy (Towse, 2000; Flew, 2002). On the other hand, the creative industry as a concept

emerged in the early 1990s in Australia (Howkins, 2002). For most people, the terms cultural and creative industries have the same meaning. Cunningham (2001) clearly distinguished the two terms based on their historiography. According to him, cultural industries reference those outputs that emerge through the industrial or large-scale process as against ordinary traditional practice. While the cultural and creative industries have been defined from different perspectives, most of the definitions are predicated on a combination of five main criteria – creativity, intellectual property, symbolic meaning, use-value and methods of production (Galloway & Dunlop, 2007).

For the UK Department for Culture, Media, and Sports (DCMS), a sector can only qualify as cultural and creative if it exhibits a certain level of expressive value, which could be social, spiritual, aesthetic, symbolic, historic and authentic (DCMS, 2007). Consequently, they defined the cultural and creative industry as "those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill, and talent and have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" (DCMS, 1998). These include industry sectors like architecture, advertising, arts, design, crafts, fashion, film, software, performing arts, music, publishing, the print media, radio and television, and tourism services (Kwanashie, Aremu, Okoi, & Oladukun, 2009). Alakwe (2018), in an attempt to arrive at a pragmatic definition that encapsulates all the critical elements that coalesce into the cultural and creative industry, defined it as:

"those industries that depend on individual creativity with the capacity to attract intellectual property rights, and which can be commercialized for economic benefits, and incorporate the regulators, the creative cities as well as allied and support services" (Alakwe, 2019).

3.1 Components of the Cultural and Creative Industry in Nigeria

The cultural and creative industries in Nigeria incorporate three critical components. These are the core practitioners, the support industry, and the regulatory bodies. Core practitioners include all individuals directly involved in the conceptualization, creation, and production of creative outputs. They have songwriters, singers, artists, cinematographers, designers, screenwriters, producers, and others whose work qualifies for intellectual property rights.

The second leg of this tripartite arrangement includes the service providers whose focus is to act in a support capacity to the core production segment. Their role is to offer ancillary services to the core creative industry. According to Castells and Aoyama (1994), this segment can be categorized into four distinct groups. Those that offer producer services such as insurance services, financial and advisory services, real estate services and other professional services related to the creative industries. The next group offer distributive services and includes all individuals and organizations that are involved in the physical and digital distribution of creative products. A third group provides social services and predominantly government agencies that offer health, welfare, and educational services. The last segment is those that focus on providing personal service. Here we find those that offer fitness services, make-up, hairdressing, and all services associated with a unique appearance and well-being (Castells & Aoyama, 1994).

The third component of the cultural and creative industry is the regulatory agencies. The Nigerian government, over the years, have established several agencies to facilitate the emergence of a robust creative sector with the capacity to contribute significantly to the growth and development of the economy and quick integration into the global space. At the heart of their functions is to engender intellectual property and protect same from abuse and infringement.

4.0 The Nigerian Visual Arts Industry

The visual arts industry in Nigeria incorporates drawings and paintings, textiles, sculpture, ceramics, graphic designs, and printmaking. The industry has witnessed significant growth in the last two decades. This can be attributed to the emergence of several art galleries, which have facilitated the institution of art exhibitions, symposiums, and conferences aimed at developing the industry. Of great importance is the rise in art appreciation and private collections. Though the economic returns within the industry still fall short of what is obtainable in the Western world, these recent developments have led to a surge in the prices of artworks. Popular art galleries include Terra-Kulture, Quintessence, Nike Okundaye, Treasure House, and Signature gallery. Arthouse Contemporary Ltd, Terra-Kulture, Signature Gallery, Nimbus Gallery, Treasure House, Mydrim Gallery, Nike Okundaye gallery, Galleria Romania, Quintessence and others (Oyedemi, 2015), individual private collectors like Yemisi Shyllon, and private corporate collectors such as The Hotel Presidential, Port Harcourt, Total E&P Nigeria, Exxon Mobil and some religious and government establishments.

Within the Nigerian cultural and creative industry sector, the Visual Arts are a fertile platform where artists can exhibit their creative ingenuity, which can be tapped for economic development (Iriwieri, 2015). The visual arts incorporate diverse forms, which include painting, drawing, engraving, printmaking, cartoon and graphic arts, digital arts, sculpture, photography, and others. The Nigerian art industry is made up of an aggregation of

art galleries spread across major cities in Nigeria, collectors, annual auctions that take place locally and internationally and a large number of creative works produced by amateurs and professionals. From the 1970s to the dawn of the new millennium, Nigerian visual arts experienced a gradual progression leading to international attention and recognition in the global art space. A diverse artistic style was developed during this period, and all flourished as a result of a high level of consciousness in the creative ability of practitioners and enthusiasts (Irivwieri, 2010). Because of its position as the commercial capital of Nigeria, Lagos is the hub of creativity in the arts sector, with most of the famous galleries located within the city. As of 2012, Lagos is home to about 70 art collectors.

4.1 Stylistic Tendencies in Nigerian Visual Arts

With a good number of artistic styles flourishing in recent times, the Nigerian visual arts experienced international recognition. This was facilitated by an optimal level of consciousness among practising artists and art aficionados. What is evident is a re-invigoration in creative consciousness among practitioners and an increase in the spate of experimentation that portrayed the industry in a positive light (Irivwieri, 2010). Of great importance was the propagation of folklorization in modern Nigerian art by Onobrakpeya. This involves using virtual artefacts in pictorial prolificity, uncanny compositions, folklorization of themes, printmaking, pyramidization of graphic motifs, profuse ornamentations and decorativeness (Irivwieri, 2010). The Visual Arts are characterized by diverse stylistic schemes:

Onabolu School

This was founded on the stylistic tendencies of Aina Onabolu. The principal characteristic of this style is the landscape genre typical of many polytechnics in Nigeria. In its earlier form, it draws extensively from Murray's art as most of the paintings were monochromatic, even though there exist some works that were excessively coloured. Artists in this school tend towards naturalism, as exemplified in the *Fulani Shepherds Boy with Flute* by Josy Ajiboye.

Murray School

The stage of modern art development in Nigeria has been attributed to the Murray school. The popularity of this school was enhanced by the dispersal of members of the Zaria Students Arts Society. While some of them worked in academia as teachers, others engaged in practice as critics, graphic artists, and industrial designers. They were credited with extensive work in sculpting, mural paintings in churches, and decorations of public and private buildings. An example is Enwonwu's *Negritude*, produced in 1976. Most practitioners here were encouraged to explore the beauty of masks after intense condemnation by the Christian religion.

Ona School

The Ona School was characterized by good draughtsmanship coupled with a proficiency in linear and aerial perspectives utilized to create modern forms. Here, patterns were consciously created using signs, symbols, and motifs which were brought together to develop modern forms of art. An example here is Tola Wewe's paintings which leverage signs, symbols, motifs and clichés from the Yoruba cultural heritage (such as ghosts and deities). (Filani, 2002).

To a large extent, these stylistic forms are best described as the totality of a people's philosophy and culture and philosophy. However, to the artist, attitudes, interests, and techniques keep evolving in relation to the associative influence of other artists and individual forays into the nature of art. (Okpu, 1995). It is expected that artists will continue to tap into their imaginations to create works that communicate effectively by utilizing the correct symbols, techniques, relics, documents, and relics.

5.0 Towards a more viable Virtual Art Industry: Militating Factors

The visual arts sector of the cultural and creative industries in Nigeria is bedevilled with myriads of challenges that impinge on growth and development and limit its potential in the global market. Central to these challenges is the apparent lack of appropriate legislation and regulatory framework that will facilitate the creation of an enabling environment for the growth and development of the sector, protect the interest of practitioners, and boost their performance. Over a decade ago, the idea of a National Gallery of Arts Bill aimed at repositioning art regulation in Nigeria was mooted. However, the said Bill is yet to gain the desired attention from the present government. According to the Bill, "every public building and structure of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be embellished with contemporary visual work of art" (Sowole, 2019). The Bill goes further to propose that such artworks must depict the purpose for which the building was erected in the first place. Included in the Bill is the definition of resale rights for artworks in primary and secondary markets. This aims at addressing the disputatious issue of what accrues to artists as the commercial value of their works appreciates over the years. Although this Bill is currently with the 8th Assembly of the legislative arm of the government, it is yet to receive

the expected attention. The importance of this Bill is evident in consideration that it will stimulate job creation among practitioners and enhance the aesthetic value of the environment. This is made worse by the apparent lack of adequate distribution services that make it difficult to collate the necessary data that will drive planning and help potential investors make decision calls.

Compounding this challenge is the dearth of good art education. This is evident when one queries the number of art consumers in a population of over 200 million people. This can be attributable to the dwindling standards in the teaching of arts in the universities occasioned by poor facilities: no models for drawing and painting, no kiln to teach ceramics, no gallery to exhibit the works, no technical staff for studio operation, lack of basic furniture, and poor remuneration of staff. Most notably is the way staff are assessed and promoted. A scenario where promotion is usually based on the number of published papers and not on the quality of the artist's intellectual and artistic output portends an excellent challenge for the industry (Yerima, 2017). It has also been observed that a more significant percentage of students of visual arts stumbled on the course by accident, as many of them initially chose to study other courses that were perceived as having more potential but ended up in creative arts due to their low scores in their matriculation examinations.

Another major issue facing the industry is the negative impact of the global trade in stolen works of art. Cases exist where some of the Nigerian artworks on display for auction carry questionable provenances. Recently, Christie listed the following pieces of art for auction on its website: Belt Mask Edo and Edo Hip Mask for between \$11,247 - \$16,870; Edo Bronze Plate with an estimated value at \$33,740 - \$56,233; pair of Igbo Statues selling for between \$290,000 - \$406,000. These works do not have a definite date of production which raises the concern that they might be linked to the illicit art trade (Sowole, 2020). UNESCO, in a bid to stem the tide of the illegal trade in artworks, developed what it calls the Red List, which includes artefacts and cultural objects that have not been given express approval by their countries of origin.

According to Olulode (2020), Nigeria was greatly concerned with the recent sale of two sculptures for US\$240,000.00, whose origins were traced to the South-Eastern, Igbo-speaking ethnic group of Nigeria. Reports have it that the two sculptures were looted from shrines during the Biafran war of the late 1960s. In line with the Hague Convention of 1954, Christie's should not deal with artefacts whose source is questionable. Rotinwa (2020) strongly believe that the sale of the artefacts represents an extension of the violence perpetrated during the war, which claimed nearly three million people.

Then there is the absence of a funding structure that will cater to the needs of the art practitioners and no properly defined guidelines that practitioners can adhere to. Even when funds are set aside (like the \$200 million provided by the government during the Goodluck Jonathan administration), accessing it is a herculean task for principal players in the sector.

Worried by the increasing level of unemployment and in their efforts to stimulate job creation among the youths in Nigeria, the Central Bank in May 2019 established the Creative Industry Financing Initiative. This was done in collaboration with the Bankers Committee and was funded by the Agri-Business Small and Medium Enterprises Investment Scheme with a seed capital of N22.9 billion (Olumide, Oluwatoba, & Faridah, 2020).

Most notably is the difficulty in valuing artworks: Art marketing is a complex process fraught with subjectivity. Globalization and the recent interest in the Nigerian art sector have made it imperative to develop a framework that will aid the valuation of diverse works of art created by Nigerian virtual artists. According to Ibisola, Folarin & Atilola (2018), the emergence of a general understanding that artefacts are valuable necessitated the creation of a set of criteria that could help to define the value of these creative works of art. In valuing works of art, specific criteria must be put into consideration. The primary factor here is the artist/creator. If a piece of artwork is made by a renowned craftsman, it definitely will be more valuable. Secondly, signed works tend to have a higher value (The Appraisal Foundation Washington, 2014). Other factors to be considered include the condition of the artwork, the age of the artefact (Pattern, 2018), the objects' history of ownership or its association with a significant collection (The Appraisal Foundation Washington, 2014); all merge to enhance the value of pieces of artworks and artefacts.

6.0 Nigeria Virtual Arts Sector: Prospects

There has been growing attention towards the Nigerian arts in recent times. The sector took a turn for the better when the May auction organized by Arthouse Contemporary recorded a sale of N124,834,000 with a total of 116 lots sold from Africa's most celebrated artists (Osae-Brown 2015). El Anatsui, the Nigerian-based Ghanaian, holds the record for auction sales. His 'Another Plot' was sold for US\$1,180,000.00 in 2012 (Castellote, 2015). At the 2013 Bonham's Africa Now auction, a number of artworks by renowned Nigerian artists broke record – works by Erhabor Emokpae, Ben Enwonwu, Uche Okeke and Uzo Egonu. These lay credence to the fact that Nigerian art and artists are attracting global attention and interest. For instance, at Bonhams in 2013 and 2014, the top ten artworks on display were products of Nigerian artists either living in Nigeria or abroad. These include works by Gani Odutokun, Yusuf Grillo, Peju Alatise and, of course, Bruce Onobrakpeya that appreciated in value during this period. Overall, the increase in activities and the resultant increase in revenue at the Bonhams

auction in 2014 can be attributed to the growing popularity and interest in contemporary African arts. With reference to arts, Nigeria is now viewed as the new China in response to the scramble for artworks from Nigeria (Castellote, 2015).

Challenged with the plan of getting a black doll for his daughter, Taofick Okoya set out in 2007 to create a black doll that Nigerian and, indeed, black girls could find alluring. The doll called "Queens of Africa" comes in traditional outfits and accessories, and each costs about ₦9,000 (US\$23.23). The dolls promote and represent strong feminine ideals like endurance, peace and love. According to Reuters, in 2015, sales volume was as high as 9,000 units per month. The boom in sales has been facilitated by online presence and e-commerce.

The 2020 edition of the Bonhams Modern and Contemporary African Art Auction had a complement of works from renowned Nigerian artists and collectors. A still life by Demas Nwoko, whose paucity of paintings confers a feeling of rarity to his works, was estimated to attract between US\$165,350 – US\$229,000. Works by other renowned Nigerian artists will also be exhibited: Head Study by Uche Okeke (US\$25,438 – US\$38,157); The Milk Maid by Osekola Osadebe (US\$38,157 – US\$63,600); Mother and Children by Simon Okeke. "Agbogho Mmuo", a 1949 work recreated in Ben Enwonwu's celebrated African Dances series, depicted a masquerade in mid-stride and adorned with body paint and imageries and estimated at between US\$254,384 to US\$381,576 will also be on the auction (Kpade, 2020). In February 2018, "Tutu" a long-lost portrait by Ben Enwonwu, which was described as Africa's Mona Lisa, set a new world record for the artist's work when it achieved a value of US\$1,666,781 at an auction in London. In 2019, attention shifted to another long-lost Enwonwu work, "Marianne", a great piece of art that took Bonhams 10 years to track down. "Marianne" has been offered at Bonhams' modern and contemporary African art sale in London and is estimated to fetch a whopping US\$254,384.

| S/No | Artist | Artwork | Auction House | Date Sold | Value |
|------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------|------------|------------------|
| 1. | Njideka Crosby | Akunyili Bush Babes | Sotheby's | May 2018 | US\$3,375,000.00 |
| 2. | Ben Enwonwu | Tutu | Bonham's | Feb. 2018 | US\$1,666,781.00 |
| 3. | Toyin Ojih Odutola | Compound Leaf | Sotheby's | June 2019 | US\$597,336.00 |
| 4. | Yinka Shonibare | Girl Balancing Knowledge | Christie's | March 2018 | US\$328,819.00 |
| 5. | Demas Nwoko | Children of Cycles | Bonham's | May 2019 | US\$225,075.00 |

Adapted from: Udodiong (2019).

From the above, these five artworks have grossed over US\$ 6 million, which represents a considerable improvement from previous years. These achievements lay credence to the positive impact of Nigeria Virtual Artis in the world of contemporary arts. In affirmation of these remarkable feats, Ulf Vierke, Director at Iwalewahaus, Germany, thrilled by the performance of Nigerian arts in the global space, states that "Nigerian arts is not only powerful but also intelligent". This he attributed to unique collaborations between different schools of modern art, such as the Nsukka School, which is rooted in Igbo culture and the Oshogbo school, rooted in Yoruba culture. He further stated that due to its cultural diversity, Nigeria could be likened to a continent when it comes to virtual arts with its huge complement of young artist, who though they lack the requisite academic background, understands the fundamental principles of art production. Vierke recently converted over 20,000 photographs taken by Ulli Beier, another German art lover, during a recent visit to Oshogbo, in Nigeria, into a film format. He predicted that the Nigerian virtual arts would be one of the big players in the global scene in years to come.

Furthermore, the visual arts provide not just a necessary means of artistic expression but also contribute to enhancing innovation and, thus, present viable opportunities for creating and owning intellectual property rights in Nigeria (Olumide, Oluwatoba, & Faridah, 2020). The implication is that visual artists generate wealth with the capability of spurring individual and national development. In recent times, skills such as interior decoration and design and photography have been transformed into professions critical to the growth of the economy. On the other hand, industrial design, graphic designs, printmaking, and ceramics all form crucial elements in various industries. In summary, the visual arts industry aptly projects a positive image of the country globally, create jobs for the teeming youths, create wealth and have the potential to attract foreign direct investment via exhibitions at international workshops, festivals and multi-cultural performance (Olumide, Oluwatoba, & Faridah, 2020).

The foregoing confirms the contributory potential of the visual arts sector of the cultural and creative industry to the Nigerian economy in terms of revenue and employment. Strategic intent should include localizing art activities in our local communities and at the grassroots level to facilitate sustainable development (Oyedemi, 2015). With renewed interest in Nigerian art locally and internationally, coupled with the rising middle class in Nigeria, the country has the potential to establish a vibrant and robust art sector that can compete favourably in the global space.

7.0 Conclusion

Globally, the creative sector is fast becoming the most dynamic and vibrant economic sector contributing immensely to employment and revenue generation. This paper has confirmed that the Visual Arts subsector of the Nigerian cultural and creative industry has the potential and can play a primary role in driving economic growth and development. The capacity to contribute to the broader economy has been further enhanced by the concept of globalization which in itself is driven by the emergence of new media technologies and digitization. This has made it possible for Nigerian artistic outputs to access global markets that were hitherto inaccessible to operators and practitioners in the industry. Consequently, globalization has exposed the rich cultural diversity and creative potential of Nigerian virtual artists to the world.

This is evident in the attention the sector is receiving from global practitioners, as evidenced by the recent pronouncements to return most of the looted works of art to Nigeria unconditionally. As the interest in virtual arts keeps increasing and the value of artworks continue to appreciate, it is imperative that the government institute strong policies that will promote good art education, stimulate the growth of the art market and, at the same time, strengthen the regulatory frameworks to enhance productivity. New markets need to be developed, and governments should create an enabling environment for innovation to thrive. These measures will ensure the optimization of the potentials inherent in the Virtual Arts sector and will further enhance the contributory potential of the industry to the national economy.

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