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The potential of creative economy

...From Nollywood collaborations to music exports generating foreign exchange

Rising Afrobeats artists and cross-border film partnerships position Ghana as West Africa's next creative powerhouse amid global demand for African entertainment

Kofi Anane, a 28-year-old singer, is working on his most recent Afrobeats song in a busy Koforidua recording studio. The song will be released internationally and collaborated with Nigerian producers. His experience is representative of a larger shift taking place in Ghana's creative scene, where digital content, music, and film are becoming important sources of foreign exchange profits and economic diversification initiatives (trickle media). The creative economy in Ghana is at a turning point, and those involved in the sector are aware of its potential to play a significant role in supporting economic expansion. Ghanaian creatives are well-positioned to gain a significant portion of the market in a sector where West Africa already holds a prominent position, as the demand for African entertainment material rises globally and digital platforms democratize distribution (myjoyonline).

The regional creative economy context

According to UNCTAD's global survey, the creative economy employs 0.5% to 12.5% of the workforce and contributes 0.5% to 7.3% of GDP in various nations, demonstrating the sector's enormous potential for economic influence. Nigeria's Nollywood, which produces more than 2,500 films a year and brings in about \$6.4 billion, or 1.1% of Nigeria's actual GDP, is the backbone of the West African creative economy. This achievement opens doors for cross-border and regional cooperation, which can help Ghana's budding creative industry.

While Ghallywood or Blackstar Films, Ghana's primary film industry, released six films during the same period, indicating significant room for growth and cooperation, Nollywood films accounted for 45 percent of the revenue generated by the film industries in Liberia, Ghana, and Nigeria in the regional film market.

Music Industry: The Afrobeats global phenomenon
Ghana's music business is

gaining unprecedented international recognition, thanks in large part to Afrobeats' widespread success. The genre, a captivating fusion of West African music that has swiftly gained international popularity, has given Ghanaian musicians new avenues to reach overseas markets and make money.

Strategic collaborations and international partnerships

Ghanaian musicians now have more opportunities because of the popularity of Nigerian Afrobeats superstars. Wizkid's third studio album sounds from the Other Side (2017), which included collaborations with international artists like Chris Brown, Drake, Ty Dolla Sign, Eftya, Bucie, Trey Songz, and Major Lazer, further cemented his impact and showed how African musicians can effectively break into international markets through strategic alliances (en.m.wikipedia.org). The crossover appeal of the genre is demonstrated by recent collaborations. With songs that combine hip-hop and Afrobeats themes, Gunna's most recent album, which features Nigerian Afrobeats artists Burna Boy, Wizkid, and Asake, opens new revenue streams and broadens their audience.

These alliances go beyond one person working with another. The soul-stirring song "Somebody's Son" was created by the merger of American R&B legend Brandy and Nigerian Afropop queen Tiwa Savage. This shows how African musicians can use global partnerships to reach new audiences while preserving their cultural identity.

Film Industry: From Kumawood to global collaborations

Through strategic international collaborations and ambitious initiatives, Ghana's film industry—anchored on the well-known Kumawood (Kumasi-based film industry)—is undergoing a change that is putting Ghanaian cinema on the international scene.

Kumawood's international breakthrough
A prime example of the current

generation of Ghanaian filmmakers who are thinking worldwide while preserving local authenticity is Kwadwo Nkansah, better known by his stage name Lil Win. The amount of money Kumawood producer is prepared to spend for global notoriety is shown in his most recent film, "A Country Called Ghana." Lil Win paid Nigerian actor Ramsey Nouah more than \$40,000 for the role, and he spent more than GHS 1 million on the film's promotion alone. Ramsey Nouah, Charles Awurum, Victor Osuagwu (also known as Awilo Sharp), and Emmanuel Francis were among the many seasoned Nigerian performers who starred in the movie, which demonstrated an unparalleled level of collaboration between Ghana and Nigeria in filmmaking. The fact that "A Country Called Ghana" received a distinguished nomination for the 2024 Nollywood Film Festival in Germany confirmed the success of this partnership.

Political Biopic and Continental Reach

The Kumawood star is spending half a million dollars on Lil Win's most ambitious endeavor, a biographical movie about President Ibrahim Traoré of Burkina Faso. From local comedies to serious political topics with continental implications, this marks a remarkable progression in Ghanaian cinema (gbghanaonline).

Hollywood Connections: The Van Damme phenomenon

Perhaps the most remarkable development in Ghana's creative economy is Lil Win's successful connection with Hollywood legend Jean-Claude Van Damme, who engaged with the Ghanaian actor through TikTok Live sessions. This interaction has spawned "Agenda Taking Lil Win to Hollywood," a project aimed at elevating Ghanaian talent to international recognition.

The Van Damme connection represents more than celebrity interaction – it demonstrates how Ghanaian creatives can leverage digital platforms and strategic networking to access global entertainment networks previously considered

unreachable.

Cross-Border Production and Distribution

In West Africa's film market, where Hollywood productions hold 69 percent of the total share and Nollywood accounts for 30 percent of revenue (moderghana), Ghanaian productions are making a significant impact through these collaborative approaches. Lil Win has justified his choice to cast Nigerian actors by citing "the need for innovation and international collaboration to revive the dying Ghanaian" film industry. The Kumawood-Nollywood collaboration model gives Ghanaian productions access to established distribution networks that reach audiences throughout Africa and the diaspora.

Economic Impact and Foreign Exchange Generation

Ghana's economic diversification strategy is becoming increasingly dependent on the creative economy's contribution to foreign exchange earnings. In 2024, Ghana's foreign exchange earnings totaled \$50.1 billion, a 21.05% year-over-year increase, and the creative sector is well-positioned to make a significant contribution to this growth (auditor general's report).

Digital Platform Revenue Streams

Streaming platforms and digital distribution have revolutionized revenue generation for creative content:

Music Streaming: Ghanaian artists earn foreign exchange through platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube Music, with successful tracks generating substantial international revenue.

Film Investment and Production: Kumawood star Lil Win's investment of over half a million dollars in his Ibrahim Traoré biographical film and \$40,000 payment to Nigerian actor Ramsey Nouah demonstrates the scale of financial commitment driving

- connectivity for digital content distribution
- Professional recording and filming equipment
- Marketing and promotion capabilities
- Rights management and royalty collection systems

Market Development Initiatives

Government and private sector initiatives are focusing on:

- Creative industry incubators and accelerators
- International market access programs
- Intellectual property protection frameworks
- Export promotion for creative services

Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations

Regional Integration

Ghana's creative sector benefits from:

- ECOWAS cultural exchange programs
- Cross-border co-production agreements
- Shared distribution networks across West Africa
- Joint marketing initiatives for international markets

International Partnerships and Global Recognition

Strategic alliances extend beyond regional boundaries:

- Hollywood Connections: Lil Win's engagement with Jean-Claude Van Damme demonstrates how Ghanaian actors can leverage digital platforms to connect with international film legends
- Global streaming platforms: Increasing content acquisition from African producers
- International record labels: Strategic partnerships for music distribution to global markets
- Film festivals and entertainment markets: Kumawood productions like "A Country Called Ghana" earning nominations at international festivals
- Cultural exchange programs: Facilitating collaboration between Ghanaian and international entertainment industries

Outlook and Growth Projections

The creative economy is expanding rapidly on a worldwide scale. At a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.21% from 2023 to 2030, the worldwide film and entertainment business is predicted to reach approximately \$169.62 billion, opening new prospects for Ghana's creative economy.

Ghana's film industry growth (ahotoronline.com).

Cross-Cultural Content: The success of politically themed biographical films like the Ibrahim Traoré project shows how Ghanaian filmmakers are expanding beyond traditional comedy productions to serious content with continental and international appeal.

Celebrity Partnerships: Digital platform interactions between Ghanaian artists and international celebrities like Jean-Claude Van Damme create new pathways for global recognition and potential collaboration opportunities.

Key Success Factors and Strategic Advantages

Cultural Proximity and Language Benefits

Reaching worldwide markets is made easier by Ghana's status as an English-speaking nation, particularly when collaborating with foreign artists and connecting with English-speaking audiences around the world.

Production Infrastructure Development

Accra is emerging as a regional production hub, with studios, post-production facilities, and technical expertise that can serve both domestic and international projects.

Talent Pool and Education

Ghana's educational institutions are producing skilled creative professionals in areas including:

- Digital content creation and social media marketing
- Audio engineering and music production
- Film production and post-production services
- Graphic design and animation

Challenges and Growth Opportunities

Infrastructure and Investment Needs

The creative economy requires continued investment in:

- High-speed internet

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