

A Survey of Ibibio and Efik Cultural and Creative Industries in Global Development (1928 to the present)

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ABSTRACT

The Ibibio is the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria, after the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. Findings show that the Ibibio constitute the earliest inhabitants of the southern part of the country, having existed in their present geographical location since 700 BC. History has it that Efik is a subset of the Ibibio. The Ibibio tribe has a vibrant cultural identity, encompassing various aspects of daily life, traditions, and rituals. The Ibibio people are renowned for their artistic skills and craftsmanship. At the heart of this cultural endowment are sculptors, raffia-weavers, pottery makers, storytellers, filmmakers, musicians, artists, fashion designers, and content. In recent times, these creatives' contributions and the impact of their cultural and creative industries have been recognised, with the creative industries emerging as a critical driver of the 21st-century economy and social life. The study draws from Kurt Goldstein's Self-Actualisation Theory to explore the cultural and creative industries of the Ibibio and the Efik people, their various manifestations, the key drivers of the Ibibio creative renaissance, the critical milestones, and the realization of their creative and cultural potentials between 1928 and the present. The Dependency Theory provides insight into social factors within the global community, and how they influence the Ibibio creative economy. The study concluded that the Ibibio/Efik cultural industries and creative industries have contributed immensely to the development of the nation and the global economy in diverse ways. Recommendations are made for harnessing the creative industries for more development dividends.

Keywords: Ibibio, Creative Industries, Cultural Identity, Self-Actualisation, Creative Economy

INTRODUCTION

Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) has been recognized as one of the key drivers of the global economy, accounting for 3.1% of global GDP, generating over \$2 trillion in annual revenues, and employing nearly 50 million people worldwide (UNESCO 2021).

Nigeria's creative sector is the second largest employer of labor in Nigeria, trailing only the agricultural sector (Oluwole 2021). By 2025, it is projected to reach a valuation of \$15 billion. The creative sector employs about 4.2 million people (Okikiolu. 2022). The Federal Government recently unveiled a roadmap to drive economic development and boost the country's gross domestic product (GDP) by \$100 billion through the creative sector.

The Ibibio is a tribe in Nigeria's South-South region, specifically in Akwa Ibom and Cross River State, with Efik as a subset (Brown, 1963; Udo, 1963; Anene, 1970). The Ibibio (including the Efik subset) have a vibrant cultural identity encompassing various aspects of daily life, traditions, and rituals (Jacob, 2013), and a corresponding avalanche of cultural and creative industries (CCI). This study presents a survey of the Ibibio creative industries. The focus is on the media and entertainment sector of the creative economy, which constitutes the subject of assessment in this study. The main objective is to articulate its contributions to global development.

Theoretical Framing

Underpinning the discuss in this work are two theories. The first one, the Self-Actualization Theory was originally introduced by Kurt Goldstein, a physician specializing in psychiatry and neuroanatomy during the early part of the 20th century. Self-actualization (also referred to as self-realization or self-cultivation) can be

described as the complete realization of one's potential as manifest in peak experiences which involve the full development of one's abilities and appreciation for life (Maslow, 1962). Goldstein viewed self-actualization as the ultimate goal of every organism and refers to man's desire for self-fulfillment, and the propensity of an individual to become actualized in his potential. He argues that each human being, plant, and animal has an inborn goal to actualize itself as it is (Goldstein 2000).

Carl Rogers (1951) sees self-actualization as the continuous lifelong process whereby an individual's self-concept is maintained and enhanced. He avers that through reflection and the reinterpretation of various experiences, individuals are able to recover, change, and develop.

Maslow (1943) moved a step further and articulated that humans have basic needs that must be generally met before their higher-order needs can be satiated, such as self-actualization. He categorized those needs as follows:

1. Basic needs:

- a. Physiological needs (water, food, warmth, and rest).
- b. Safety needs (safety and security).

2. Psychological needs.

- a. Belongingness needs (close relationships with loved ones and friends).
- b. Esteem needs (feeling of accomplishment and prestige).

3. Self-actualization needs (realizing one's full potential)

He went further to create the hierarchy of needs articulating the five levels of need to illustrate the relationship between them. The Maslow Hierarchy of Needs is shown in the figure 1.

The Self Actualization Theory is critical to the exploration of the cultural and creative industries of the Ibibio and the Efik, inspiring a better understating of their journey to the realization of their creative and cultural potentials, the key drivers of the creative renaissance, critical milestones, and contributions to global development, despite their limitations.

The second theory is the Dependency Theory. Propounded by the Argentine economist and statesman, Raul Prebisch, the theory holds that "external forces are critical in terms of economic activities of dependent states" (Rosmaniuk 2017). Frank (1971) collaborates the position and goes on to state that "developing countries haven't advanced due to "internal impediments to development," but rather because the dominant state purposefully underdeveloped them, leaving them in a dependent position (thus, "dependence theory"). This theory is important in this study as it will aid the understanding of the putative constraints to the fullest manifestation of the Ibibio creative economy, offering insight into the strategic advances to overcome these impediments orchestrated by the dominant entities, as well as changing the paradigm.

The Ibibio and the Efik in Perspective

The Ibibio-speaking people occupy an area of land in Nigeria's South-South region, Udo (1983) enunciates:

The Ibibio have a common boundary with the Ijaws of Rivers State in the west and northwest, their neighbours are the Igbos of Imo State in the north and northeast, they have a common boundary with the Ekoi, and in the east with various ethnic groups in the Cameroons. The Bight of Bonny washes its southern border.

The Ibibio are Nigeria's fourth-largest ethnic group (Akpan, 2019). Ibibio speakers number an estimated four million (Essien, 1991). They have a vibrant cultural identity that encompasses various aspects of daily life, traditions, and rituals (Jacob, 2013). Efik is a subgroup of the Ibibio (Waddel, 1970; Goldie, 1864; Casement,

1895). The Ibibio people are considered among the earliest inhabitants of southern Nigeria, with an estimated arrival around 7000 B.C. (Abasiattai, 1987; Akpan, 2019).

Amoah (1992) has done in-depth work on the Ibibio people of Southern Nigeria, dwelling extensively on the controversies of the clan components of the Ibibio nation. Udo (1983) documents the major clans in the Ibibio as Ibibio, Annang, Efik, Oron, Eket, and some communities along the estuary of the area's number one river – the Cross River.

Some writers, particularly British historians as detailed in Udo (1983), regard the Ibibio as closely related to the Ibo, particularly as the first landing point from the claimed migration from Israel or Egypt was at Arochukwu, an Ibo community. The snag is that some people feel the people of Arochukwu descended from the Ibibio. Whatever their origin and composition, the Ibibio people remain a subject worthy of study, particularly in cultural terms.

Their origins remain somewhat mysterious, but scholars suggest connections to the central Benue Valley and the influence of the Jukun people¹. The Jukun's use of the Manila currency and their southern drive to the coast hint at possible interactions with the Ibibio, who eventually settled in present-day Akwa Ibom.

The Ibibio and Efik are celebrated for their rich and unique cultural identity, creative potential, and artistry. They own some of Nigeria's celebrated delicacies, tourist sites, festivals, celebrations, artwork, music, theatre, fashion, monuments, dances, and architectural masterpieces. This is a testament to the existence of a vibrant population of creatives working in various domains of the creative industry.

Cultural and Creative Industries

Culture is deployed in the sense that it encapsulates “all the accepted and patterned ways of behaviour of a given people” (Brown 1963). It encompasses the social behaviour, institutions, and norms found in human societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, and habits of the individuals in these groups (Tylor 1871). These shared commonalities unite these individuals as a group and help to distinguish them from other groups

The term 'cultural industries' describes theatre, dance, music, film, visual arts, and the heritage sector. It involves the creation, production, and commercialization of creative, intangible, and cultural content (Cunningham, 2004; UNESCO, Newbiggin, 2014). The Creative industries (Newbiggin, 2014) “encompass a broader range of activities which include the cultural industries plus all cultural or artistic production, whether live or produced as an individual unit.”

The term ‘creative industries’ began to be used about a decade ago, with many of the component activities having strong cultural roots; hence, the term Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI).

The UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics (2019) provides the six main cultural domains and related sectors for the categorization of cultural and creative industries as follows:

- **Cultural and Natural Heritage** (museums, historical places, archaeological sites, cultural landscape, and natural heritage);
- **Performance and Celebrations** (performing arts, live music, dance festival and, feast and fair);
- **Visual Arts and Crafts** (fine arts, photography, and crats);
- **Books and Press** (Books, newspapers, magazines, libraries, and book fairs);
- **Audio Visual and Interactive Media** (film, TV and radio, streaming, podcast, and video games);
- **Design and Creative Services** (architecture, fashion design, graphics, interior design, and advertising).

The cultural and creative industries or the creative economy as the case may be, is one of the world's fastest-growing sectors, contributing to employment, income, and innovation. The creative industries account for 3.1% of global GDP, generate over \$2 trillion in annual revenues, and employ nearly 50 million people worldwide (UNESCO 2021).

As categorized by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Nigeria's creative sector is comprised of five sub-sectors: Media and Entertainment, Beauty and Lifestyle, Visual Arts, as well as Tourism and Hospitality. The creative industry is the second largest employer of labour after the federal government (Henry 2018). PricewaterhouseCoopers, a leading consulting firm has projected that Nigeria's Entertainment and Media (E &M) industry's revenue will rise from \$7.68 billion in 2021 to \$14.82 billion in 2025. In its latest industry report titled "Perspectives from the Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2021-2025." A study of the Ibibio cultural and creative industries (CCI) will help place on record the critical contribution of the creative industry to national and global development, boost the confidence of existing players in the creative economy while providing the relief required to reposition the Ibibio creative industry to perform at its highest capacity. For this purpose, the researcher will explore the media and entertainment subsectors of the creative economy, and in particular the Ibibio theatre, film, and music industries.

The Emergence of the Ibibio Cultural and Creative Industries

The Ibibio have a rich repertoire of cultural and creative industries (Johnson, 1999; Inyang, 2013; Ebong, 1995). The Ibibio concept of creativity is called "obot". In Ibibio, "obot" would describe the nature of the product and the artist.

Peters (2019:27) summarises the concept as follows:

It is Ibibio concept of creative art known in Ibibio language as "Obot" that is referred to the nature of art in line with the Ibibio art discourse. Art has a nature and classification which distinguishes it from other things as well as the artists from other people. "Obot" in Ibibio is the nature of creative art as well as the artist. The artist otherwise called "Obot" in Ibibio language is a highly honoured and respected personality whose quality of creating new things for things to have real resemblance of the ideal things is unequivocal. The Ibibio art lays emphasis on creating things that are creative and artistic to show the nature of art where elements and principles of art are embodied. This is what makes the real nature of art where aesthetics consideration alongside various aspects of art and given proper place.

This attests to the agelong existence of creatives and the creative culture among the Ibibio people.

The Ibibio masquerade tradition is a synthesis of the Ibibio cultural and creative world. This is because a typical display or festival involves the coordination and presentation of creative forms from several artists and cultural practices, including the setup of the performance space, masks, chants, makeup, costumes, props, motifs, dances, and other practices related to Ibibio masquerades.

Today, the creative products of Ibibio are found in different parts of the world, such as Japan, Berlin, Geneva, Italy, America, and the United Kingdom, among other places. At the Devon Museum in the United Kingdom, they have an array of Ibibio creative products, such as puppet art of the Ibibio, on display. These are evidence of the influence of Ibibio's cultural and creative industries.

The multiplicity of sub-groups, diversity in cultural practices, early exposure to Christianity and the Western economy, rapid urbanisation, the rising youth population, technology, and the ambition for self-actualization must have driven the Ibibio creative renaissance.

However, it appears that colonization, slavery, and neo-colonization had combined to constrain the production of creative goods and services among the Ibibio cultural and creative industries. This is so because, with colonialism, the colonizer influenced what trade the colonized could engage in, like driving slaves, working the plantation, and mobilising resources (as warrant chiefs) for the colonial masters. According to Udo (1983), the Ibibio was not allowed to engage directly with the whiteman, while the colonial masters were busy raping the community of their natural resources. The leadership structure in most communities was distorted to achieve the colonizer's wishes while creating chaos distrust, and enmity in the community. Uya (1994) asserts that "the missionaries were intolerant of any competing institutions and values especially traditional religious ones, and stridently condemned them as cultic, fetish, barbaric, devil worship, and so on."

Even at independence, the dominant ethnic groups have continued to deploy policies that seem to subjugate the aspiration and creative expression of the ethnic groups in the peripheries. This aligns with the Dependency Theory in that, it results in an unequal distribution of opportunities, and rights denials which ultimately impacts the people's capacity to achieve self-actualization, given that some basic needs remain unmet.

The Ibibio State Union, it has been reported was the foremost ethnic organisation to have written to the British parliament requesting a sovereign state (Udo 1983). It has also been reported that the same organization in 1928 was the first to have sent its people abroad to study the "white man's" ways. This exposure broadened the creative imagination, boosted the creative recess of the people, and further strengthened the resolve to chart an intentional pathway towards self-actualization.

Looking at the UNESCO six domains of cultural and creative industries, the Ibibio truly has come a long way.

The early encounter with the missionary, the introduction of the printing press, the radio studios, the post-independent Naria boom, overseas studies, and the engagement of Ibibio people as apprentices, fast-tracked the ascendancy of the Ibibio in the creative production ladder. Professor Uwemedimo Atakpo while delivering his lecture at the 61st inaugural lecture of the University of Uyo on the 31st May 2018 narrated his inspiration to study theatre as follows

As a young secondary school student in the middle 60's, I used to work in my father's bakery after school hours and at weekends to earn some money for my tickets into the film house in Uyo. The only film house, APEX Cinema was located on Nawniba Road. The present Church owned by Abel Damina was the APEX Cinema. Sometimes, we had to trek from my village to Uyo when we could not ride our bicycles. We watched Western Cowboy films, Indian and war films. From that point, I always saw myself as a film director. The itinerary films unit by UAC (United African Company) used to go to villages to show films. Thus we kept track of and went to watch the free films. Again, the Lutheran missionaries showed films in our Church Headquarters at Obot Idim, and we never missed such opportunities. That too gingered my interest in films (Atakpo 2018)

These realities are common experiences for most of the Ibibio creatives of that generation.

Nigeria's burgeoning film industry, Nollywood, has gained international attention. While the Efik and Ibibio communities are not the sole contributors, their cultural influence resonates within Nollywood. The rise of home video production (Nollywood) has transformed Nigeria's media landscape, showcasing the creativity and resilience of these ethnic groups. When we celebrate Nollywood and its successes, we cannot ignore names like Emem Isong, Keppy Ekpenong, Uduak Umondak, John Ekwere, Bethell Basse, Ime Bishop, Liz Benson, Nse Ikpe Etim, Ini Edo, Moses Amstrong, Obot Etuk, and Kate Henshaw, among others, who delivered value for the film viewing public through strong interpretations of roles, presence, and meaningful storytelling. They also introduced the market to unique Ibibio and Efik films addressing issues such as HIV, conflict resolution, and infidelity, among others. These productions have created jobs and supported several individuals within the film production chain, providing the means to sustain their livelihoods, meet their basic needs, and support others on the job.

Proponents of the Ibibio Creative Economy

Late Prof. Emmanuel Akpan:

The late Prof. Emmanuel David Akpan, a native of Ibesikpo Asutan Local government area, Akwa Ibom State studied at Lutheran Normal School, 1958-63, San Mateo College, USA, 1966-68, San Francisco State University, USA, 1968-71, Ohio State University, USA, 1977-79.

He was the pioneer Nigerian Director of the Lutheran Hour Ministry's funded Christian Radio Studio, Obot Idim. In this capacity, he used to host the neighbouring communities on weekends to film shows and organise drama

presentations. Atakpo (2018) alluded to this and elaborated on the impact of the experience on his creative development.

He lectured at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1974-81, the University of Calabar, 1981-85; the University of Cross River State, Uyo, and the University of Uyo. He was appointed the Director of the University of Cross River State (Later University of Uyo) Centre for Cultural Studies. At the University of Cross River State (now UNIUYO), he facilitated the creation of the Theatre Arts Unit (now the Theatre and Film Department) which has been a fertile training ground for Theatre Nigeria's contemporary Theatre and Film practitioners.

As the director of the Centre for Cultural Studies from 1986, he initiated the famous UNICROSS Cultural Week. The cultural week featured workshops on various aspects of creative and cultural development, exhibitions of cultural and creative products, competitions in arts and craft production, networking and collaboration opportunities. Talents identified during the cultural week were intentionally supported and supported for self-actualization.

Prof. Akpan was a member of the Professor World Peace Academy of Nigeria and listed on the Newswatch's *Who is Who in Nigeria?* Some of his publications include *Prologue to Communication Understanding*, (Calabar, Scholars Press), and *Communication and Media Arts* (Uyo, Modern Business Press). His teaching and research interests included communicology, expressive communication, broadcasting, and aesthetics.

Dr. Inih Akpan Ebong:

Associate Professor Inih Akpan Ebong is an astute theatre director, poet, playwright, critique, actor teacher, leader, and honours degree graduate from the University of Nsukka. He holds a Master Degree in Theatre Arts from Michigan State University. He is a member of the World's Leisure and Recreational Association (WLRA) and was appointed to the International Commission for Leisure Information Exchange (INTERCALIX). Dr Ebong has been a lecturer since 1977 teaching Directing, Contemporary African, Third World, and Twentieth Century Theatre, Literary Theories and Criticism, Acting, and Playwriting. His Ph.D was from the University of Birmingham, UK. He served as the Head, of the Department of Theatre Arts, at the University of Uyo. He has taught at the Cross, University of Jos, Plateau State, and produced respectable creatives for the theatre and entertainment sub-sector including Prof. Effiong Johnson, Dr. Reuben Abati, Dr. Ofonime Inyang, Dr. Justina Nkanga, etc. He will be remembered for his fearlessness, courage, outspokenness, and activism.

Inyang (2019) focuses on Ebong's contributions in the following words:

...Ebong, an Associate Professor of Theatre Arts, for instance was also playing roles in notable serial television productions of the time such as *Supple Blues* (1991-93); *Shadows* (1994), *Heritage* (1995) while teaching at the University of Jos and through his creative activities added impetus to the role of Ibibio and Efik indigenes in the development of film and media industry in the country.

Prof. Effiong Johnson:

In the theatre and performing arts, the Ibibio has been blessed with erudite Professors of theatre starting from the referred Professor Effiong Johnson – himself the first Ibibio Professor of Theatre and Aesthetics. Professor Effiong Etim Johnson, an author of several professional texts on theatre studies in Nigeria, is a visiting scholar to the University of Ghana, Cape Coast, and Tshwane University of Science and Technology, Pretoria, South Africa, has been the Director, Centre for Cultural Studies and the University Public Orator since 2003, and had presented an Inaugural Lecture at the University of Uyo, in February 2014, the 37th in the series, on the topic, "Of Theatre Arts' Effervescence (and Infamy): Dismantling the Grotesque from the Aesthetic."

Professor Johnson's contributions to global development include lecturing at universities in Nigeria and abroad. He has presented and published 65 seminal works on directing, acting, aesthetics, communication, and play production among others. He has served as an adjudicator at the National Festival of Arts and Culture, Abuja, and other festivals. Since 2021 he has been a member of the National Accreditation Panel of the National University Commission for Theatre Arts. He has been an external examiner to many universities in Nigeria and

Ghana. He is the Departmental PG Coordinator for the University of Uyo and is currently on sabbatical leave at the Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa. He drew the academic curriculum for Theatre Arts Studies for the Akwa Ibom State University.

He has served at different times as the Media Relations and Public Relations Officer to Church organisations, the Society of Nigerian Theatre Artists (SONTA), the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), and served as moderator and freelance newscaster for the Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation (AKBC TV), Uyo. He has coordinated Theatre for Development (TfD) Projects in Lagos, Abuja, and Akwa Ibom states targeting neighbourliness, civility, basic hygiene, environmental sanitation, HIV and AIDS, etc.

Prof. Uwemediom Atakpo:

Professor Uwemedimo Atakpo is an embodiment of a sound academic and professional background. was the founding head of the Department of Theatre Arts, at the then-University of Cross River State (Now University of Uyo). He had served as the coordinator of the Centre for Cultural Studies. He has been very active in research and publications. To his credits are 8 published plays, journals articles in both national and international journals, and chapters in books. Prof. Atakpo's films include:

- Dance on His Grave
- Jet Age Mother – A UNICEF Project
- IF... A Tragedy of the ruled
- Watering the Hard Ground
- Ken Saro Wiwa and Niger Delta Trial
- Sound of the Bugle
- The Wretched of Our Era, and
- Ekpe, Our Heritage.

He is currently teaching at the Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa.

Chief Lady Mary Afi Usuah (MON) 1941- 2013

The Late Chief Lady Mary Afi Usuah was a renowned music and theatre interpreter, an international artiste, performer, singer, producer, and an adjudicator in State, National, and international events. She studied music and theatre interpretation at the world-famous Santa Cecilia Conservatorio, an academy of music in Italy where she specialized in didactic music and interpretations of theatre. In addition, she also acquired a postgraduate certificate in Literature at Petro Majella Conservatory, Naples, Italy.

Chief Lady Mary Afi Usuah was employed immediately after her graduation in big theatres in Rome where she was involved in Opera productions. She also starred as the lead character in some of such productions. Mary also organized private groups to represent Nigeria at the Cantagiro World Festival in Italy. She had served as the administrator of the Cross River State Arts Council. On resumption of duties in the Arts Council, a member of the planning committee for the National Festival of Arts in 1974. Lady Mary Afi Usuah also staged various Television shows such as "The Mary Afi Usuah Show", and starred and performed on other TV shows such as "Stars of the Tube", "Bala Milla Show", "AM Express" etc.

Mary had worked with the world's greatest arts and literary ambassadors such as Georgio Albertazzi, Anna Proclaimmer, Italian theatre director Georgio Strehler, African Mother of Songs- Miriam Makeba, Iconic American singing star- Aretha Franklin, the Dome of Jazz- Duke Ellington, Literary Giants and Noble Laureates like Prof Wole Soyinka of Nigeria and Chilean author and former ambassador to Britain- Prof Pablo Neruda, among others.

Mary worked towards the promotion and development of Arts and Cultural events nationally and internationally such as the All Africa Games, Algiers '78, OAU Summit- Nigeria, COJA 2003, ICASSA 2006; and as an adjudicator- NAFEST 2006, Cross River State Carnival.

She recorded four songs to her credit. These are;

- “Ima- Mma Uyem” (1974), her first album
- “Ekpe Ikpe Eno Mi” (1974)
- “Afia Mma” (1974)
- African Woman (1976)

Ini Edo:

Iniobong Edo Ekim, professionally known as Ini Edo, is a celebrated Nollywood actress, producer, and filmmaker from Onna Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. She began her acting career in 2000 and rose to prominence after her breakout performance in *Worlds Apart* (2004). Over the years, she has featured in more than 300 films and remains one of the most recognizable faces in Nollywood.

In 2010, she expanded her creative footprint by co-producing films such as *Memories of My Heart* and *I’ll Take My Chances*, working alongside filmmaker Emem Isong. She has also served as a brand ambassador for top organizations, including Nobel Hair, Glo, and Chivita.

In recent years, Ini Edo has sustained her relevance through strategic career evolution, digital presence, and high-profile Nollywood collaborations. She frequently features in major 2025–2026 Nollywood releases shared via platforms like Ik Ogbonna TV and her own official channel, Ini Edo TV—with popular titles including *Love at Sunrise*, *My Sister’s Obsession*, *Her Shadow*, and *Behind Her Smile*. [youtube.com]

In December 2025, she released her film *A Very Dirty Christmas*, which attracted significant attention and further established her as a filmmaker.

Emem Isong:

Emem is one of Africa's pioneering female filmmakers, with over 25 years of championing the rights of women in Nollywood movies (Nigeria's film industry). She has been nominated and won many local and international awards, and her films have been screened at major film festivals. In 2018 she was awarded the African Film Leadership Award at The African Film Festival (TAFF) in Dallas, United States, and other numerous awards in Africa such as the Giama Award, Thema Award, ZAFAA Award, Best of Nollywood Award, City Peoples Award and AMMA awards (Africa's answer to the Oscars).

A native of Ikono Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, her films have been studied at many universities across Africa, Europe, and America, with written academic papers. A showcase of 'Cinema and Social Change in West Africa' written by Jonathan Haynes, a professor of English at Long Island University, Brooklyn, and a few of the major clients are DSTV, Iroko TV,

Her movie "Bursting Out" was screened and recorded a sold-out audience at the Odion Cinemas. London in November 2010.

She is currently a PhD student at the University for the Creative Arts (UCA), Farnham, London.

She is the founder and CEO of the Royal Arts Academy where students are taught the rudiments of acting and elocution. The Academy also provides a platform for writing and editing screenplays, working closely with Directors and film crews to understand their requirements, organizing and facilitating the casting of actors, and collaborating with Iroko TV, and African Magic to make high-quality films.

Liz Benson- Ameye

Elizabeth Benson, better known as Liz Benson, a veteran iconoclastic Nollywood actress hails from Nsit Ubium in Akwa Ibom State. She graduated from the Havana State University, Georgia where she studied Dramatic Arts.

She ventured into the movie industry in 1993 with the TV Soap opera “Fortress”. In 1994, she starred in the mind-bursting home video “Glamour Girls”. Following this, she stormed the industry with another classic, and mind-blowing film, “True Confession”. Her ability to interpret roles made her one of the most respected actresses in the industry, thus she became a screen goddess and a role model for young actresses. She was off the screen for six years or more to work with her husband in God’s vineyard. Recently, she staged a comeback when she and Stephanie Linus did some work focused on women’s health.

Her diligence at work brought her wealth of experience to bear on her performances. She has acted as a mother, grandmother, lover, wife, schoolgirl, witch, widow, etc. in these movies, her interpretation of these roles was so perfect that she was seen as the undisputed Queen of Nollywood.

Inyang (2019) provides insight into other notable offerings of the Efik and Ibibio in the theatre and film sub-sector thus:

The other notable productions of the early developing period of Nollywood had many Ibibio and Efik sons and daughters playing major roles in the various departments of film productions. In films such as Glamour Girls 1& 2, True Confessions, Rituals, Strange Ordeals, The Price, Rattle Snake, Violated, Nneka, the Pretty Serpent, many Ibibio and Efik stars such as Keppy Ekpeyong, Liz Benson, Obot Etuk, Nse Ikpe-Etim, Kate Henshaw-Nuttal among others gave the film viewing public the best of their interpretation of roles and positioned the burgeoning industry for the quality and extent of successes it is recording at the moment.

This also acted as a pedestal for the building of interest in film and video production in this part of the world leading to the increase participation of artists from the Ibibio and Efik flanks of the country. Later entrants including Emem Isong, Ime Bishop, Adim Williams, Eyo Ekpenyong, Oyoyo Nsa and many others came into a space that was galvanized by their brothers and sisters in different productions.

At home and creating the base for the development of a fringe Nollywood production axis between Uyo and Calabar has been the rising input of persons such as Fidelis Duker, Moses Eskor, Ekere Nkanga, Moses Armstrong and many others. The new breed producers, actors, and directors of Nollywood films of Ibibio and Efik extraction came to build on the foundation already laid by the active television production culture of the NTA Calabar, Cross River Television and private initiatives in media production though mainly in the Radio by John Idung whose contributions to the media production field in Asuama, Ifioke Ikeme Owo among others set the tone for what has come to represent a thriving base for film production in Akwa Ibom and Cross River State

Among the Efik and Ibibio people, music plays an important role in their work, entertainment, rituals, battles, and cultural celebrations. Put differently, “...indigenous music conveys messages of beliefs, values, and other fundamental philosophies of Ibibio people and heritage” (Akpan, O. and Akpan, A. 2022).

Ekpa (2012) collaborates the utilitarian function of music among the Ibibio and asserts:

To the Ibibio, music and life are inseparable. There is music for many of the activities of everyday life as well as music whose texts express his attitudes to life: his hopes and fears, his thoughts and beliefs. Since music is so intimately bound with Ibibio worldview or cosmology, it then becomes symbolic, spiritually potent and situational.

Resultantly, in the music sub-sector, the Ibibio has a hegemony, producing icons of the Nigerian music industry such the late Afi Usua, the legendary Essien Ibokwe, Aity Denis Inyang, Nathaniel Basse, Inyang Henshaw, Peter Efiiong, Etubom Rex William, Udo Abianga, Peterside Otong, Moses Bliss, Uti Pius, Ikon Afrikana, the United Choral Voices, Yama Chorale, Uko Akpan cultural troupe, Ikon Africana, New Dawn, Real Brass, Sir Wilker, David Sax, Ikpa Udo, etc.

Late Christy Essien Igbokwe

Late Christy Essien Igbokwe began her singing career in secondary school. She sang at various clubs in Aba, Abia state. A multi-talented creative, she ventured into acting and was featured on the Nigerian Television

Authority [N.T.A.] Channel 6, Aba programme called ‘Now Sound.’ She later joined the cast of the ‘The New Masquerade’ in 1976. In 1977, she released her debut album called ‘Freedom’. However, 1981 was a milestone in her musical career as she released her hit album, ‘Ever Liked My Person’. She featured in two Nollywood films; ‘Flesh and Blood’ and ‘Scars of Womanhood’.

Christy contributed immensely to the development and growth of the music industry in Nigeria by participating in the founding of the Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria [PMAN]. She also mentored younger musicians; for instance, in 2009, she hosted a musical concert: “Inspire Africa Benefit Concert” a musical show of old and new breed musicians where her son, Kaka, featured alongside the MTN Musical festival.

Some of her milestone achievements include putting Nigeria’s name on the world’s music map with her evergreen “Seun Rere” track, initiating the first meeting that brought about the formation of the Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria [PMAN] in 1981, and serving as its first national treasurer between 1996 and 1999 and as the first female PMAN president.

She composed and performed the song “*Akwa Ibom Mmi* [My Akwa Ibom] in 1987 to commemorate the creation of Akwa Ibom State. The song became the Akwa Ibom anthem at that seminal age.

She was the chairperson and managing director of Soul Train Entertainment Limited. She featured in State, National, and international events at various times. Christy was fluent in Yoruba, English, Igbo, Ibibio and sang a lot of her songs in the western Nigerian language [Yoruba] and drew heavily on their culture and the tradition of the people.

Aity Dennis Inyang

Aity Itohowo Dennis- Inyang is one of Nigeria’s Gospel artistes who has made a name and has contributed immensely to the growth and development of music in the country. From Oruk Anam Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

She has worked as a French and English teacher in Taraba and Akwa Ibom States. A former schoolteacher and Television producer, with a Master’s Degree in Mass Communications and a First Degree in French, Aity Dennis has been in the music ministry for over twenty years and has shared the stage with several renowned international acts. She sings in many languages including English and French.

Aity Dennis, CEO of Aity Music Foundation and Chairman, the Lagos State chapter of Fellowship of Gospel Music Ministers of Nigeria (FOGMMON), has over 3000 songs and 10 CDs, and awards to her credit. Aity Dennis, crisscrosses the nations of the world with her inspiring message of joy and faith in Christ. Her music will move your heart and feet and bring healing, comfort, and restoration.

Owirre (2022) has this to say:

Akwa Ibom State is home to different forms of arts. They are highly gifted, creative, and talented in every form of art. In the Church and the gospel setting, there are Akwa Ibomites who are pulling strings and making a huge contribution to the music angle of it, and in Nigeria, currently, 80 to 90% of bands playing for top gospel artists have at least one Akwa Ibomite among them. The average creativity level in an Akwa Ibomite is high.

In the gospel genre, you will find names like the Nathaniel Bassey, DAVASOL (David and Solomon) Brothers, Progress Effiong, Bobby Friga, Eno Michael, Freke Umoh, Emmanuel Iren, and Jimmy D’ Psalmist, among others. Some of the popular songs in the genre include:

“Si’ma Do“, “Ebenezer” DAVASOL Bothers “Ama”, “Amen,” Progress Effiong Sosongodoboho”, “Ameyaiya” “Owo’do” Bobby Friga “Breath“, “He Cannot Lie” Eno Michael

Iberedem Mmi,” “Bara Sune“, “Your Love is Higher”, “God is taking me somewhere” Aity Dennis Inyang

“You, I Live For” Moses Bliss Mighty Man of War”, “Powerful Jesus”, “Consuming Fire”, Jimmy D’ Psalmist.

In various musical genres, Ibibio artists are making significant achievements at local, national, and international levels. Among them is Innocent Udemé Udofot, popularly known as MC Galaxy, a singer and songwriter. He won the Davido dance competition in 2012. Hailing from Uyo LGA in Akwa Ibom State, he has produced many notable dancehall tracks, with ‘Sekem’ standing out for sparking widespread trends across the country and internationally, thanks to its signature dance move. The music video has garnered over 4 million views on YouTube. MC Galaxy now manages his record label, MCG Entertainment, Sekem Kitchen, and other ventures.

Daniel Benson, popularly known as BujuToyourEars or Buju, is a rising star in the music industry. He developed a passion for music as a teenager. His debut single, “Catch a Vibe,” released in February 2018, quickly topped charts and gained popularity. Since then, he has collaborated with renowned artists like Grammy winner Burna Boy, Zlatan, and Ladipoe, establishing himself as one of the top artists from the Ibibio community.

Nsidibe Sunday Ukim (Ikpa Udo) is the top rapper currently representing Akwa Ibom State. This indigenous artist has developed a unique rap style that seamlessly combines the Efik/Ibibio dialect with hip-hop and Afro sounds, thus putting Akwa Ibom on the musical map. Known by all music enthusiasts in the state, Ikpa Udo's stage name is widely recognized. He first gained fame with his single “ITIPEKE” and has since released additional singles and collaborations. The “Ame Nwod” crooner has worked with artists like Iyanya, Slow Dogg, and others, and has also partnered with Nigerian legend 2Baba Idibia.

Kingsley Imeh Willies, also known as Kizz Brown (Big Kizz), also known as Dakruzceebobo, is an Akwa Ibom/Nigerian Afro musician. The Afro singer made a trend with his first single, “Akwa Ibom the Land of Promise,” which he dedicated to his dear state, Akwa Ibom State, followed by another single, “Fake Friends.” Presently, there are about 8 tracks to his name.

Eric Eton, popularly known as Lybra, is a Nigerian Highlife/Afro Pop artist from Akwa Ibom State who has gained notable recognition both locally and nationally. He started his music career with the single ‘Kulu Kulu’ and has since released several other tracks, including ‘Fresh Fish’, ‘Ekamba’, and the hit ‘Baby Tomato’ in collaboration with Mc Galaxy. Recently, Lybra dropped another successful single, “Unbelievable”.

The influence is reflected in the number of non-Ibibio music artists who dedicate or incorporate an Efik or Ibibio song into their albums. For example, Mercy Chinwo often features an Ibibio song as the second track on her albums; both “Bo Ekom” and “Udemé Mi” are her second songs. Tuface Idibia (2004) included “Mfina Ibaha”—an Ibibio phrase meaning “no problem”—on his album, which subsequently became a national chant. Other examples include ‘Yak I kom Abasi’ by Oyadiran K. E. & M. K. Amisa, ‘ISANTIM’ by Okechukwu Ndubuisi, and ‘Nnam Fin-So’ by Albert Oikelome.

Other Key Drivers of the Efik and Ibibio Creative Influence include the establishment of universities in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States and the work of these universities in the areas of theater arts, music, film studies, etc. The government of Donald Duke established the Tinapa in Calabar – Cross River State, complete with a film complex. Inyang (2019) attests that this development boosted the profile of the city, especially:

...because of the conceptual integration of the creative industries in the industrial vision of the economic zone, the citing of state-of-the-art media and production studios and facilities added pep to this creative localization and set the tone for the shooting of not only local productions but also productions of international reputation such as the adaptation by Biyi Bandele Thomas of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* and its location shoot in Calabar, Cross River State.

The Ibibio Unity Park in Uyo is a tourist haven, offering the largest green space in the country and attracting thousands of visitors annually. The Unity Park is among the first and foremost parks in Akwa Ibom State. The Unity Park features cultural and spiritual symbols for the city of Uyo. It also houses the prestigious Ibibio Museum. The museum is a repository of the people's cultural heritage, including artifacts, paintings, and sculptures. The park boasts a lush green field, an amphitheater, and the Ibibio Museum. It hosted the prestigious

Akwa Ibom Christmas Carol, in addition to serving as the state's Christmas village. The space has continued to inspire creatives from within and outside the state, providing an ambiance for creative thinking, engagement, and socialization.

The Nest of Champions (Godwill Akpabio Stadium) is a 30,000-capacity national sports stadium in Uyo. It has been designated the 2nd among the top 20 stadia in West Africa and serves as the home of the Nigerian Super Eagles. It has hosted several FIFA matches and created opportunities for local creatives, such as the Brass Bands, cultural troupes, and craftsmen producing gift items and souvenirs for visitors to the state.

The more than 120 kilometers of shoreline at the southern end of the state is another of nature's gifts to the Ibibios. It connects the state to more than 6 countries across the Atlantic. It is a corridor for business incubation, tourism, and trade. Several creative products have been exchanged along the shoreline.

The Oron Museum was established in 1958 to house eight hundred known ancestral figures (Ekpu Oro) of the Oron people, which are believed to be among the oldest and finest surviving wood carvings in Africa. Although these were stolen during the Civil War, the museum was recommissioned and restored to its former glory.

The Ibom Icon Hotel & Golf Resort is located on Nwaniba Road in Uyo. This 5-star hotel sits atop a rich palm forest in the capital city of Akwa Ibom State. Set amid lush palm forest vegetation, this magnificent hotel on 174 hectares of land connotes peace and serenity, complemented by its original atmosphere. The lush greens of the world-class 18-hole golf course create the right atmosphere for the most challenging, memorable golfing experience. It is a few minutes from the Akwa Ibom Airport. The Ibom Icon has hosted many international events and heads of state. It provides avenues for creative expression and business incubation.

The Four Point by Sheraton Hotel, Ikot Ekpene, offers 146 modern rooms and suites with floor-to-ceiling windows, providing great views of the city. On-site amenities include an outdoor pool, fitness center, spa, meeting space, dry cleaning service, and laundry facilities. The hotel is operated by Marriott International and targets business travelers and small conventions.

Festivals in Ibibio include the Ekpo Festival (Ekpo Ntokeyen, Mboyo Ekpo, Udat Ekpo, Ekong Ukaba Isua, Ekoong, etc.), the Ekpe Festival, the new yam festivals, the Christmas Carol Festival in December, and the Calabar Carnival – the biggest street parties in Africa, which continue to attract tourists from various climes to Ibibio communities. They also continue to serve as vehicles for propagating values, providing orientation, sustaining trade, and fostering immersive leadership within the global village.

Harnessing the Creative Industries for Greater Impact

To harness the creative industries for greater impact, it is essential to provide support and resources for Ibibio creatives (Johnson, 2019). This includes investing in cultural infrastructure, providing training and capacity-building programs, and promoting Ibibio cultural goods and services globally. Additionally, efforts should be made to preserve and promote the Ibibio cultural heritage, including their language, customs, and traditions.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the significant contributions of the Ibibio cultural and creative industries to global development, they face several challenges. These include the paucity of data on the sub-entities of the creative industry. There is the challenge of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) for the creatives who may not have the resources to protect their creation.

There is the challenge of internationalization and an export framework for creative products. Others include poor funding and financing, digital disruption and piracy, cultural appropriation, exploitation, and the depressive politics of the dominant entities.

Despite these challenges, there are several opportunities in the creative industry. Atakpo (2014) listed over 30 career opportunities in theatre and film alone. Others include innovations in digital technologies, where artists

and creatives are finding new ways to monetize their work and reach global audiences. Creative communities online provide mentorship, networking, and collaboration platforms for creatives. These platforms continue to enhance personal growth and professional development. They provide a space where young creatives can meet with veterans and nurture their creative ideas by leveraging collective wisdom and diverse perspectives.

Educational institutions have continued to provide leadership in shaping the future of creatives by incorporating an interdisciplinary approach to learning and promoting design thinking. Several courses now include digital media, creative entrepreneurship, and hands-on practical learning.

Inyang (2019) listed Eve Esin, Annie Macauley-Idibia, Theresa Edem, Didi Ekanem, and Ini Edo, who obtained a diploma in Theatre Arts from the University of Uyo before launching into Nollywood on a full scale; Uchena Nnana, who holds a degree in Theatre Arts from the University of Uyo; Perekeme Odon, a sought-after makeup artist in Nollywood; actress Anita Hogan, a pioneer of the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Uyo; and many other notable practitioners.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Ibibio people have a rich cultural heritage and history, with a vibrant cultural identity that encompasses daily life, traditions, and rituals.

Their cultural and creative industries have contributed significantly to global development, and their artistic skills and craftsmanship are recognized worldwide. To harness the creative industries for greater impact, it is essential to provide support and resources for Ibibio creatives and to preserve and promote Ibibio cultural heritage.

The Ibibio and Efik people continue to shape global cultural development through their artistic expressions, diaspora contributions, and participation in national and international creative enterprises. They contribute to employment, economic growth, and social cohesion. Their rich heritage remains a testament to human creativity and resilience, bridging the past, present, and future.

Recommendations

1. Creating a supportive environment is essential for the growth of cultural and creative industries. This involves providing creators with necessary support and resources, including training, mentoring, and capacity-building initiatives.
2. The cultural values, beliefs, and worldview of a community shape their creative pursuits. It is important to promote the rich Ibibio cultural heritage and to invest in cultural infrastructure like museums and cultural centers.
3. Our creative outputs (including dance, drama, festivals, and films) are capable of competing effectively on the global stage. It is important to develop a policy framework for the internationalization and export of these products. We should start actively promoting Ibibio's creative products and services worldwide.
4. A strong coordination platform is recommended to promote collaboration and partnerships between Ibibio creatives and international organizations. The experienced creative should establish communities of practice, create spaces for young creatives to develop their skills, give constructive feedback, enhance visibility, and offer support for their self-actualization.

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