



UNLEASHING THE POWER OF THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES: A CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NAMIBIA¹

Ms. Sevelia Nakalemo
Ms. Nelago Aluvilu
Ms. Abigail Nainda

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**Policy Research and Analysis Division
Research and Financial Sector Development Department**

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1. Introduction

The importance of the creative industries on growth and development is increasingly gaining recognition at a global level. The creative industries comprise of various subsectors², broadly referred to as the cultural and creative industries, as per the United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s framework for cultural statistics (UNESCO,2009). The framework defines culture as a set of values, expressions and heritages of a society. In addition, cultural and creative industries, reflect the combination of ingenuity and cultural values to produce tradable goods and services. Further, culture has also been incorporated in the United Nations Agenda 2030 for sustainable development with objectives to safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage (UN, 2015).

Increasingly, the creative industries are being recognized as a significant contributor to economic growth and employment creation through innovation and new products. According to the United Nations, taken together, creativity, culture, economics, and technology have the potential to generate income, create jobs, and increase exports while promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity, and human development. As a result, the emerging creative economy can be utilised to promote development. Data from the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), indicate that the creative industries contributed between 0.5 percent and 7.3 percent to GDP and employed between 0.5 percent to 12.5 percent of the workforce, across different countries globally over the past ten years (UNCTAD, 2024). Also, the Namibia Statistics Agency data shows that the Namibian creative industries contributed 1.6 percent to GDP, on average, over the last 10 years.

In this context, this paper aims to assess the status of the Namibian Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) and explore possible policy interventions to support the growth of these industries. The Namibian creative industries comprise a diverse array of media, entertainment, design, technology, publishing, advertising, marketing, cultural and artistic forms, reflecting the essence of a society and preserving cultural heritage. The paper analyses the current Namibian creative industries landscape by identifying prevailing challenges and opportunities with the view to determine possible policy measures to support and improve the outcomes and contribution of the creative sectors to economic growth and social development.

² A break-down of this is presented in a box article in the Appendix

In assessing the status of the Namibian creative industries, the paper adopts a qualitative methodological approach. This is centred around secondary research and primary data collected through mini questionnaires to allow for a comprehensive descriptive understanding of the sub-sectors within the industries. Following the introduction in Section 1, Section 2 will present an overview of the Namibian creative industries, while Section 3 covers their contributions to growth and employment in Namibia. Furthermore, Section 4 and 5 explore the challenges to and opportunities for the industries, respectively. Lastly, Section 6 provides a few lessons from other countries while Section 7 concludes and provides key policy recommendations necessary to drive growth and long-term sustainability.

2. Overview of Cultural and Creative Industries in Namibia

The Namibian cultural and creative industries encompass a wide range of artistic forms such as media, advertising, entertainment, culture and arts, among others³. This section provides an overview of certain sub-industries that were selected based on the role they play in the economy, while acknowledging the contributions of the remaining sub-industries to the economy.

2.1 Crafts and Visual Arts

Craft is one of the very few sub-sectors that have been long-standing in the Namibian creative industries, strongly representing the Namibian demography as defined by the diverse traditions of its ethnic groups. Craftmanship plays a significant role beyond the expression of artistic visions into tangible products as it serves as a source of livelihood, for many people, especially those in the informal settlements and rural areas, particularly women. Craftwork is mostly comprised of products originating and drawn from traditional patterns, historical tales and personal ideas. The Himba beadwork and the San ostrich-eggshell jewelry are amongst the many popular craftwork souvenirs produced in Namibia⁴. As such, craft serves as a cultural embroidery, reflecting the essence of cultural heritage and showcase national pride.

³ <https://www.creativeindustryguide.com/home>

⁴ As such, <https://namibiaday.com/namibias-traditional-crafts-and-their-role-in-tourism/>

Visual and contemporary arts include ancient works attributed to the San people, textile weaving, printmaking, painting, drawings and sculpture. Contemporary art involves using textures, shapes and colours to express and address various social subjects such as social equity, individuality and in the past, it was mostly linked to colonial issues. Currently, Namibia hosts an estimated 130 000 contemporary artists⁵. With the expansion of digital platforms and globalization, Namibian sculptors and artists have been gaining international recognition, including through platforms such as the African Women in Arts Awards.

2.2 Fashion and Graphic Design

The Namibian fashion industries consist of a vibrant mix of cultural heritage and the creative talent of designers. The fashion industry includes the design, manufacturing, marketing and sale of clothes and footwear, with a primary focus on private consumers. Furthermore, creatives in the fashion industries are leveraging digital platforms to market their products to wider markets. Given the increasing demand for local fashion design services for various occasions, the Namibian fashion industry has potential for further growth.

Graphic design involves digital and print designing as well as motion graphics and brand imaging to communicate relevant messages to identified audiences. Graphic design in Namibia has moderately advanced from being print dominated to tech and digitally driven given the increase in internet access and usage. According to the Communication Regulation Authority of Namibia (CRAN), 4G internet coverage reached 88.4 percent countrywide at the end of 2024 (CRAN,2024). As such, graphic design has potential to further expand given the increasing need for branding, marketing, and digital content creation.

2.3 Sports

A category of the creative industries, the Namibian sports industries has had a strong run as certain athletes and teams have attained success on the global stage. A few notable achievements, include the consistent qualification of the national rugby team for the World Cup. The 'Brave Warriors' also managed to reach the round of 16 in the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations, while a few athletes secured spots in world-class competitions. Moreover, the national netball team 'Desert Jewels won the 2025 United Arab Emirates Netball

⁵ <https://www.mexicohistorico.com/paginas/contemporary-art-movements-in-namibia-c3d13d5c.html>

Cup in Dubai. At the 2025 Indoor World Cup, Namibia's men's hockey team finished eighth while the women's hockey team finished sixth overall. Earlier on, the country's men and women's hockey team both finished as the top two nations at the 2024 Indoor Africa Cup, where the men's team won the tournament and the women's team placed as runner-up. This highlights talents within the Namibian youth that, if well nurtured, can contribute to the growth of the creative industries.

Albeit less popular, cricket has been recognised as one of fast-growing and successful sporting codes in Namibia. Historically, cricket has been more prominent in Windhoek, but several programs are currently expanding the game to other regions with a focus on youth⁶. It has a record of achievements, with the country expected to co-host the 2027 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup alongside South Africa and Zimbabwe for the first time in its history. This has been enabled by the sport's development and progress in the country, including the construction of the FNB Namibia Cricket Ground in Windhoek⁷. With sufficient investment, including training, in fast-growing sports like cricket, more growth opportunities would be available to the Namibian Youth.

The Government, through the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture (MEIYSAC) is actively prioritizing the promotion and development of sports. The 2025/26 national budget has allocated an estimated N\$1.3 billion towards sports, youth, and national service with around N\$450 million directed towards the development of sports, talent, and infrastructure. This indicates that the country is prioritising efforts towards the development and accessibility of sports infrastructure in most parts of the country which will eventually encourage the hosting of home matches for the national teams. Such effort is represented through the N\$200 million allocated for the construction of six Confederation of African Football (CAF) Category 2 stadiums and seven CAF Category 3 stadiums. Six of the stadiums are planned to be built in Otjiwarongo, Omuthiya, Katima Mulilo, Mariental, Nkurenkuru and Gobabis⁸.

Beyond direct funding, the Government also mobilises partnerships with private sector entities and international organizations to support creative industries. Bank Windhoek entered a partnership with MEIYSAC, as the title sponsor of the four-year running Bank Windhoek under 21 (U21) Soccer Tournament to help discover talent amongst participating players. Recently, the U.S Embassy along with MEIYSAC co-hosted a "Youth Sandbox on Sports and Economic Benefits" dialogue, where various sport professionals,

⁶ <https://cricketnamibia.com/about-us/>

⁷ <https://cricketnamibia.com/stadium/>

⁸ <https://www.namibian.com.na/steenkamp-hails-46-boost-in-youth-sport-budget/>

educators and policy makers emphasized the need for sports facilities that are accessible and fair, increased cooperation between the government and private sector, and policies that promote innovation and investment in youth-led sports initiatives⁹. Another collaborative initiative is the Namibian Annual Sports Awards which has been running for the past years and recognizes sport professionals for their contribution to the sports industries.

2.4 Music and Performing Arts

Music is the most evolving industry within the Namibian cultural and creative industries, comprised of performing arts, traditional music and contemporary music. Performing arts is made up of ballet, poetry and music concerts or festivals and is anchored by the National Theatre of Namibia where talent and skills are displayed through live performances. Meanwhile reggae, jazz, house, kwaito and hip-hop make up what is referred to as modern music or contemporary music. Traditionally, music is highly defined by Namibia's distinct ethnicity¹⁰.

The country's music industry has witnessed significant transformation over the past two decades, including the fusion of modern genres into traditional music. As widely acknowledged, music transcends borders, connects communities, and celebrates cultural diversity. In pursuit of widening their reach and increasing earnings, creators in the music industries make use of digital platforms like YouTube, Spotify, iTunes and Apple Music to distribute their songs, by selling the products such as albums or Compact Discs. These diversified platforms have helped pave way for local artists, songwriters, and producers to the attention of locals and global viewers.

As the primary institution mandated to protect the rights of music creatives, the Namibia Society of Composers and Authors of Music (NASCAM) collect royalties for the registered work of its members¹¹. The existing arrangement is for 30 percent of total royalties collected to remain with the institution, while the remaining 70 percent is to be distributed to its members (composers, lyricists, publishers, and recording artists). NASCAM reported royalties' distribution of N\$1.6 million and N\$1.9 million for 2022

⁹ <https://na.usembassy.gov/youth-sandbox-highlights-economic-potential-of-sports-in-namibia/#:~:text=Throughout%20the%20evening%2C%20panelists%20highlighted,in%20youth%2Ddriven%20sports%20ventures.>

¹⁰ <https://www.namibiansun.com/columns/authentic-namibian-sounds-keep-it-real2024-09-13>

¹¹ NASCAM only collects royalties for the registered videos, songs and equipment such as jukeboxes for music creatives

and 2023, respectively, an improvement from an average of N1.0 million observed in the preceding three years. Royalties are based on how frequent artists' work¹² plays on platforms such as radio and television. Table 1 below shows that royalties distributions between 2019 and 2023 were shared in almost equal proportions between local and international artists. This highlights the presence of international entertainment work in the Namibian market, closely competing with local music creatives.

Table 1: NASCAM Royalties Distribution

Year	Total	Local artists	International artists
2019	1,079,391	62%	38%
2020	1,071,673	51%	49%
2021	987,473	54%	46%
2022	1,623,705	54%	46%
2023	1,891,575	47%	53%
Average		53%	47%

Source: NASCAM

2.5 Film

The film industry is one of the fast-evolving sectors of the creative industries in Namibia with potential to significantly contribute to economic growth due to its multiplier effect. The industry cuts across many areas of the creative industries and other sectors in the economy and stimulates businesses in other sectors such as hospitality and marketing while also contributing to cultural tourism promotion and social wellbeing in general. According to the Namibia Creative Industries Institute, the average feature film in Namibia spends approximately N\$100,000 a day when in production, while an average TV commercial may spend up to N\$150,000 in 2 days, and a photography shoot is able to generate 50,000 from it.

The Namibian film industry has seen several accomplishments over the recent years, attracting international players. At the same time, local films transcend across borders and receive admirable recognition. Africa Magic Viewer's Choice Awards has nominated some of the country's local films over the last few years, including "Hairareb" a drama film, which won as Best Movie in Southern Africa in 2022. For the 2025 awards several films received nominations for potential, such as "Skeleton Coast" for eight categories, "Walvis Tale" and "Lukas" for Best Indigenous Language Film, with "Walvis Tales" scoring an addition nomination for Best Documentary¹³.

¹² How frequent local and international artists' work is played on local platforms

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fi9OSjThm7g>

From international producer's perspective, Namibia stands out as one of the top five African nations for movie production due to its attractive and diverse landscape. In 2021 alone, Namibia hosted about 89 foreign films worth N\$74 million, despite the detrimental effects of COVID-19¹⁴. As provided by the Namibia Film Commission (NFC), international film producers are dominantly from countries like the United States of America, Germany, the United Kingdom, and India. Popular international movies like Dune Part Two (2024) and Mad Max: Fury Road (2015) both have scenes shot in Namibia, specifically at Swakopmund, Skeleton Coast, Rossing Mountains, Blanky Flats, and Henties Bay¹⁵. This further demonstrates the industry's potential to contribute to growth and employment in the country.

In terms of governance, the NFC oversees film activities, develops local talent and helps to market Namibia as a desirable film location¹⁶. Recently, NFC placed a public call for its 2025/2026 film project funding cycle, a strategy that aims to identify fresh and untold local stories as well as emerging talent, with a focus on areas outside of the capital city Windhoek¹⁷. The funding by NFC is aimed at providing support towards the production of up to three films, three short web series and a mini documentary.

2.6 TV, Radio and Photography

Creative sectors such as television and radio have witnessed significant expansion over the last couple of years. Television (TV) and radio mostly serve as modes for transmitting information and entertainment. Radio listeners are mainly made up of rural residents while urban residents occupy majority of TV subscribers. Currently, the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) is the primary service provider in television and radio given its widespread connectivity across the country. NBC dominates with three TV channels, where NBC 1 serves as the main channel, while NBC 2 focuses on news, whereas NBC 3 primarily focuses on entertainment as well as current affairs¹⁸. NBC radio services are available in various languages, thereby creating diversified platforms for local creatives to showcase their work.

¹⁴ <https://neweralive.na/namibia-hosts-89-foreign-films-in-2021/>

¹⁵ <https://emergefilmsolutions.com/country/namibia/#:~:text=Namibia%20has%20hosted%20productions%20such,divided%20into%20the%20following%20regions%3A>

¹⁶ <https://nfc.na/regulations#:~:text=We%20accomplish%20this%20by%20authorizing,environment%20for%20successful%20filming%20ventures.>

¹⁷ <https://www.namibian.com.na/film-commission-launches-2025-call-to-finance-local-film-projects-2/>

¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Namibian_Broadcasting_Corporation

Photography also plays a vital role in the creative economy by placing Namibia on the global map.

Photography largely functions as support services for other sectors such as films production. It is mainly used in marketing and continues to capture the country’s landscapes and diverse culture promoting activities in the tourism sector while supporting artists’ livelihoods. Namibian photographers mainly focus on landscape and astro sceneries (dunes, ancient rocks, mountains), wildlife, culture and documentary photography. Recent reports indicate that photographic safari took place in 39 out of 89 Namibian conservancies and thus a main source of income across 16 of these conservancies. The photography sector is broad and not only limited to commercial work or tourist attractions but also includes capturing events, at both corporate and individual levels.

2.7 Architecture

Architecture is one of the highly specialised sectors of the creative industries and is guided by a professional body. It is concerned with the creation of buildings structures and designs that shape cities and towns. It is also described to broadly play a role in the wellbeing of a society with its captivating aesthetics. It is architecture that add life to structures, embeds a story of the community or geographical landscape of an area and makes it attractive to tourists. Data from the Namibian Institute of Architects shows that the industry had a total of 91 professional practices in 2024, growing by an average of 4.0 percent since 2019. Also, there were a total of 115 registered professionals by the end of 2024, while on average 5 architects passed the Architects Professional Competency (APC) exams annually, between 2019 and 2024.

Table 2: Namibian Institute of Architects membership

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Registered Architectural Firms	77	78	80	77	86	91
Architects in Training	50	53	41	51	60	51
Corporate Architects	121	115	121	124	126	115
Architects Competency exams (APC) Passed	7	6	5	5	5	6

Source: Namibian Institute of Architects

2.8 Training and talent development

With regards to education and training, there are several tertiary programmes available to the cultural and creatives. As the main institution established for the purpose of training and developing creators in the creative industries, the College of The Arts (COTA) offers programmes in fashion design, radio, television,

new media design, and visual arts, including a one-year basic course for children aged five and above and has produced a total of 419 graduates since 2019. The University of Namibia (UNAM) also offers a few degrees in media, design, arts, theatre, and in heritage and conservation management. The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) has recently introduced a Department of Digital Arts and Animation, with a direct focus on scriptwriting, animation and filmmaking. Other training Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) and colleges include the Namibia Film School, National Training Authority and the COSDEF Arts and Craft Centre.

There are several funding opportunities and programmes available to students interested in pursuing careers in the cultural and creative industries. The Namibia Students Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF) offers funding to credited courses provided by accredited institutions of higher learning at undergraduate levels and at TVET qualifications levels. Besides NSFAF, the National Arts Council of Namibia also plays a pivotal role in allocating bursaries and grants to those who want to pursue careers or professions in different priority areas¹⁹. To remain relevant and profitable to the creatives, it is important that the trainings and funding are directly aligned to the ever-evolving needs of the industries, especially in the digital space.

3. Contribution of the creative industries to growth and employment in Namibia

A country's creativity is its main economic capital, as it directly links to innovation, evolution of new ideas and improvement in product and service delivery (Kober, 2025). Kober further explains that this leads to increased economic productivity, with multiplier effects that incentivise individuals to undertake new ventures to transform communities. This section highlights how the Cultural and Creative Industries contributes to economic growth based on the available data.

The Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA)'s 2023 Population and Housing Census (PHC) includes categories on employment in the craft and related trades²⁰. The report shows that 63,812 workers were employed in the craft and related fields. Of this, 80 percent of the workers were male, and highly concentrated in the Khomas region. Applying the UNESCO's 2009 cultural and creative industries Framework, the data

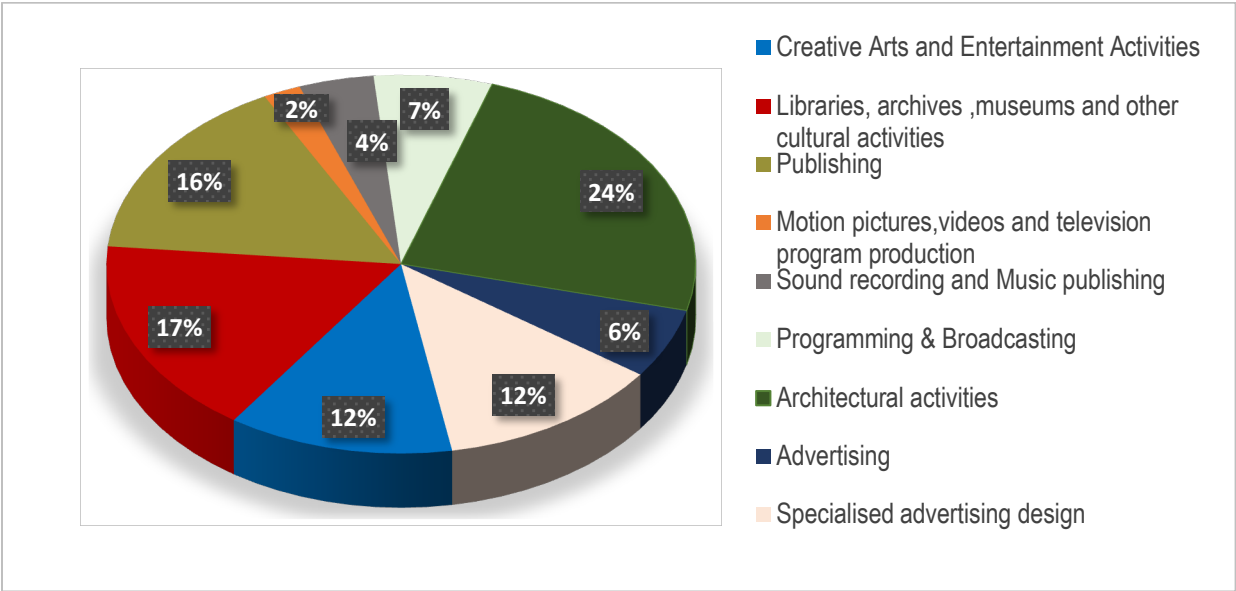
¹⁹Graphic and game design, organology, cultural policy and management, jewellery making, curatorship in arts, culture and creative fields, digital or new media art, arts research, journalism and education (visual and performing arts)

²⁰ Creative Arts and Entertainment Activities, Libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities, Publishing, Motion pictures, videos and television programme production, Sound recording and Music publishing, Programming & Broadcasting, Architectural activities, Advertising, Specialised advertising design

shows that only about 6,300 people were employed in the cultural and creative industries, in 2023. This is out of a total employed population of 546,805, and given the broadness of the creative industry, it may be subject to potential gaps, in either data reporting or misclassifications in the local creative industries.

Additional data from the NSA shows that occupation in the creative industry is spread across many sectors. Figure 1, below depicts that a higher percentage of workers in creative occupations was employed in architectural activities in 2023, followed by the category of libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities. It is important to note the volatile and project-based nature of the creative industries such as film production where work is mostly available on a short-term basis. This may, therefore, suggest that the presented statistics may understate the actual number of workers in each sector.

Figure 1: Creative occupation -2023 Population and Housing Census

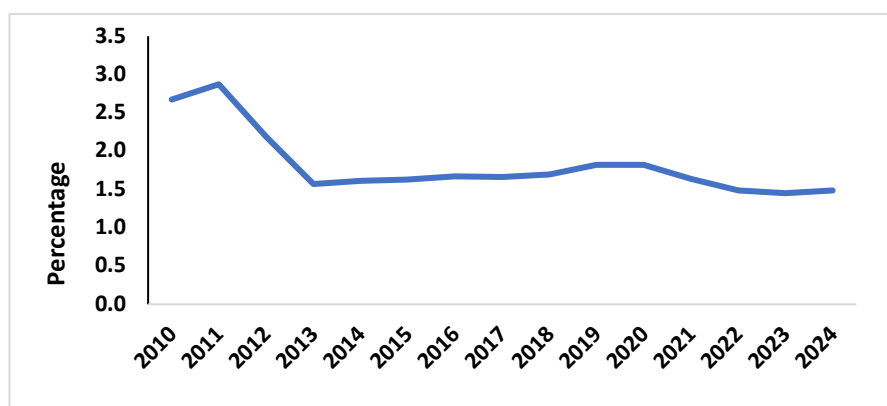


Source: NSA Population and Housing Census, 2023

In terms of contribution to GDP, the NSA National Accounts (NSA) includes data on the arts, entertainment and recreation sector. The NSA data shows that the sector’s contribution to GDP has been volatile during the past decade, as shown in Figure 2, below. Nonetheless, the sector contributed 1.5 per cent to nominal GDP in both 2023 and 2024 (NSA,2024). Although some industries may have been left out, this indicates that there’s potential and room for the sectors to expand beyond current levels especially under

prevailing policy priorities at a national level to support and promote entrepreneurship in cultural and creative industries.

Figure 2: Arts, entertainment and recreation sectors' contribution to GDP



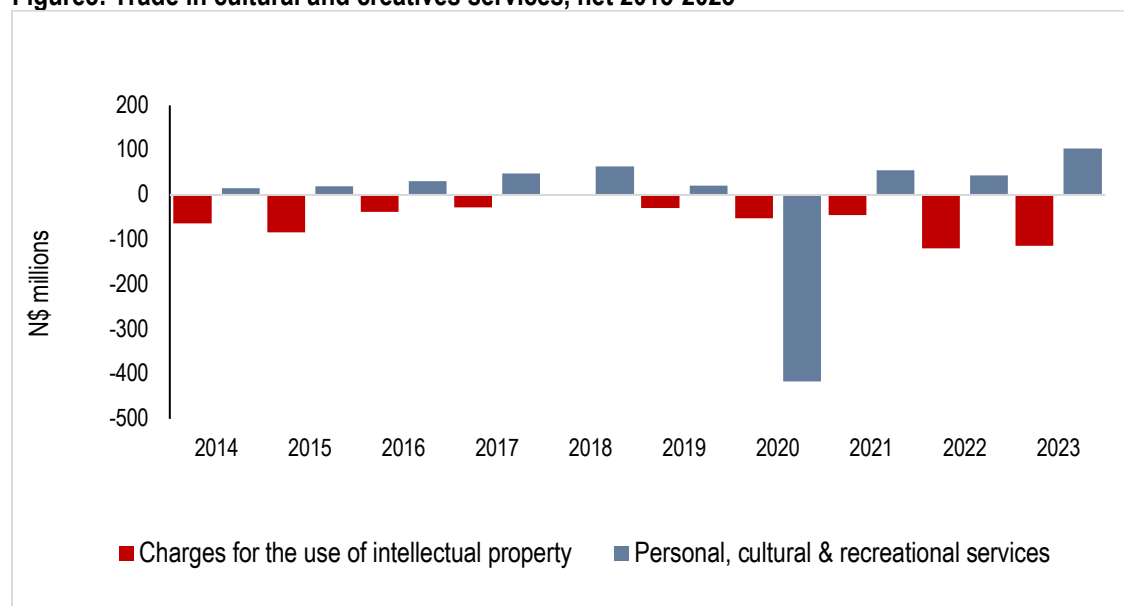
Source: NSA National Accounts (2024)

The creative economy is captured under the personal, cultural, and recreational services and charges for the use of intellectual property in the Bank of Namibia Balance of Payments (BoP) data²¹. As depicted in Figure 3, below, net trade in personal cultural and recreational services Namibia averaged at an outflow of about N\$1.7 billion between 2014 and 2023, with significant outflows in 2020 where the use of online audio services increased during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns²². On the other hand, trade for charges for the use of intellectual property which includes proprietary rights and rights for research and development mostly records outflows, averaging at N\$57.1 billion between 2014 and 2023.

²¹ The BoP follows the IMF' BMP6 Standards

²² This includes the hosting of online meetings (teams/zoom etc)

Figure3: Trade in cultural and creatives services, net 2015-2023²³



Sources: Bank of Namibia

The economic impact of the creative industries is potentially underestimated due to data limitations and lack of standardized methodological framework for measuring their contribution. This is especially prevalent in developing countries, where creatives activity is significantly concentrated in the informal sector and largely characterised by data inadequacies, and weak or non-existent regulatory frameworks (Afreximbank,2024). The broadness and interlinkages of activity in the creative sectors and the fact that they overlap with other sectors are some of the reasons for the underrepresentation of the sectors impact on the economy.

4. Challenges for Cultural and Creative industries in Namibia

The Namibian creative industries are faced with various challenges, which hampers their success and contribution to growth. This section aims to explore challenges facing the creative industries in Namibia, primarily based on the results obtained from the mini survey.

Behind thriving creative industries in other countries are strong funding mechanisms; however, the Namibia creative industries are confronted with insufficient funding opportunities. According to Afreximbank, (2024), African Governments initiatives to support the development, promotion and funding of

²³ These services comprise of performing arts, visual arts, heritage services, recreational services and other personal services.

Cultural and Creative Industries remains at an infant stage. Although there are initiatives provided by institutions such as the National Arts Council, grants²⁴ and others, the Namibian Creative industries attribute the lack of growth to underinvestment to non-existent investment in the industries. This is mainly because such resources remain insufficient to fully support the financing needs of the growing number of creatives. Most creative projects in Namibia appear to be self-funded, as they are unable to get credit scores required by financial institutions. This is described as an unsustainable way of financing that easily leads to failure.

The subject of intellectual property right is a critical challenge for the creative entrepreneurs in Namibia. With the new technological developments that makes reproduction and distribution of copyrightable works easily accessible, the industries face significant copyright challenges. While some policies exist, their implementation and enforcement of intellectual property protection legal instruments are cited to remain slow and less aligned to the trends in the creative industries. The Copyright and Related Rights Protection Bill 2024, currently in draft form, is expected to support and protect intellectual property assets, making it critical for driving economic growth and cultural preservation in the country. Nonetheless, its success remains rooted in efficient implementation and enforceability when it is finally promulgated.

Not only are there gaps in the regulatory environment, but some creatives may not be aware of their rights. As such, awareness and claiming one's intellectual property becomes a complex and costly process. This has even been made difficult by the advent of digital technology, where creatives work is visible and equally vulnerable, leaving some Namibian creatives' digital work in the hands of external parties without any rewards accruing to them. In the absence of Namibian legal frameworks that allows for the claiming of their work from unauthorised users, the growth of the Namibian creative industries remain stifled.

While technology helps make creatives output more efficient, digital transformation of creative industries also poses risks and challenges regarding the use of artificial intelligence. Generally, these challenges relate to the quality and reliability of content produced using artificial intelligence, whereby it prioritises data patterns to the detriment of others factors to increase the commercial objectives of its promoters. This has raised key concerns about how digitalisation can reduce cultural diversity and lead to cultural bias, while presenting regulatory challenges especially on consumer protection (UNCTAD,2024).

²⁴ <https://artscouncilnam.org/funding/>

The creative industries are also characterised by weak value chain linkages, as industries often operate in isolations, with limited collaboration between different sectors. This disintegration makes it difficult to scale up production and reach a wider market. This has also been observed in the corporate institutions' preferences for importing creative services from other countries instead of hiring and supporting local creative entrepreneurs. The absence of a comprehensive national strategy for the creative industries and minimal understanding of the creative industries value chain limits coordinated support and long-term planning. However, the results of the mini survey undertaken revealed that UNESCO is currently supporting MEIYSAC to develop a Cultural and Creative Industries Strategy.

High input costs and lack of incentives to attract adequate international investment is hindering the growth of the industry. This mostly affects the film and graphic designs industries where large equipment is required in the production process. Equipment and other materials used in large film production in Namibia are reported to be mostly imported as they are not available in the country, an opportunity that could be seized locally. To grow the film industry, some countries offer incentives in the form of tax rebates for international film production, this is identified as non-existent in Namibian and a challenge to the growth of the industry. Should the country fill this gap it is posed to significantly increase the growth of the creative industries and contribute to employment given the multiplier effect of the film sector.

With the significant advancement of technology and digital platforms, creative entrepreneurs need to consistently acquire appropriate skills to remain relevant and grow their business. Namibian creatives need to be technologically and digital savvy to be able to apply the skills and keep up with global trends to grow their business. Despite the level of education attained, data shows that more effort needs to be exerted on the provision of internet connectivity and training on basic digital skills to empower the youth, especially talented creatives and enable them to showcase their work on global digital platforms.

Data availability is a critical input in the formulation of appropriate policies. Lack of data is a major challenge in the cultural and creative industries, especially in developing economies (UNCTAD, 2022). UNCTAD further explains that countries face several issues in measuring services due to lack of the appropriate statistical infrastructure. This is also evident in the data available in the Namibian market where data gaps and classification issues are observed. This makes it difficult to quantify the industry actual

economic contribution and highlights a need for improved processes in data capturing and management for the country.

Namibian creatives struggle to build stable earnings prospects due to payment restrictions and regulatory barriers. Some streaming platforms such as YouTube do not monetise views for certain countries²⁵, Namibia is specifically excluded from the list of countries where YouTube monetise views, thereby limiting the income potential for Namibian creatives. Also, PayPal²⁶ does not, currently, have an active payout function for Namibia, which means Namibians can receive funds via the platform, but are not able to cash it out. The prevailing restrictions in the payment space disadvantages Namibian creatives, especially content creatives, limiting them from building stable earnings.

Creative entrepreneurs, especially outside urban areas have limited access to services and infrastructure and that limits their growth. Most creative spaces and facilities such as innovation hubs, museums, theatres and educational institutions like the College of Arts are only available in urban areas, making it difficult for these creatives to participate in exhibiting their work and/or to pursue studies in cultural and creative fields. Another issue at hand for creatives in the rural areas is the limited digital connection and reliable technology, which make them less attractive to outside investments, confines their market access and therefore opportunities to grow.

5. Opportunities for the Namibian cultural and creative industries

Despite its relatively small size and the challenges that the Namibian creative industries are faced with, there are still opportunities that would make a great impact on the Namibian economy. Namibia is a youthful nation, a valuable resource, with high potential to transform and drive growth in the creative industries. With a young population, the country is entering a potential window of demographic advantage (NDP6, 2025). The country has a relatively young population, with 34.1 percent in the youth category (15-35 years), (NSA,2024). This is an advantage in terms of labour force but also implies that the country will

²⁵ <https://www.namibian.com.na/namibian-creatives-struggle-to-make-money-online/>

²⁶ <https://www.namibian.com.na/namibians-to-keep-waiting-for-paypal-payout/>

continue to face an increased demand for economic opportunities. As such, concerted effort, as explored below, and as confirmed by the mini survey results, is needed to support and grow the creative industries where many young people are active.

Given the current high level of unemployment in the country, the creative industries are seen as a beacon of hope for the youth. Youth unemployment rate was recorded at 36.9 percent in 2024, increasing from the previous level of 33.4 percent published in 2018, (NSA,2025). The cultural and creative industries do not only present a hobby for the creatives but serves as an avenue for new employment and income generating opportunities. As such, the creative youth would strive to pursue entrepreneurship in the industries especially that creative work is driven by intrinsic qualities and passion. Through appropriate training, mentorship programmes, and community initiatives, the creative industries can become a strong driver of empowerment and social development.

Under the Human Development and Community Resilience pillar, the NDP6 strives to preserve and support the cultural and creative industries. The Plan targets heritage and culture sector as well as the arts and creative industries and aims to unlock community wealth through heritage tourism by establishing a national heritage Endowment Fund and promoting cultural heritage sites at local levels, among others. The plan further aspires to develop integrated infrastructure to enhance capacity in the creative industries. This will be attained through enhanced capacity in the creative industries, the strengthening of funding models and the improvement of intellectual property rights and market access.

The Harvard Growth Lab Report, (2022-2024) identified key growth challenges to the Namibian economy²⁷. One of these is the limited diversification of the economy and the overly reliance on resource sectors such as mining. The Report highlights the need for the country to explore other sectors and diversify the economy. The country has since incorporated economic diversification initiatives into the NDP6, which includes a priority focus on harnessing the creative industries and exploring opportunities to support and enhance its contribution to economic growth and employment.

²⁷ <https://growthlab.hks.harvard.edu/publication/a-growth-diagnostic-of-namibia/>

In its effort to support the Youth, who are the majority players in the creative industries, the Government has established a National Youth Development Fund. The Fund is one of the strategies for the Government to address the current high youth unemployment rate in the country. The Fund has been established to be extended to youth enterprises in agriculture & agro-processing, green & eco-friendly projects, manufacturing & value addition, as well as other sectors, including the creatives industries at interest rates of 2 to 4 percent. With an initial allocation of N\$257 million the Fund's implementing agencies have been identified as the Agricultural Bank of Namibia (Agribank), the Development Bank of Namibia (DBN) and the Environmental Investment Fund (EIF)²⁸.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to play a major role in advancing the development of Namibia's creative industries. AI-powered tools can use automation to blend audio, harmonies, create melodies, and drum patterns tailored for a given genre, allowing artists to have home studios and to produce more music in a shorter period. Through the systematic preservation and digital storage of vintage or deteriorated pictures and creative works, AI would help to preserve cultural heritage as this will make it more readily available for study and public exhibitions. In visual and arts design, inputting text-based commands enables AI to generate images and designs that can be used for initial sketches or provide various design options. Artificial intelligence can also help analyse screenplays, automate subtitles, edit videos, forecast audience interest and create special effects for filmmakers and videographers.

Namibia has unique and breathtaking landscape, with a combination of savanna land, mountainous areas, sand dunes and the desert that meets the ocean. The country also has two UNESCO²⁹ recognised world heritage sites, the Twyfelfontein and the Namib Sand Sea and a total of eight others on the waiting list. This gives Namibia a comparative advantage in tourist attraction, an opportunity to grow the tourism industries. As such, the creative industries can leverage Namibia's rich cultural heritage and artistic talent that integrates local art, music and storytelling to enhance tourism and boost earnings and employment in such industries. In addition to tourism, the country's landscape has strong potential to attract investment in

²⁸ Technical - MOF - Portal Ariel

²⁹ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

the film and television industries, which, given the right support, equally has higher potential for growth and employment creation.

Also, the cultural and creative industries are receiving increasing interest from global funders. The Afreximbank launched a \$1 billion African Film Fund as part of its Creative Africa Nexus program in 2025³⁰ which aims to develop creative and cultural industries in Africa. Also, as part of its commitment to the cultural and creative industries, the Africa Development Bank (AfDB) launched a Fashionomics programme to support enterprises in the fashion and textile industries in Africa worth a total of \$14.9 million over a period of 7 years, (AfDB, 2024). This presents an opportunity for Africa, including Namibia to develop the creative economy.

6. Lessons from other countries: South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya

6.1 South Africa

In accordance with (UNCTAD,2024), the South African creative and cultural industries contributed R161 billion to GDP, representing about 3.0 percent of total GDP. In South Africa, audio-visual, design, media and creative sub-industries are the major industries. South Africa's creative industries accounted for 4.1 percent of the workforce in 2019 alone (UNCTAD,2024). As the South African Government actively promotes talent development as well as using an entrepreneurial approach to manage specific cultural and creative industries, below are a few lessons that Namibia can benchmark on to improve the country's CCIs.

South Africa (SA) prioritizes skills development in the creative industries through education and training. The country has a network of schools, academies and colleges to help produce skilled creative professionals. The South African Film Academy places focus on human capital development by educating students and providing them with a 12-month paid internship through relevant employing partners³¹. The School of Audio Engineering Institute³² also provides courses in games, film, animation and audio. These

³¹ <https://safilmacademy.org/>

³² <https://www.thenextpages.com/sae-institute-south-africa/>

institutions produce skilled personnel for every phase of the value chain, ranging from set designers and cinematographers to sound engineers and set directors. The South African National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) provides financial assistance to aspiring creatives from low-income backgrounds, mostly those who want to study at public institutions³³. Namibian may need to consider distributing studies funding opportunities evenly across TVET and other qualifications to enhance specialization in different arrears of the creative industries.

The country's sports management prioritizes sports infrastructure development and operates on business principles. It emphasizes the importance of sports marketing, managing sports facilities and seizing opportunities in the hosting of sport events. This strategy enabled the country to co-host the 2003 Cricket World Cup as well as being the official host of the 2015 FIFA World Cup. The SA government has defined governing structures for sports entities such as the South African Sports Commission. Such structures generally operate on a business approach and sources funding for investments in sports activities, and to be held liable for sports performance outcomes. With the current commitment to improve and build sports infrastructure highlighted in Section 2.3, above, lessons for Namibia would be on the management of such facilities once constructed.

South Africa offers a Foreign Film and Television Production and Post-Production Incentive³⁴. The incentive is designed to attract foreign film and television productions and post-production work to promote employment creation. The rebates are based on qualifying criteria and consist of a 25 percent refund on qualifying production expenditure spent locally, which should not exceed ZAR25 million. Also, for expenditure on post-production, foreign production firms may qualify for 25 % rebate on qualifying expenditure. By attracting foreign production, the incentives enhance growth through local procurement and also promote the country's film television industry. On the contrary, Namibia does not offer any incentives in this area.

³³ <https://gauteng.net/nsfas/nsfas-funded-courses-fields-of-study-are-covered/#:~:text=Creative%20fields%20like%20Art%20and%20Design%20are%20also,Photography.%20Performing%20Arts%3A%20Theatre%20Arts%2C%20Dance%2C%20and%20Music.>

³⁴ <https://www.thedtic.gov.za/financial-and-non-financial-support/incentives/film-incentive/foreign-film-and-television-production-and-post-production-incentive-foreign-film/>

6.2 Nigeria

According to M'Hammdi & Jaidi, (2021), Nigeria's film industry well-known as "Nollywood" is the second largest movie industries in the world, after India. It is further stated that the country's music industry produces about US\$150 million annually. In terms of employment, the Nigerian creative industries contributed 6 percent to total employment in 2019, employing a total of 3.2 million people (UNCADT,2024). However, Nigerian creative industries still face challenges for which the country established and put in place relevant policies to combat these issues.

Through comprehensive policies and legal frameworks and dedicated government entities, Nigeria committed to ensure that it protects the Intellectual Property of local creatives. Nigeria has an institution that is solely responsible for the protection of intellectual property, the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC). Three primary laws protect the intellectual property of the country's creatives, in Nigeria: The Copyright Act of 2022³⁵, the Trademark Act of 2004, and the Patents and Designs Act of 2004. The Copyright Act is an automatic protection where creative work is guaranteed protection regardless of whether the artist has registered the work or not. However, registration with the NCC is essential as it serves as crucial proof of ownership in case of a dispute. The country established the Trademark Act to protect brand identification of an artist or creative firm, where the owner gains exclusive rights to the mark upon registration with the Trademark Registry. Lastly, the Patents and Designs Act protects ornamental features of a creative product to prevent other creatives from reproducing it.

With intentions of protecting the local fashion industries, Nigeria enforces tariffs along with quotas on imported products. The Government imposes high tariffs to stimulate consumers to buy local textiles and finished garments, and to discourage these imports. Currently, tariffs on imported textiles and apparel remain between 20 to 35 percent³⁶. Nigeria spends around U\$6 billion on the importation of finished garments and textiles. At various times, Nigeria had placed bans on the importation of specific textiles and finished goods, and recently the country's Federal Government proposed the introduction of a U\$4 billion annual clothing import Bill³⁷, which aims to place limits on the clothing imports. Although the bill is still in talks, this move signifies the Government's commitment to significantly reduce garment imports.

³⁵ This act provides protection for musical, literary, visual artistic and audiovisual works.

³⁶<https://www.zhengbackpack.com/nigeria-import-tax/>

³⁷ <https://kohantextilejournal.com/nigeria-targets-4-billion-garment-import-bill-bold-textile-revival-plan/#:~:text=In%20a%20strategic%20move%20to%20revive%20Nigeria%E2%80%99s%20struggling,to%20the%20Cotton%2C%20Textile%20and%20Garment%20%28CTG%29%20sector.>

6.3 Kenya

Strengthened by a strong collaborative structure, Kenya is transforming its creative industries by employing digital innovation tools, among other strategies. Creative industries in Kenya have adopted to digital marketing, advertising and streaming platforms, making way into the global market. Below are two major lessons that Namibia can draw from Kenya, with a focus on digital monetizing and data capturing inclusion for the creative industries.

Kenya introduced a mobile money service known as M-Pesa³⁸ to help built a simple financial infrastructure that is inclusive and accessible. Along with other sectors of the economy, this service is also used in creative industries, where fashion designers, tailors, musicians, filmmakers and event organizers sell their products through e-commerce platforms and receive instant payments from anywhere in the country, which enables direct payments from fans or audiences, cutting traditional intermediaries and digitizing the entire creative industries value chain. Out of Kenya's total population of about 57.5 million, there are about 45 million³⁹ M-Pesa users with over 70 million users worldwide, indicating the number of people that have trust in this mobile money service. Namibia's ongoing efforts to introduce an instant payment platform, spearheaded by the Bank of Namibia, present an opportunity for the country to emulate the Kenyan example

Kenya introduced a model for measuring the economic contributions of its creative industries, using satellite accounts. The country has thus far published its Film Industries Satellite Account (FISA)⁴⁰ which used to measure the contributions of Kenya's film industries. This is a collaborative effort between the German Society for International Cooperations (GIZ) and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). FISA captures key data such as revenue, job types, gross capital formation, employment figures and contribution to GDP. Data is collected through desktop research, industries reports, interviews, surveys as primary source, and digital platforms to acquire a wider range of data. Setting up a similar programme (satellite account) would address the current lack of data and ensure proper measurement of the industry's contribution to the Namibian economy.

³⁸ M-Pesa is a mobile phone-based money service that allows users to transfer money, make payments and acquire micro loans even if the users do not have a bank account.

³⁹ <https://techweez.com/2025/07/01/kenya-goes-cashless-mobile-money-subscriptions-soar-to-45-million/>

⁴⁰ <https://kenyafilmcommission.go.ke/news/kfc-launches-the-first-ever-film-industry-satellite-account/>

6.4 Ghana

Another exceptional example Namibia stands to leverage on is from the Central Bank of Ghana. The Bank of Ghana has put in place regulatory infrastructure that guide and acknowledges Intellectual Property as a movable asset Bank of Ghana, (2023). The Bank established a collateral Registry, under the Borrowers and Lenders Act, 2020, which, among others, permits the use and recognition of Intellectual Property, such as copy rights and patent a secured assets worthy to be used for collateral purposes. This implies that creative entrepreneurs can present their Intellectual Property to banking institutions to apply for loan. The initiative has been recognised as an impactful support for the creative businesses in Ghana considering that assets holdings among the creative entrepreneurs are primarily in intangible resources. Considering that lack of funding opportunities is cited to be one of the major challenges hindering the growth of creative businesses in Namibia, it would be advisable for the relevant institutions to give this initiative a consideration.

7. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

The Namibian creative industries are increasingly being recognized as a significant contributor to economic growth and employment opportunities. This paper aimed to assess the status of Namibian creative industries, exploring possible challenges it faces and opportunities available to the industries. The Namibian creative industries encompass a wide range of artistic forms such as visual arts, music, performing arts, film, advertising, architecture, fashion design, the digitalised sector of graphic design, and others smaller sectors with cultural and artistic traits such as literature.

The paper highlights that cultural and creative industries do in fact contribute to GDP and employment in Namibia. This has also been confirmed with lessons from the countries reviewed, where such as been observed, especially when the industries are offered targeted support. However, challenges especially data-related were encountered in trying to fully explore the degree of the industries' contribution to the economy. It's important to note that this places a strain on performance evaluation and progress tracking of the creative industries, thereby limiting the recommendation of appropriate support needed by the individual industries.

The paper also notes that certain industries in the creative space have higher potentials to drive growth and employment creation in Namibia. The film production industry, for example, is considered to have a higher multiplier effect as it cuts across other sectors. It stimulates businesses in other industries such as hospitality and tourism, beauty and cultural areas for costumes and others. Therefore, if efficiently incorporated in the mainstream developmental efforts and receive the necessary support, it will enhance economic activity and generate earnings for Namibians especially the youth who are the active players in the industries.

Several challenges persist in the creative industries, hindering the rate at which these industries can grow and eventually maximise their full potential. The industries are characterised with weak regulatory requirements that often fail to protect the creatives' work against illegal copying and distribution and faces high equipment costs, among others. While the Namibian creative industries grapple with limited access to funding opportunities, they also suffer from applicable skills gaps to effectively run their businesses in the digital world.

Amidst these issues, the Namibian creative industries hold potentials that if explored would make a great impact on the Namibian economy. This is especially true, given that the youth make up a large segment of the industries' active players. As such, a close focus on the opportunities highlighted in this paper would contribute to the National aspiration of reducing youth unemployment in Namibia. Thus, the following section provides policy recommendations to the current identified issues within the creative industries.

In addition, Namibia can improve by learning from the experiences of other countries that have thriving creative industries. These revolve around efforts to develop and properly maintain of sports infrastructure, considering that they can be used to bring extra earnings into the country by hosting international and regional sports competitions. Acknowledging the Copy rights and Related Rights Protection Bill that's currently underway⁴¹, Namibia can leverage on other nation's approaches to growing the film industry, as well as on the effective implementation, alignment and enforcement of relevant laws to protect the work of creatives. Moreover, the adoption of appropriate data models for measuring the economic contribution of the creative industries as employed by other countries Statistics Agencies is another point for consideration for Namibia especially given the current aspirations to grow the industries.

⁴¹ According to BIPA, the Bill was before the Cabinet Committee on Legislation.

7.2 Policy Recommendations

Given the above conclusion, the note recommends the following strategies with the view to grow and enhance the contribution of the cultural and creative industries to growth and employment in Namibia.

Table 1: Policy Recommendations

Key Pillars	Action Required	Responsible Authority/Agency	Implementation Timeline ⁴²
I. Industries empowerment and market access	<p>a) To achieve a contribution of 3 per cent to the GDP, the Government, together with stakeholders need to implement initiatives that are targeted to develop and grow the creative industries. The film production industry appears to have higher growth potential. Therefore, concerted efforts should be targeted towards these sectors. This may include the introduction of rebates on international film productions to attract foreign investment as well as government subsidies towards the purchasing of production equipment.</p> <p>b) In order to increase demand for creative products and services, there is a need to stimulate public interest through initiatives such as national or regional Creative Fairs.</p> <p>c) Also, the country needs to support creatives in increasing access to regional and international markets through special efforts and trade agreements and cultural exchange programmes. This will require</p>	Various players: Ministry of Finance, Namibia Competition Commission,	Medium to Long-term

⁴² Short-term: up to 2yrs
Medium-term: 2 yr – 5 yrs
Long-term: > 5yrs

proactive efforts by the responsible Ministries to identify such opportunities.

II. Funding	<p>a) The Government is advised to introduce initiatives to encourage the private sector to provide funding to the creative industries, in their individual capacities, complementing their corporate-social responsibility. The Government is also encouraged to mobilise Funding from the private sector, including the global funders to grow the National Youth Fund and enhance support to the creative industries.</p> <p>b) Financial institutions led by the Ministry of Finance should opportunities to allow for the use of Intellectual Property in credit provision to the creative industry.</p>	Ministry of Finance and Industry players	Medium to Long-term
III. Training and mentorship	<p>a) The public sector and private sector need to collaborate through structures such as the Namibia Public-Private Forum in providing mentorship programmes to capacitate and empower passionate creative entrepreneurs including those in rural areas to be able to grow their business. Also, wider expansion and incorporation of sports training in schools especially the best performing sport codes will help identify talent and contribute to the performance of the sports industry.</p>	MEIYSAC and various players/IT Sectors	Medium-term
IV. Data availability	<p>a) There is a need to improve data coverage and classification and the adoption of frameworks applicable to the creative industries. The challenges on data availability and access makes it difficult to quantify their economic contribution and advocate for supportive policies. The upcoming national accounts (SNA)</p>	National Statistics Agency, MEIYSAC	Medium to Long-term

rebasing exercise needs to render appropriate measurement of the industries, including adopting the Satellite Accounts approach, where applicable.

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