

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN RWANDA: DIGITAL PATHS TO GLOBAL MARKETS



Creative industries in Rwanda: Digital paths to global markets

About the paper

Rwandan creative industries are exploring ways to tackle challenges and develop products and services for domestic and international markets.

This ITC paper uses case studies to illustrate how music and film companies in Rwanda tap global platforms to expand outreach, follow the diaspora to enter overseas markets, tailor production and marketing for specific markets, and apply new business models and monetization channels. They are working to maximize visibility, collaborate with stakeholders and address fair sharing of revenue with artists and creators. These experiences provide insight for creative businesses in developing countries seeking a foothold in the global market.

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For more information, contact: Marion Jansen, jansen@intracen.org

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Foreword

The digital revolution has vastly expanded the frontiers of the creative industries, turning it into a sector that generates \$2.25 trillion of revenues globally. This is comparable to the gross domestic product of Brazil or India.

Digital trade is a fast-growing segment of international trade. New technologies allow small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from developing countries to leverage their culture and heritage by producing and distributing creative products and services to a global audience. This trade generates jobs and income, and also contributes to cultural diversity and national branding.

Listening to music from Africa or watching movies from Latin America has never been easier, thanks to digitalization. Creative talents are brought closer to their audiences, even though they could be thousands of miles apart.

In Rwanda, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as individual artists are leveraging digital technologies to reach a wider global market. They create online platforms to deliver Rwandan music to growing audiences, wherever they may be. With new technologies and business models, they are improving user experiences and helping artists monetize their creative work. Equally importantly, as these artist-entrepreneurs use technology, they are shaping a brand for Rwanda that is dynamic, innovative and powered by youth.

This report presents original stories from these Rwandans, sharing their experiences in exporting music, films and apps through digital trade.

It also sheds light on common challenges for small businesses exporting creative products and services in developing countries. These include the need for fair revenue sharing with artists; access to, and costs of, operating on global platforms; and the tough choice between producing original content versus adapting content for international clients. These challenges call for policymakers and industry players to take action to ensure inclusive and sustainable development of the creative sector.

The techniques used by Rwandan companies to overcome resource and market size limitations are a useful reference for companies facing similar challenges. These range from creating and operating their own platforms to share music; diversifying into new business lines such as co-production and teaching; and exploring financing options such as advertisements, revenue sharing, freemium and crowdfunding.

ITC has developed online training for SMEs in the creative industries, connected handicraft makers to tourism value chains, and supported governments develop sector export strategies. This guide represents a new contribution to support SMEs in the creative industries. We stand ready to work together with partners and agencies to help more of these small businesses and creative talents benefit from the global trade in creative goods and services.



Arancha González
Executive Director
International Trade Centre

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