

Tourism, Creative Economy and Regional Integration from the Lenses of Mass Communication

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Abstract

This is an advocacy paper that explores the intersection between tourism, creative economy and communication in regional integration in Africa. It uses newspaper narratives, derived from four purposely chosen national newspapers, Mail and Guardian and Maverick, from South Africa and Punch and Business Day, from Nigeria to discuss the subject matter. The reports were retrieved from their databases over a twelve-month period, organized thematically and analyzed qualitatively. It argues that given the threatening competition between the global north and south, there is need for Africa to have a voice that is anchored on culture, tourism and creative economy to foster closer exchange in many spheres and promote regional growth and competitiveness. This strategy could be tailored along the Chinese BRI model of regional integration and global exchange. The paper posits that increased intra-Africa exchange is very feasible if properly harnessed, and if mass communication plays a pivotal role in this regard.

Introduction

Regional integration and collaboration, economic diversification and exchange are increasingly becoming major issues of discourse among scholars, development professionals, business analysts and communication practitioners. This debate has become more apparent following the increasing divide and economic competition between the global north and south and the resultant emergence of political cum economic blocs such as G8, BRICS, G20 and so on. This may be exacerbated by the executive orders signed recently by Donald Trump; imposing high tariffs on selected imports from China, Canada, Mexico etc and his current global economic and political disposition. We acknowledge the historical efforts at regional cooperation and integration across the globe, including Africa. However, exploring the intersection between tourism, creative industries and communication in this regard will provide a veritable platform for

collaboration in other spheres, including trade. The strength of many African countries lies in their diverse, but unique cultures, hospitable nature, natural assets and creative industries, and if properly articulated and promoted, will foster cultural exchange, economic growth, and national development. Thus, while the numerous potential heritage and tourism resources as well as the thriving destinations in Africa are valuable assets, they need to be packed and promoted through the media of communication to attract tourists and subsequently catalyze development in other spheres. Media portrayal and framing of events have been acknowledged as potent catalytic tools that shape public perceptions, which ultimately prompt their actions or inactions, as the case may be.

Tourism and creative economy in Africa have grown significantly in recent years, with projections of continued expansion. For instance, South Africa's tourism sector recorded 8.92 million international tourist arrivals in 2024, which is an impressive 5.1% increase compared to 2023 (South Africa Government, 2025). Morocco was even more impressive in this regard, having received 15.9 million tourists, representing 20% increase in international arrivals in 2024 compared to 2023. Kenya's tourism sector earned 452.2 billion shillings in 2024, representing a 20% rise compared to 2023 (Reuters, 2025). In 2021, Nigeria recorded a lowly 518,000 tourist arrivals, ranking 68th globally in absolute terms (World Data, 2021). Nevertheless, it is projected that its tourism revenue will reach \$3.77 billion, with an annual growth rate of 10.60% (Statista, 2025).

Africa's creative industries also wear an impressive outlook in terms of economic contributions, driven by musicians, filmmakers, and digital innovators. Notable artistes like Wizkid, Tems, and Tyla are making waves across the globe, creating new standards in global pop culture and amassing billions of streams (thecreativebrief.africa, 2024). On the average, cultural and creative industries (CCI) contribute 8.2% to total employment in African nations, and this is higher than the global average (Afreximbank Media, 2024). It is projected that Africa will produce up to 10% of global exports of creative goods, valued at around \$200 billion (or 4% of Africa's GDP), by 2030 and could create more than 20 million job opportunities (The Africa CEO Forum, 2024). The above underline the significance of tourism and the creative economy in Africa's economic growth and global cultural influence. However, there is need to promote Africa-focused exchange in all spheres of development, using tourism and creative industries as a launching pad.

A number of scholars have studied the intersection between tourism, cultural economy and regional integration and concluded that, while some negative effects may occur, there are numerous potential beneficial impacts. In their Bibliometric Analysis on Creative Tourism (2002-2022), Faria *et al* (2024)

revealed that most publications relating to Creative economy and tourism increased in the last ten years in the Scopus database, thereby drawing more attention to the industry. Yangailo (2025) identified poor tourism marketing, poor transport and communication infrastructure, poor government support and investment in tourism, disease and lack of security as the most dominant challenges to travel and tourism growth in Eastern and Southern African countries. He recommended a multi-faceted strategy, including full support for the implementation of the regional strategy for sustainable tourism development, and the establishment of an independent body to oversee and ensure the implementation of the strategy. Regional blocs such as COMESA, SADC and EAC can promote sustainable development, economic expansion and regional integration if complemented by cooperation among states, private sector involvement and supportive government policies.

For Gruber, Ebenstreit, Fischer, Gross Wang, Heintel and Payer (2024), regions have emerged that are active in the fields of regional policy and development in spite of the growing need for a programmatic incentive to set-up collaboration. In his *Overview of South Asian Tourism Industry and Significance of the Regional Tourism Integration*, Amin (2021) concluded that Regional Tourism Integration (RTI) can pave the way for an integrated tourism hub with cost-effective promotional programmes and a concrete marketing strategy for sustainable tourism development in South Asia. In India, the media contributes to 80% of tourism revenue and tourism contributes to 25% of media's revenue (Rameshkumar & Karthikeyan, 2018). Furthermore, Hou, Wu, Ju, Lai (2021) revealed that the evolution of regional tourism economic linkages and the accessibility of transportation networks significantly impacted regional tourism economies in Poyang Lake Region, China.

Scholars (Croy and Kersten 2010; Lindstorm 2010; Parashar and Indolia 2013; PraveenKumar 2014; Sanyal 2009; Croy, Beeton and Frost, 2010;) have argued that there is a strong link between the media and tourism industries. Tourism depends highly on media reporting because the vast majority of travel decisions are made by people who have never seen the destination first-hand for themselves. Such decisions are often taken after being duly informed about their inherent values, uniqueness and attractiveness; a role which the media is in a vintage position to perform. The media in all ramifications are duly equipped to create awareness about any destination or activity and what it offers and portray same in a manner that elicit the desired visitation and attention. While tourism attracts visitation, the media portrays the attractiveness of tourism and its destinations to enhance further visitation. The media industry works with hostels, travel agencies, tour operators, airlines, creative industries and the various government agencies to generate

revenue and promote them through such multiple sources as television, radio, newspaper, books, magazines, movies, and internet.

It suffices to reflect on some narratives from specific media to buttress our point of view. Media inputs come in the form of campaigns, news and feature stories, editorials, documentaries, public announcements, and advertisements. The framing of any of such information and language used are major determinants of the priority given to the information by the concerned media. The narratives have been delimited into themes that portray the stories, reports and items published in 2024 by four newspapers, *Punch* and *Businessday*, for Nigeria and *Mail and Guardian* and *Maverick*, for South Africa over a twelve-month period as retrieved from their databases. The themes are taken one after another.

Benefits, Opportunities and Prospects

Many of the stories reported the accruable benefits, available opportunities and prospects of tourism and creative industries to regional development and integration during the period under review. The stories have been delimited under the following:

Economic Growth and Development through Tourism and Creative Industries

Tourism and the creative industries are seen as critical drivers of economic growth and development. The newspapers captured this theme vividly during the period under review. The following stories in *Mail and Guardian* and *Maverick* newspapers are typical examples.

1. Business Tourism on the Up, Says De Lille by N Ndlovu
2. Africa's Travel Indaba to Boost Local Economy by Lyse Comins
3. "Youth4Tourism initiative takes off with job creation in tourism industry"

The first story reported that "*Trade-show Meetings Africa*" generated R488 million (approximately \$258 thousand) in 2023, with expectations to surpass this in 2024. Additionally, South Africa welcomed 4.8 million international tourists from January to July 2023, basically because of increased collaboration with other countries and the establishment of more airline routes. De Lille noted that airlines that fly into South Africa would want a plan that integrates leisure tourism with investment opportunities since they "rely on selling business class seats to make money." Similarly, Lyse Comins' story: "*Africa's Travel Indaba to Boost Local Economy*," revealed that the forum generated R408.6 million (approximately \$22 million) in direct revenue. The third story, published in *Maverick* reported that "*Youth4Tourism initiative...*" contributed R60 million (approximately \$3.2 million) in youth salaries in 2024 while stimulating South Africa's post-pandemic economy.

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Some stories in *Punch* newspaper in 2024 also emphasized the potential of tourism and creative industries in regional growth and collaboration. For example, in *"Tourism will boost Kaduna's poor IGR, service projects,"* Israel Bulus, April 2024, quoted Dr. Tobi Bernard Thomas as follows: "tourism can lead to economic development through revenue generation, foreign exchange, and local work creation". He noted that tourism can help Kaduna State overcome its debt burden and improve infrastructure by attracting tourists and investors. Similarly, the strength of creative industry in economic development was echoed during a discourse on *"Creative arts technology: Nigeria's new oil, - Sanwo-Olu"* (Oyediran, 2024). Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu was quoted as saying that "Afrobeats and Nollywood are two of Nigeria's biggest cultural exports that have caught the attention of global markets, earning international acclaim, including Grammys. He emphasized that along with agriculture; the creative industries will "unlock the country's vast potential and build a resilient economy." Thus, the industries were reported as being in a position to generate domestic growth and serve as regional unifiers, encouraging cross-border collaborations in film, music, and other art forms.

Technology and digital innovation

There are some stories in *Mail and Guardian*, 2024 that echoed the use of technology to strengthen both tourism and the creative economy sectors. These include: (1) *"Delicious Festival Trader Academy Powered by FoodBev SETA in Partnership with CATHSSETA Launches Next Leg of SMME Development Programme,"* and *"Virtual Reality Opens Exciting New Pathways of Learning."* The first story reported the launching of the second intake of 50 students for the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality, and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA) course." The course is aimed at providing students not only with the skills and knowledge required in tourism and creative industries, but also supporting the growth of small businesses and entrepreneurs in these fields. The story on virtual reality, tagged: *"Virtual Reality Opens Exciting New Pathways of Learning"* by Maritsa Grewe, explored how virtual reality (VR) technologies are transforming education in South Africa, where high dropout rates and poor pass rates persist.

The creative economy and its contributions to growth and innovation were also captured in the following stories, published by *Mail and Guardian*.

1. Innovating for Inclusion: Mark Harris on the Future of Tech, Startups, and Media, by Scott Peter Smith
2. Game-Changing Tech Adoption can Turn SMEs into Retail Giants, by Standard Bank
3. Breaking Boundaries: The Evolution of New Casinos and Their Impact on the Gambling Industry, by Online Betting

Story number 1 reported the transformative impact of digital innovation by Tshimologong in Johannesburg, which evolved from traditional IT to become a hub for digital creativity and tech-driven change. Its main focus is to empower disenfranchised youth, using startups to leverage technology for economic and social development. This portrays how creative industries help to enhance economic growth and address social challenges through inclusion and community empowerment.

There are also themes that capture the potentials of the creative industry that caught the attention of the newspaper. One of such stories is "New book explores emerging metaverse economy, AI creative revolution". A part of the story reads: "The metaverse economy is now starting to take shape as the technologies required to play in this parallel universe become more accessible. Landmarks are being built, countries are creating cyber services for their citizens, universities have opened and retail brands have started to trade".

Articles published by *Punch* newspaper in 2024 also captured how advancements in technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and digital connectivity, drive economic and cultural integration. A good example is the story: "Google to connect Africa, Australia with new subsea cable" (May 24, 2024, by Justice Okamgba). The story reported that: "Technology giants, Google, announced their intention to build the first-ever fibre-optic cable directly connecting Africa with Australia, noting that its purpose is to "facilitate broader regional connectivity" and foster "economic integration between the two continents". This implies that technology is invaluable in regional integration and tourism.

Infrastructural Growth and Development

The development of requisite infrastructure and the implementation of favorable policies are central to tourism promotion and regional cooperation. Well-developed transport systems, communication networks, accommodation and cultural facilities are the building blocks for tourism development, cultural exchange, cross-border collaboration, enhanced visitor experiences, trade and investments. A number of stories in *Mail and Guardian* highlighted how South Africa is addressing these aspects to attract more tourists.

The stories include: "Medical Tourism has Great Prospects in South Africa," by Nomqhele Dube and "Urban Decay and Infrastructure Projects to Be Fast-Tracked," by Lyse Comins (2024), both of which showcased the importance of infrastructure in boosting tourism.

According to Dube (2024), "South Africa can capitalise on the medical tourism sector by investing in and promoting its healthcare infrastructure,

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leveraging its cost-effective treatments, and enhancing its overall patient experience." He noted that "partnerships with international medical institutions and tourism agencies can create comprehensive packages that combine medical treatments with travel experiences."

Comins (2024) discussed government's efforts to tackle urban decay to improve tourism prospects, reporting that Minister Dean Macpherson announced that "the Department of Public Works is working to fast-track projects, tackle urban decay, and address hundreds of derelict and hijacked buildings across the country." He also announced a partnership with the KwaZulu-Natal Public Works Department, Fedhasa, and eThekweni Metro to revitalize infrastructure and boost tourism in the region.

An article in *Punch* newspaper highlighted the importance of infrastructure upgrade, such as roads, digital connectivity and tourism facilities in regional integration and economic development. Such investments will not only connect regions physically, but also strengthen economic and cultural ties. This was captured in the story "Minister urges Lagos to showcase Epe fishing potential" (April 16, 2024, by Agency Report). The Minister of Tourism Lola Ade-John called for the establishment of a proper fish market and improved maintenance of tourist sites like the Marina Waterfront and the Oju Alaro Shrine to enhance infrastructural supply. She also pointed out that, "Tourism sites must be kept neat and tidy to attract visitors and maximize their potential." Along with some other stories, the *Punch* newspaper highlighted how infrastructure upgrades and enhancement of facilities can attract regional and international tourists, and subsequently foster economic growth and cooperation.

International travelers, Cultural Exchange and Partnerships

A lot of stories in *Mail and Guardian* newspaper projected some tourist attractions and sites in South Africa to international travellers. The stories included:

"Celebrity Drive launch puts South African tourism in the spotlight," by HONOR

"Discover the allure of South Africa: Nature, business and culture," by Brand South Africa

"Best tours for over 50s: Your next adventure awaits," by Flight Centre

"From cultivation to cup: South Africa must brew up rooibos tea tourism," by North West University

"MBDA statement: Old St. Peter's site opens in time for bumper cruise liner season," by Mandela Bay Development

"Tempo Luxury Restaurant scores highly at World Luxury Awards in Bali," by Partner Content and so on.

The first story noted that "The primary objective of the Celebrity Drive campaign is to highlight the stunning landscapes of South Africa, reminding both locals and international tourists of the country's status as a top travel destination" The second story argued that South Africa is a captivating destination for travellers, investors and professionals alike, and offers a unique blend of natural beauty, rich culture and a dynamic business environment. The remaining stories were area-specific aimed at showcasing South Africa as a choice destination.

Punch newspapers of 2024 reported how festivals and exchange among diverse cultures can create unity among different peoples and foster regional understanding. Through cultural festivals and collaboration in creative activities, different regions can be integrated. An example is found in the story "FG seeks UNESCO recognition for Ojude Oba Festival" (June 25, 2024, by *Punch* Editorial board), where the Minister of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy, Hannatu Musa Mussawa described the annual festival as "a platform that fostered the unity of a country in diversity". Also, in the story "2024 World Igbo summit committee inaugurated in Asaba" (August 1, 2024, by Matthew Ochei), one of the speakers, Patrick Nwanze, explained that the "gathering of diverse cultures and groups of Igbo-speaking people would play a significant role in enhancing national cohesion and integration". The stories showed how events and festivals can help to foster unity and cohesion between cultures and regions.

Public-private partnerships and Relationships

Collaboration between public and private entities has become the basis for advancing tourism and creative industries, with public-private partnerships (PPPs) offering innovative solutions to development challenges. These partnerships bridge funding gaps, inject technical expertise, and facilitate cross-border initiatives that drive regional cooperation. This theme was highlighted in some *Punch* newspaper stories, demonstrating how they are being leveraged to revitalize tourism infrastructure, expand creative opportunities, and enhance regional connectivity.

For example, Ademola Adegbite, April 18, 2024 reported in the story: "Oyo to partner investors for tourism development," that Governor Seyi Makinde plans to attract ₦250 million in private investment to develop six major tourism sites, including Idere Hills. Similarly, Deji Ayoola, May, 8, 2024 reported in the story "Rebirth for arts, culture, and creative economy," on the collaboration between the Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy, the Central Bank of Nigeria, and The Bankers' Committee to renovate the National Theatre and position Nigeria as a cultural leader in West Africa through infrastructural supply.

Challenges of Tourism and Creative Economy

Stories from *Mail and Guardian* in the year under review highlighted the challenges facing the tourism industry and creative economy in Africa. Notable examples were:

Infrastructure Deficit

"Infrastructure Issues Affect Tourism, and the Repercussions are Huge" by Bongani Mthombeni

"Free State Tourism Growth Hampered by Poor Municipal Services, Says MEC Toto Makume" by Lunga Mzangwe

"Africa's Only Penguin Moves Closer to Extinction" by Sheree Bega

Limited infrastructural supply and poor municipal services were seen by the first two stories as the bane of tourism development in South Africa. The story by Sheree Bega highlighted environmental concerns threatening tourism, such as habitat loss, pollution, and food shortages occasioned by climate change and overfishing, the resultant decline in the population of African penguins and their possible extinction. This could lead to a significant loss of biodiversity and their tourism potential.

Stories in *Punch* newspapers also echoed the lack of adequate infrastructure as a significant barrier to regional cooperation through tourism and creative industries. For example, in a story titled: "Erin-Ijesa waterfall: Tourist gem in ruins as neglect persists" (December 7, 2024, by Bola Bamigbola), the poor state of infrastructure around the Waterfalls was laid bare, describing the roads leading to the site as "almost impassable," while waste management issues were alarming. This state of affairs, according to the story, has frustrated local residents and tourists alike, preventing the site from reaching its full potential. Also, in the story "Stakeholders seek visa policy review to boost tourism," August 11, 2024, by Olasunkanmi Akinlotan, Sally Okpo, a tourism expert, was quoted as saying that: the "tourism sector is faced with a series of challenges, among which are infrastructure deficit and economic issues".

Insecurity and Crises

Furthermore, *Punch* newspapers reported how threats such as insurgency, inter-communal conflicts, and border tensions discourage investors and tourists alike, thereby weakening the potential for collaboration across nations. A good example is found in the story "ECOWAS parliament seeks reforms to address regional crises" (September 24, 2024, by Gift Habib). Here, the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Memounatou Ibrahima, acknowledged the destabilizing effects of insecurity on regional cooperation and development, stating that the "region is ravaged by floods, terrorism, violent extremism, and irregular migration that have affected thousands of citizens." The article also highlighted how these crises create an atmosphere

of fear, instability, and distrust, which hinder tourism and investment. The ECOWAS Parliament called for reforms to address these challenges, emphasizing the urgent need to tackle insecurity to ensure smooth regional collaboration through tourism and creative industries.

Underutilization of Cultural Assets

Articles in *Punch* newspaper reported the missed opportunities in showcasing Nigeria's rich cultural assets as tools for strengthening cross-border tourism and creative industry collaboration. They emphasized the need to use cultural events to promote tourism and regional integration. For instance, "FG to unveil Abuja international carnival..." (May 16, 2024, by Deborah Tolu-Kolawole), captured the intention of the Federal Government of Nigeria to use the Abuja Carnival to promote tourism and boost the economy and promote regional cooperation. One of the interviewees noted that "the last Abuja carnival was held in 2016." This story recognized that the potential of cultural events in fostering cooperation and tourism has often been underutilized.

Solutions to the Challenges in the Tourism, Creative Economies and Regional Integration

A range of stories from *Mail and Guardian*, 2024 portrayed how some of the challenges facing tourism and creative industries can be addressed. They included:

1. How the New Northern Drakensberg Nature Reserve is Transforming Conservation in South Africa by Caitlin Blaser Mapitsa
2. Outbound Travel Rebound: What South Africans Need to Know About Air Capacity and Fares
3. Aviation Can Give Wings to Africa's Economy by Rudi Kimmie and Nyashadzashe Chiwawa

The first story noted that the newly established reserve, spanning 6,500 hectares, is a critical driver in conservation. The reserve works closely with communities to preserve the ancient rock art, significant grassland and water sources for numerous people. It connects two major protected areas, and creates a transnational corridor from South Africa to Lesotho. This corridor facilitates wildlife migration, and supports the recovery of migratory species, while combating habitat fragmentation.

The significance of wildlife conservation is underscored by its contribution to South Africa's economy. For instance, biodiversity-based tourism contributed approximately R27.7 billion (approximately \$1.5 billion) to the economy in 2019, representing 0.5% of the national GDP and 13.3% of the total economic activity within the tourism sector (Department of Statistics, South Africa).

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Similarly, Rudi Kimmie and Nyashadzashe Chiwawa's story, 'Aviation Can Give Wings to Africa's Economy', highlighted the transformative potential of Africa's growing aviation industry. It noted that, with its vast geographical size and diverse economies, a robust aviation network can enhance connectivity, boost intra-continental trade, and drive tourism. Apart from reducing travel times and costs, aviation can attract foreign investment and promote industrialization and economic diversification, and subsequently encourage tourists to explore Africa's rich cultural and natural attractions.

The strategies to overcome challenges in the creative economy were portrayed in the following stories:

1. Prepare Schools to Develop Entrepreneurial Skills
2. Empowering Marginalised Entrepreneurs: A Vision for Inclusive Economic Growth

While the first story stressed the growing need to inculcate entrepreneurial skills in students to enhance their competencies and make them employable and or/self-employed, the second emphasized the importance of empowering marginalized entrepreneurs to foster inclusive economic growth. An excerpt from the latter story read: "Nobesuthu Ndlovu, Director of SME at Old Mutual Limited, shared insights into the empowering impact of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly those owned by marginalized groups, on the social fabric of South Africa." These initiatives, along with other similar programmes, show the potential of entrepreneurship to uplift people, including marginalized communities and create a sense of belonging and provide economic and social benefits across the continent.

Many stories in *Mail and Guardian* newspaper highlighted the challenges and opportunities for regional integration in Africa, and offered valuable potential solutions:

1. African Nations Must Push for Homegrown Solutions to the Continent's Problems (Cele, 2024)
2. Unlocking Regional Potential: South Africa's Gas Master Plan and Energy Transition (Siyobi, 2024)
3. Alternative Payment Systems in Africa and BRICS Member States Can Shift Goeconomic Dynamics (Asanda, 2024)
4. Why Gas Is Not the Bridge Fuel for Africa
5. Aviation Can Give Wings to Africa's Economy
6. US 'Bonfire' Elections an Opportunity for African Development

A cursory look at the titles reveals the growing interest in African-oriented solutions to Africa's problems, the need to harness the benefits accruable to regional cooperation and mutual exchange, the quest to build a robust financial system that facilitates exchange and builds bridges across the

region. An excerpt from the first story aptly captured the thinking in this regard and why Africa requires localized solutions at present. At the African Peace and Security Dialogue, hosted by the Thabo Mbeki Foundation, participants unanimously reaffirmed the need for “African solutions for African problems,” a concept encapsulated in the African-centred Solutions for Peace and Security (AfSol) approach. This strategy promotes leveraging the continent’s unique resources, cultural heritage, and regional cooperation to address its challenges to peace, security and development.

Strengthening the creative industry and regional integration

The following stories exemplified the reports in *Mail and Guardian* newspaper under this subhead:

1. After Years of Debate in Parliament, Ramaphosa Sends Copyright Bill to ConCourt by Elsie Ferreira (2024)
2. Copyright Bill Enables Creatives to Own Their Work and Be Paid Fairly by Denise Nicholson (2024)
3. AI-Generated Art: Protected in SA Law? by Donrich Thaldar and Marietjie Botes (2024)

The first story portrayed President Cyril Ramaphosa as being committed to the rights of creative professionals, performers and writers having referred “the Copyright Amendment Bill, and by extension the Performers’ Protection Amendment Bill, back to parliament [after years of being in the cooler], to the constitutional court for certification.” The second story emphasized the progressive nature of the bill, pointing out that: “The constant criticism of the Copyright Amendment Bill is against the interests of authors and other creators. What critics fail to note is that the bill includes some of the most progressive and aggressive provisions of any copyright law in the world; it increases the rights of authors and others to create, own their work, and be remunerated fairly.”

The theme on regional integration is addressed through the following stories:

1. The Future of the African Union: How Many More Days Are Left? (Zung, 2024)
2. SA’s First Exports Shipped into Africa under African Continental Free Trade Area Pact (Comins, 2024)

These stories reflected on the collaborative efforts of regional political organizations like the Organization of African Unity (OAU), lately AU in regional integration and economic growth. The second story aptly captured the efforts to boost intra-African trade as follows: “Delegates from 40 African countries are in Durban to strengthen the agreement to boost intra-African trade.” These developments are very critical in the efforts to grow African economies and extricate them from the apron strings of the global north.

Framing of the Stories and Reports

A critical examination of the reports and stories revealed a range of frames as follows.

Optimistic and Promotional Frame

Some stories in the papers under review used promotional frame to portray tourism and creative industries as untapped opportunities for regional growth. For example, a *Punch* newspaper story titled: "Lagos seeks investment in entertainment, tourism" (March 13, 2024, by Idowu Abdullahi), used phrases such as "transformative opportunity" and "hub for economic regeneration" to portray Lagos as a model for Africa's tourism and entertainment. It stressed the confidence of the government in attracting investments and fostering regional cooperation. The story framed the vision of Lagos as being in tandem with regional goals, portraying it as a leading force in economic and cultural integration.

Furthermore, the article highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships in achieving these goals, with Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu calling for collaboration with the private sector to maximize opportunities. The story emphasized on shared success and future possibilities to promote tourism and creative industries as essential for achieving sustainable regional growth.

A similar frame was adopted by *Maverick* newspaper of South Africa. In a story titled: "Tourism grows by 48.9% year-on-year," the author employed optimistic frame to portray the growth of the tourism industry in the country, promoting it as an area worthy of investment. The writer used such phrases as "remarkable growth," "tourism had passed the COVID-19-related slump and was now on the mend," "Surge in international arrivals and foreign direct spend," to frame the story. This article sees tourism as being not only resilient, but also a key driver of post-pandemic recovery.

Urgency and Emotional Appeals Frame

Some stories, particularly those concerned with systemic challenges adopted emotional and urgent frames to show the gravity of the situation. In "Erin-Ijesa waterfall: Tourist gem in ruins as neglect persists" (December 7, 2024, by Bola Bamigbola), phrases like "visibly distressed" and "literally destroying our heritage" evoke frustration and disappointment over the neglect of cultural assets. The story also presented an emotional appeal from a tourist to decry the condition of the site, while highlighting government's failure to act. This framing seeks to draw attention to the consequences of inaction, and urged for immediate intervention to preserve valuable cultural sites. The story described the waterfall as a "real shame," and echoed the idea that neglect has robbed the community and the region of a vital economic and cultural asset. Such emotional appeals aim to provoke action by exposing the cost of inaction on regional tourism and cooperation.

Similarly, *Maverick* used emotional appeal to describe a boat mishap off Egypt's Red Sea coast. The headline read: "Three bodies recovered from capsized tourist boat off Egypt's Red Sea coast" (Reuters, 2024). Such words as "capsized", "high waves and 13 missing people," create a sense of immediate danger, and emphasized the risks of inadequate safety measures in tourism activities and the need to take remedial action.

Collaborative and Diplomatic Language Frame

Articles emphasizing partnerships and bilateral agreements used collaborative and inclusive language to highlight the importance of mutual efforts in regional cooperation. In "Nigeria, Benin Republic to boost cross-border trade" (May 22, 2024, by Animashaun Salman), the story used phrases such as "strengthening social and economic interaction" and "fostering mutual benefits" to positively frame the collaboration between Nigeria and Benin Republic. Such phrases reinforce trust and goodwill between stakeholders, encourage further investments and policy alignment. Thus, through partnerships, countries can address regional issues more effectively, and pave the way for greater unity and economic growth.

Critical and Problem-Oriented Framing

Critical framing is often used to highlight systemic challenges and barriers to development, including regional cooperation. In "Stakeholders seek visa policy review to boost tourism" (August 11, 2024, by Olanikanmi Akinlotan), stakeholders criticized the restrictive visa policies and infrastructure deficits, and described them as "major impediments" to Nigeria's tourism growth. The story frames the two issues as solvable problems rather than inevitable obstacles if proper reforms are implemented. The story highlighted the inefficiencies and bottlenecks, and encouraged concerted action from relevant stakeholders, while holding policymakers accountable for their actions and inactions. This framing presents tourism and creative industries as sectors that require urgent attention to contribute meaningfully to regional integration.

Maverick newspaper also took a similar slant in the story: "Bo-kaap residents rally against over-tourism: demand sustainable solutions for cultural preservation" (Ndlovu, 2024). The story was portrayed with such phrases as "tourists and their tour buses are blocking roads", "extractive nature of tourism", and "residents cannot move out of their homes or neighborhoods." It focused mainly on the negative impact of tourism on local residents, and called for urgent action and more sustainable and inclusive practices.

Group identification, Culture and Heritage Frame

Some stories portrayed the significance of culture and heritage preservation in regional cooperation. For instance, the story: “FG to unveil Abuja International Carnival ...” (May 16, 2024, by Deborah Tolu-Kolawole), used phrases like “celebrating our diversity” and “promoting unity through culture” to frame tourism and creative industries as tools for group identification and solidarity. The carnival was presented as an opportunity to showcase Nigeria’s cultural wealth, while strengthening the historical bonds with neighboring countries.

Similarly, in “Erin-Ijesa waterfall: Tourist gem in ruins as neglect persists,” descriptions such as “its majestic presence” and “its role in the community’s beliefs” were used to highlight the historical significance of the Waterfalls. The story presented cultural sites and heritage resources as symbols of unity and regional identity and, therefore, need to be preserved and promoted for investment. These narratives remind stakeholders of the shared cultural assets that connect the region, and foster cooperation and mutual respect.

Conclusion

Among the numerous benefits of regional tourism and creative industries are infrastructure improvement, facilitation of free movement, improvement of communication and intergroup relations, enhancement of knowledge, income redistribution and promotion of an alternative economy. The role of the media and tourism industries in bridging the gap between and among people and countries have been acknowledged (Croy and Kersten 2010; Lindstorm 2010; Parashar and Indolia 2013; PraveenKumar 2014; Sanyal 2009; Croy, Beeton and Frost, 2010; Ferguson 2010; Okoli 2017; Xu, Bao and Zhou 2006; Gligorijevic and petrovic 2009). While tourism attracts visitation, the media portrays the attractiveness of tourism activities and destinations to enhance further visitation.

The themes reported in the newspapers under review revealed the economic potential of these sectors, the role of cultural exchange in fostering unity, the importance of technology and infrastructure, and the impact of public-private partnerships. They also highlighted significant challenges such as infrastructure deficit, insecurity and crises, and the underutilization of cultural heritage and assets. The narratives predominantly portrayed the sectors in positive light, with emphasis on future opportunities, while also acknowledging existing obstacles. In all, the narratives posited that regional cooperation through tourism and creative industries holds substantial promise, but stressed the urgent need to address the complementary infrastructural, security, and policy challenges.

A number of partnership initiatives that could be adopted in the process include cultural exchange, peace and security, quality tourism and creative

industry services, capacity building and development, institutional building and adherence to ethical standards. These initiatives should be Africa-focused or what South Africa President recently called “African voices,” and anchored on a modified Chinese BRI model. The model has five priority areas, namely policy coordination, connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bond. These require multi-media approach that target all the key stakeholders involved in the industries to frame emergent discourses and stimulate desirable actions. It therefore, behooves the governments, tourism organizations, the creative industries and other stakeholders to understand and appreciate the need for collaboration and work closely with the media to promote tourism and creative economy in Africa.

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