The intersection of pop culture and education has become a global phenomenon especially with new audiences from traditional backgrounds. The appreciation of such intersections and the appropriation of the same into the teaching and learning curriculum has continued to grow beyond traditional geographic contexts of North America and Western Europe. Embedding pop culture, notably music into the curriculum has also received new calls for interdisciplinarity e.g., music and arts with business management. It has also been found that most of the key social actors in the pop culture space or creative economy, have tended to operate within the fringe or informal economy, which calls for further research exploration into how these players can be brought back into the mainstream for the harnessing of their contributions to sustainable development – social, economic and environmental.

Starting with the discourse on informality, a recent journal special issue on Africa’s informal economy pointed out that although intersectionality in entrepreneurship has attracted significant scholarship effort over the years, the discourse has been saddled by the liability of informality and/or smallness especially when the conversation is in the African context (Madichie, Gbadamosi & Rwelamila, 2021). Such baggage are predominantly funding or credit contingent with funds being more readily available for businesses in the ‘formal economy,’ despite the bulk of small or informal business activities catering to a significant proportion of the population, residing in the informal economy.

As for embedding pop culture into the curriculum, Madichie & Gbadamosi (2017) used a case illustration of a course launch at the University of Missouri linking hip-hop artists to curriculum development and pedagogy, to arguably “open up the discourse on the future trajectory of teaching and learning in higher education, with its attendant social implications – not the least for life after graduation.” The study also highlights how instructors have, in the past, based their syllabi on celebrities – from the Georgetown University to the University of South Carolina, University of Missouri and Rutgers University – all in the United States – cutting across departments from English through sociology to Women’s and Gender Studies. Ultimately that study captured intersections between hip-hop artistry and poetry, as well as meeting the needs of society more broadly. In terms of making societal impact, the authors alluded to the notion of bringing “street cred” into the classroom.

Moving on to the subject of social and/or societal impact, and with specific reference to the intersections of hip pop and entrepreneurship, Madichie (2011) highlighted the contribution of hip-hop to entrepreneurship and place marketing literature. That intersection was taken from the lens of an individual artist of African origin, Akon, whose music and lyrics – a “hybrid of
silky, West African-styled vocals mixed with North America’s East Coast and Southern beats” arguably provided fresh insights for place marketing.

Using “discourse analysis” of the lyrics from two non-chart songs by Akon, Madichie (2011) developed a conceptual base for a better understanding of the fusion of music and entrepreneurship as it impacts place marketing. He also found that the songs served to bridge socio-cultural (ethnic cuisine, immigration and social exclusion, faith or spirituality) and economic attributes (notably remittances) – with implications for entrepreneurship and place marketing. For example, in his attempt to fuse three distinct streams of literature – music, entrepreneurship and place marketing, Madichie (2011), pointed out potential future research directions by calling for considerations into how to leverage the potential of celebrity endorsement or partnerships in place marketing strategies, by “extrapolating a well-known, but little discussed, subject in academia, i.e., the role of hip-hop music in the place marketing discourse.”

On the subject of music lyrics and/or song texts, Madichie (2017) in his review of Sonny Oti’s “Highlife Music in West Africa: Down Memory Lane,” pointed out a series of historical events – from conversation cutting across topics such as Balladism, Pan-Africanism and Militarism in African songtexts (or lyrics as discussed in Madichie, 2011). Although song-texts of African urban popular music rhythm could be entertaining, they are functionally the voice of the community – the conscience of African societies. It is through these lyrics that African domestic and external politics can be monitored as well as act as the thermometer for measuring African political, social and economic temperature. As he observes, the subject of “sex and love” are never publicised, they are treated with reverence; and they are also regarded as trivial and incompatible with the [more] serious problems of Africa.

Alternative music genres such as Hip life (Ghana) and Afro hip-hop (Nigeria) – rooted in highlife – and Rex Lawson is renowned to have filled a vacuum created in the political tensions between Nigeria and Ghana and its effect on Sigma Club’s Havana Nite – a “classique” attributable to Broadway – a festival of music, song and dance (Oti, 2009, p. 8). In all these, however, a “new wave” gathers momentum; international or sub-regional collaborations have become more prominent with artistes linked with Afro Hip-Hop in Nigeria rubbing minds with artistes of Hip-Life in Ghana – notable examples being the collaboration between Nigeria’s Flavour and Ghana’s Asem in “waka waka baby? Ashawo!” While in the case of Ghana, hip-life is the mantra, where the alternative style combines hip-hop and other genres such as highlife with notable acts such as Asem (who has collaborated with Nigeria’s Flavor), Obrafour and Jay Q are household names.

On the subject of the intersections of pop culture with the world of digital, Madichie (2020) recently interrogated what he described as “a series of accidents epitomized by the success of a music artist, bringing three streams of literature together – pop culture, entrepreneurship and place branding.” Using an illustrative case of the 2012 YouTube hit song, where a South
Korean artiste attempted to lampoon the extravagant lifestyle of residents of Gangnam District, accidentally put them on the global map. Using a storytelling approach, the study highlighted the intersections of pop culture, creativity and entrepreneurship with implications for place branding. In a broad sense, the study claims to be a pioneering effort in the field of entrepreneurship and its interconnections with other disciplines.

Still on the topic of digital, another recent journal special issue on “Digital Transformation in the Emerging Markets and Communities of Africa.” (Halkias et al., 2021), featured one article (Madichie, Bolat & Taura, 2021) that explored opportunities and challenges of accelerating digital entrepreneurship development in key economic growth sectors in West Africa. The study uses case illustrations from the media and agriculture sectors to highlight some of the opportunities and challenges that have shaped current business practices in this digital space in West Africa. The study finds that technological infrastructure featured as one of the main challenges for fostering success in the media-tech cases and perhaps linked to the low internet penetration rates. Overall, Madichie, Bolat & Taura (2021) highlighted the importance of partnerships (attributable to SDG 17) within the entrepreneurship ecosystems as a critical condition for ensuring positive benefits for all stakeholders within the entrepreneurial ecosystem taken from the lens of West Africa.

That study builds upon an earlier exploration on how the world of digital has reshaped the film industry in Nigeria (see Madichie, Ajakaiye & Ratten, 2019). In that latter study, the authors highlight the place of Nollywood in the context of technological and digital advancements. Approached through different lenses – practitioner and academic – the study acknowledged how technological advancements have impacted upon every sphere of the Nigerian economy with a particular emphasis on the creative industry, which has been one of the key sectors propelling the country back to the number one spot in a rebased GDP exercise. The coverage of the entire movie value chain from the production, distribution, and marketing of the movies to the internationalisation of the cultural product — notably digital production, distribution, and marketing of Nigerian movies to both domestic and international audiences (Madichie et al., 2019, p. 117).

**Papers in this Issue**

In this issue, five contributions capture the trends from conversations around the “registrerial variation in Nigerian Hip-hop,” to the “the idea of music business,” and other developments and trends linked to the increased impact of social media in fostering the creative industries. Two papers in this issue, “the role of social media in enhancing entrepreneurship skills among Nigerian Youth in the Covid-19 Lockdown,” and the “influence of digital advertising on social media brand awareness in Nigeria,” are worth highlighting. Finally, an acknowledgement of the key players in this space is captured in “employment in the informal sector in Nigeria: implications for sustainable economic development.”

In the first article, “Registrerial Variation in Nigerian Hip-hop,” Ezenwa-Ohaeto & Nweke both of a Department of English Language and Literature, posit that “language functions as a
means of communication and socialization [...] vital in the Nigerian informal business sector.” According to these authors, “one aspect of the informal sector that is examined [...] is Hip-hop [a subset of the Creative Industry].” They go on to define “Register” as a set of linguistic items associated with discrete, occupational and social groups. This article looked at Nigerian Hip-hop songs (as a social group) and its informal language, which has “started piling up register for itself” with variations having taken the informal sector to its next level. This paper examines the registerial variation of Nigerian hip-hop drawing insights from three artistes with two songs each from the southern region of the country. The authors used this as a frame of reference to determine indexation of registerial variations in the interrogated songs.

Still on the subject of music, a second paper, “The Idea of Music Business,” set about capturing the need to include ‘Music Business’ as a course of study in Music Departments and Business Schools across Higher Institutions in Nigeria. Indeed, Okeke and Okeke (this issue), considered this intersection to have been necessitated by the growing zeal and number of students, youth, entrepreneurs, businessmen and businesswomen, music enthusiasts, as well as investors “enthusiastic about engaging in the music entertainment industry across the country in the face of rising unemployment indices.” Music educators have also awakened to the realization that some of the courses and music specialties offered students were either insufficient or inadequate in meeting the demands of the economic hardship. Another interesting aspect was that music featured across most social engagements in the country – from meetings, weddings, rallies, religious gatherings, ceremonies, funerals, to seminars and conferences, banquets, etc. The authors conclude that Departments of Music and Business schools across the country should recognize the imperatives of ‘Music Business’ as part of their curriculum of studies to the end of fostering functional education among the youth.

On the subject of youth, Nwolu et al, in the third article, explored the role of social media in enhancing the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills among Nigerian youth. The study was guided by the uses and gratification theory as well as the social category theory. Drawing insights from 10 social media influencers they find that most respondents acquired skills on social media during the lockdown with YouTube, Facebook and Instagram as the main media. These authors surmised that since the youth were more active in this space, there was a need for Government to act on two main fronts – first, use these same social media for sensitization and orientation all geared towards effective youth productivity; second, provide appropriate infrastructure for better internet connectivity and also subsidize data costs by reducing the taxation of internet service providers.

In their paper “influence of digital advertising on social media brand awareness in Nigeria,” Mac-Ozigbo, Ogoji and Araga (fourth article in this issue) examined the influence of digital advertising on social media brand awareness in Nigeria. Social media influencers play a vital role which entices brands to pursue them. It is more likely for a consumer to trust a brand that collaborates with an influencer than to trust the brand exclusively. It is found that influencer marketing has impacted the purchasing decision of Nigerians when online. Though many of
the purchasers may have positive experience purchasing online, few of them may actually share their experience. Meaning it is more likely for them to share a negative experience in purchasing a product. Social media influencers were reported to be highly effective and important at bringing awareness to a brand on social media as well as in influencing consumers to make the final purchasing decision.

Finally, in their article, “Employment in the Informal Sector in Nigeria: Implications for Sustainable Economic Development,” Onwo and Ohazulike (in this issue) highlight the need for the government and development partners to be fully engaged in finding a lasting solution to the problems confronting especially the informal economy. This is because the sector seems to be appearing in new places and guises. According to these authors, the informal sector serves as a buffer against unemployment in times of economic downturn, allowing an increasing share of the population to earn a livelihood from the sector rather than stay openly unemployed with no income. Following their interrogation of the nature of employment in the informal sector, and anchored on Modernisation theory, the study revealed the sector accounted for a significant portion of employment and national GDP, which makes it imperative to implement policies towards improving productivity and incomes of informal sector workers.

Conclusions and Implications
Collectively, the five papers in this issue – i.e., Registerial Variation in Nigerian Hip-hop; The Idea of Music Business; Social media, youth and the lockdown; influence of digital advertising on social media brand awareness in Nigeria; and Employment in the Informal Sector in Nigeria: Implications for Sustainable Economic Development – revolve around the creative industries from the call for hip-hop and language interactions, to the explorations of interdisciplinary education (music and business) to the subject of social media and employment in the informal sector – all for achieving the sustainable development goals notably SDGs 1, 2, 4, 8 and 17 – from no poverty, zero hunger, quality education, decent work and economic growth, partnership for the goals, respectively.

Arguably, the papers in this issue touch upon the intersections between the aforementioned SDGs and the world of digital – albeit from the context of Nigeria, but with wider implications for the rest of Africa. As recently highlighted in a report by the Oxford Business Group, despite the “hurdles, there are encouraging signs that authorities are serious about boosting the Nigerian digital sector.” The report also mentions a rebranding exercise that indicates some degree of interest in prioritising the digital economy in recent times (OBG, 2021):

“At the end of 2019 the Ministry of Communications was rebranded as the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy. This was followed in early 2020 by the launch of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy 2020-2030.”

The Oxford Business Group signal document lays out eight pillars that will be used to transform Nigeria into a leading digital economy viz: developmental regulation; digital literacy and skills; solid infrastructure; service infrastructure; digital services development and promotion; soft
infrastructure; digital society and emerging technologies; and indigenous content development and adoption.

On the subject of digital regulation, both Ghana and Nigeria have been on the news headlines recently – albeit for various reasons. In the case of Ghana, Twitter only recently “delivered a surprise for Africa when it said it was establishing a regional headquarters in the West African nation of Ghana, triggering vigorous debate about the business environment for technology start-ups across the continent” (Ndukwe, 2021). For the social media giant, its decision was based on shared values – Ghana supports “free speech, online freedom, and the open internet.” In the Nigeria context, however, the second most used social networking site after Facebook, in the country was recently banned (Iyanda, 2021). In the last decade, interest in using the sites has been on the increase in developing countries, where citizens believe that the sites could help them in demanding and getting good leadership towards sustainable socioeconomic development. Year-on-year, the users of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube among others have grown on the continent, and one of the factors that has been attributed to the growth of social media use is the increase in the number of Internet users (Iyanda, 2021). It is instructive to know that these sites are not only deployed for political purposes, but also for business activities.

Another article, while acknowledging that Nigeria’s economy and even government have become increasingly reliant on digital media, equally noted the irony that the government announced its ban on Twitter with a tweet (Conroy-Krutz, 2021). Talking about the implications of the Nigeria-Twitter saga, Conroy-Krutz (2021) opines, “the Nigerian government suspended Twitter on June 4 [a move that threatens] Nigeria’s corporate existence.” He goes on to posit that “while only a minority of Nigerians use Twitter, they form part of the most vocal and politically active segment of the population. Many young people have used Twitter and other social media recently to organise anti-government protests [and] Nigeria has been among the best-performing African countries in attracting investments for technology start-up business. The ban could threaten that status.”

As Conroy-Krutz (2021) explicitly stated “digital media are essential for information exchange, marketing, customer service, and remote work, especially during public health and safety emergencies.” He went on to remark that such “shutdowns can slow commerce, cut productivity and ultimately cost jobs. In the longer term, the ban – even if only brief – could seriously harm Nigeria’s ability to attract investment to its otherwise-promising digital economy [as] investors may turn to markets without the threat of sudden regulatory disruptions to the digital economy. In other words, Twitter’s choice of Ghana would only be the beginning.”
References


