

Creative Industries' Entrepreneurial Success: Social Capital, Networks, and Internationalization Strategy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explain the success factors of business ventures in creative industries. By analyzing three types of festivals in three countries through the perspectives of entrepreneurial success, internationalization, and management, the paper explains how business ventures in creative industries from developing economies mobilized key factors to succeed. The study particularly focuses on identifying the types of partners, channels, and strategies that entrepreneurs in creative industries mobilized to achieve international success. Using data from publicly available online sources to categorize important factors for success, the paper argues that social capital-based view may explain success in creative industries better than resource-based or knowledge-based views although the combination of the three perspectives is deemed necessary. Founders' personal social capital (connections and networks) appeared particularly important for entrepreneurial success in creative industries. The importance of social capital is perceivable in national and international success and is also applicable, to some degree, to the contexts of both developing and developed economies.

Key Words: Creative industries; social capital; culture; internationalization; Africa; developing economy

INTRODUCTION

In developing countries, creative industries (industries focused on the business of cultural and artistic products and services) contribute significantly to economic growth and could help nations diversify their economies, fostering an environment that promotes cultural creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship, thus creating employment opportunities for youths (UNCTAD, 2021). According to a UNESCO Report (2017), creative industries generate more than \$2,250 billion each year and over \$250 billion of cultural products are exported globally, while it is projected that, on average, 10% of global gross domestic product (GDP) will

be generated by this industry in coming years. In fact, these figures were only \$227 billion revenues in 1996 and \$424 billion in 2005 (UNCTAD, 2008). This indicates how important creative industries have become in recent years as the revenues they generated have now multiplied nearly 10-fold compared to two decades ago.

Another report from Ernst & Young (2015) stated that creative industries generated 29 million jobs in 2013, and Africa and the Middle East (among the leading regions in creative industries worldwide) gained on average \$58 billion annually and have so far benefited 2.4 million jobs. Meanwhile, the sector of creative industries in countries such as Nigeria was the second top employer with 300,000 direct

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employees and Nigeria's music industry was country's second source of foreign income (International Labour Organization, 2016).

The existing investigations of creative industries in the business and management literature point to opportunities to study the success and internationalization of creative industries and understand the rise of successful ventures in the cultural sector in developing economies. This study focuses on three business ventures in creative industries in three countries in Africa: the Festival des Musiques Urbaines d'Anoumabo (FEMUA) in Côte d'Ivoire, the Festival International de la Mode Africaine (FIMA) in Niger, and the Gnaoua and World Music Festival (GNAOUA) in Morocco. These three festivals have shown tremendous success in those three countries and have internationalized by attracting not only foreign fans but also international artists, brands, sponsors, and collaborators. FEMUA, FIMA, and GNAOUA contributed significantly in creating new jobs and adding value in the show business and creative industries overall in Africa (Agence Ecofin, 2021; CNN, 2018; FIMA, 2022). These festivals in the cultural sector are referred to as creative industries, an area that has a potential to contribute in extending the business literature, especially as creative industries are booming in regions like Africa. Indeed, as an interesting context, Africa is becoming a rich empirical setting and laboratory to generate new, or to extend, theories in business (Ado & Wanjiru, 2018; Barnard et al., 2017; Cheriet et al., 2020). For such purpose, the specific research context should also be carefully considered (Piekkari et al., 2022) and different types of entrepreneurs have different strategies for success in developing countries' contexts (Ado et al., 2016). Such potential for theory development could be even more significant in the creative sector because Africa is so diverse, with cultures that span its many countries, and with many subcultures across the continent. Businesses focused on sectors such as festivals, movies, and music are rising and succeeding on the continent.

This paper investigates some of the major creative industry's business ventures in Africa. The purpose is to analyze and explain key factors that may explain creative industries' success. The paper studies three well-known African public festivals to understand what contributed to their national success and internationalization. The study therefore offers additional explanations on how to run a successful business venture in creative industries in the context of three francophone African countries. The study mobilizes concepts from three theories in business and management literature to explain the potential interplay between creative industries' success and the mobilization of partners, channels, and strategies to achieve such success. The next section presents the literature review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internationalization and Business Success in Creative Industries

For businesses, international success factors have often involved the possession of unique tangible resources (Barney, 1991), of scarce knowledge (Darroch, 2005), or of strong networks (Ozcan & Eisenhardt, 2009; Watson, 2007). Good quality institutional host environment has also been highlighted as an important factor for businesses to prosper internationally (Meyer et al., 2009; Peng et al., 2008). Overall, there is literature on the role of resources and knowledge for international success as well as on the importance of networks to conquer global opportunities.

From a cultural perspective of networks in developing and emerging economies, it could be argued that social network concepts such as *wasta* and *guanxi* are increasingly playing an important role in internationalization success in countries where these cultural practices usually dominate how businesses operate (Ado, 2022; Hutchings & Weir, 2006). From many theoretical perspectives, possessing something unique such as a resource, knowledge, or network is critical for business success and competitiveness in international markets. For creative industries, this also means that to successfully internationalize, various unique assets may need to be mobilized by the firm even if it must embrace new managerial practices or adopt opportunistic behaviors. Hence, from accessing more quality resources to gaining specific knowledge to expanding their networks, businesses in creative industries are also expected to take advantage of these tangible and intangible assets to achieve international success (O'Connor, 2007).

To successfully internationalize, creative businesses usually need to mobilize adequate financial resources and skilled human resources, both internally and externally (Comunian et al., 2010; Turok, 2003). This requires internal resource mobilization through what the business owns and external resource mobilization when the business also relies on government institutions and public funds to support its internationalization. From a network standpoint, the business could also rely on a wide range of social connections and valuable networks (Shirokova & McDougall-Covin, 2012), often through its well-connected managers and employees, both in private and public sectors, to support its internationalization.

Resource View in Creative Industries

A firm's success could be analyzed through the resource-based view that suggests the necessity to combine multiple resources, various capabilities, and different types of skills owned by the firm (Lahiri et al., 2020; Peng, 2001; Wernerfelt, 1984). In this sense, resources are scarce, valuable,

and hardly imitable. From an internationalization perspective, such resources could help the firm win foreign markets by competitively selling its products internationally. Such internationalization may succeed if the firm has superior and unique resources (Peteraf, 1993). Resource-based view research, including resource orchestration perspective (Penrose & Penrose, 2009; Rugman & Verbeke, 2002), explored the topic of effectiveness and success from both local and international standpoints, including in the African context (Zoogah et al., 2015). However, it is the view of some scholars that internationalization debates should integrate resource views to other theories of the firm and reconcile the contextual conceptualizations from the developed economies with those of developing economies (Yaprak & Karademir, 2010) in studying new phenomenon such as the rise of creative industries.

Knowledge View in Creative Industries

The analysis of a firm's internationalization through the knowledge-based view generally suggests that organizations would succeed in foreign markets if they possess a significant amount of unique knowledge about their industry but also about the targeted foreign market or similar locations (Grant, 1991, 2003). In international business, this logic was widely explained by the Uppsala model which suggested that a gradual internationalization of firms based on learning from previous experiences is what helps organizations succeed in foreign markets (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). Scholars who analyzed businesses from a knowledge-based perspective consider knowledge as one of the most strategic factors for businesses and that organizations may build their competitive advantage and international success using this special intangible asset (Eisenhardt & Santos, 2002; Grant, 1996). In the case of creative industries, this also suggests that previous experiences accumulated by the entrepreneur, especially knowledge of the relevant industries, could play a significant role toward a successful foreign market entry (Zucchella et al., 2007). Meanwhile, succeeding in the booming creative industries and their global business context also requires entrepreneurs to be pragmatic, exercise distinctive leadership, and craft winning business strategies while improving their entrepreneurial and creative skills with a sharp cultural intelligence and an international mindset (Passaris, 2006).

Social Capital and Network View in Creative Industries

Another view of analyzing firm's success and internationalization is through the combination of the network and social capital perspectives. This cross-fertilization of views argues that businesses mobilize their social connections within and

outside the industry to maximize chances of success nationally and internationally (Seibert et al., 2001). This perspective is particularly supported in the African context where distinctive social skills are required (Amoako-Gyampah et al., 2021; Ayiku & Grant, 2021) especially in emerging sectors such as the creative industries. This perspective also embodies the social capital-based view that suggests the need for organizations to "know" and "have" someone within "the system" to connect with necessary resources, knowledge, and opportunities to succeed in the industry, nationally and internationally (Baron & Markman, 2003; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005; Tymon & Stumpf, 2003). This means for ventures in creative industries, founders who possess social competencies, including a strong social capital originating from a good reputation, experience, and unique personal contacts in that specific industry, could be more likely to succeed (Baron & Markman, 2000). Therefore, businesses in creative industries that are led by such well-connected entrepreneurs could be more likely to access resources and gain knowledge to succeed internationally, especially if those founders continue to improve their social capital and relational skills. This also means that financial resources could be invested to develop better social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2009) toward international success.

Conceptualizations and Success Factors in Creative Industries

The literature in creative industries has various perspectives, ranging from sociological to business considerations, making the understanding of the concept of creative industries important in explaining the dynamics of the contemporary economy (Berg & Hassink, 2014). Scholars such as Boggs (2009) have pointed to the fact that many studies of creative industries have so far focused on one business in a single metropolitan location, making the creative industries yet to be globally studied and understood. This means there is still a gap in what we (do not) know about the management and success of creative industries around the globe, especially since the few earlier studies focused on Western cases such as Hollywood and its cinema industry, thus making even the definition and understanding of creative industries different across regions and contexts (Berg & Hassink, 2014; O'Connor, 2007). Meanwhile, locations such as Africa are experiencing a boom in revenues and jobs from their creative industries in recent years, particularly in artistic performances and show business in general. At the same time, Africa needs to improve its competitiveness in the global economic context (Ado, 2018) and that improvement is also needed in creative industries. The conceptualization of creative industries that fully considers the context in which businesses emerge therefore presents new empirical investigation

opportunities. It is an interesting growing phenomenon in new culturally rich contexts.

The literature also argues that for creative industries to succeed, it is necessary to have highly specialized skills and strategic knowledge as well as a high degree of concentration of activities in specific locations in the form of creative clusters (Turok, 2003). This perspective is described as the “knowledge pool model” by Benneworth and Charles (2005) and CURDS (2001). This view about the success of creative industries is also extended by the logic of urbanizing economies where the cross-fertilization of individual creativities to innovate in such industries becomes significant (Florida, 2002; Lorenzen & Frederiksen, 2008). So, this perspective suggests that large cities or agglomerations such as New York, Lagos, or Abidjan may host more creative industries than other less populated locations. It also suggests that creative industries may prosper more where there is abundance of skills and audiences. However, the success of creative industries may also be determined by what Comunian et al. (2010) call the spatial distribution of institutional infrastructure and governance structures that could support founders and ease their entrepreneurial ecosystems. Overall, the theoretical arguments about business success appear complementary to one other, but the literature is still unclear as to which factors are more important for entrepreneurial success in the creative industries.

As creative industries continue to experience the boom in large agglomerations across many developing economies (World Trade Organization, 2021), there are emerging business opportunities as well as growing interests in academia for a better understanding of how they can prosper even more while serving as an empirical setting for theory development and practical lessons in international business and management. In fact, the intersection of internationalization, creative industries, and management theories has been so far underexplored among comparative international management scholars. This opens new research avenues to improve our understanding of ways to bridge these fields and fill the cross-disciplinary gaps and generate theory while helping practitioners to make better decisions. From the three theoretical perspectives presented above (resource-based, knowledge-based, and network-based views) regarding firm’s success and internationalization (Gaur et al., 2014; Pinho & Prange, 2016; Shirokova & McDougall-Covin, 2012; Vissak et al., 2020), one view or a combination of views may further explain international success in creative industries. Thus, this study conceptualizes the intersection of these three views to explain the success and internationalization of three creative business ventures from three locations. These creative businesses gained international reputation and are cultural phenomena with significant potential, if studied and understood

in-depth, toward new theoretical insights and meaningful policy implications for more job creation and economic growth. The next section presents the conceptual framework.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

At the intersection of the resource-based, knowledge-based, and network-based views alongside the international business success theory, this study adopts a framework that bridges relevant conceptual dimensions in better understanding creative industries in developing economies. This research mobilizes three key concepts related to management theory of firm’s internationalization to explore the success factors of festivals at the national and international levels. The conceptualization follows the premise that in cultural business and creative industries in general, resources, knowledge, and networks are all important for the international success of businesses; however, some could be more important than others. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to identify, using this conceptual framework, the frequency of mobilization of various factors in the pursuit of success in creative industries in developing countries’ rich cultural contexts. Figure 1 shows the conceptualization of potentially explaining factors in international success, using a cross-complementary approach of resource-based, knowledge-based, and network-based views. The interdisciplinary approach of this conceptualization aims to help understand the contribution of each view in better explaining the success phenomenon in creative industries.

The study is conceptualizing internationalization through its classic success factors in existing literature in regular sectors such as manufacturing. This conceptual framework is based on the dominant views of three well-established theories of the firm explained earlier: the resource-based view, the knowledge-based view, and the network-based view at the intersection of theoretical complementarities and conceptual

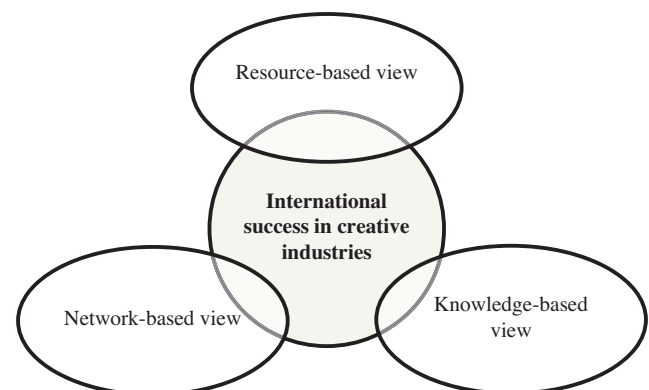


FIGURE 1 Conceptual Framework

ties that could better explain international success of creative industries. Therefore, our approach acknowledges the important role of each of these views about firm's prosperity but also seeks to highlight which view is more likely to be critical for explaining internationalization success in creative industries. The next section details the methodology through the research context and the empirical approach used for data collection and analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Research Context

Cross-cultural contexts and comparative management investigations generally present different and more complex research challenges in developing economies than in developed economies (Poesche, 2019; Yeganeh et al., 2004). Hence, business phenomenon in highly cultural contexts such as Africa can be complex but also pertinent to investigate. This investigation studies the phenomenon of entrepreneurial success in creative industries through the analysis of cultural sectors in Africa. This highly cultural empirical setting in developing economies offers interesting opportunities for new comparative insights. Indeed, Africa presents new unique cultural contexts for empirical investigations, especially considering that internationalization research has focused more on industrialized economies and their businesses (Guili & Alami, 2020). The fact that Africa is also multifaceted in terms of its francophone and anglophone comparative sub-contexts (Ado, 2020; Zoogah, 2023) brings more reasons to expect differences in explanatory variables of success in creative industries on the continent. To contribute in extending the literature and close this gap, we decided to focus on three well-known festivals (FEMUA, FIMA, and GNAOUA) in francophone Africa as research context. Therefore, three locations were identified as research contexts of these festivals: Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, and Morocco. To study these three festivals, the research adopted a comparative approach that identified the types of activities, promotional initiatives, and media campaigns carried out by the founders of the festivals, particularly the means mobilized for international success. This includes, for instance, founders' use of media appearances or comments relating to the festivals to advertise toward national, regional, and international markets. The study also used data on the collaborations the festivals had with celebrities and sponsoring organizations for international outreach, including through foreign producers, actors, musicians, and other national and international artists. The objective is to understand the factors and strategies frequently used by the festivals to succeed and internationalize. This allows a comparison between

the mobilized means and activities and a categorization of partners, communication channels, and strategies used to organize, promote, and access resources. This study also highlights the role founders played in the success of cultural business ventures.

Festivals and Founders

FEMUA

The founder Traore Salif (also known as A'salfo) is the vocal leader of the popular musical band *Magic System* from Côte d'Ivoire (FEMUA, 2022). He has emerged as one of the most influential musicians in francophone Africa. He has an extensive network of fellow music artists across Africa and Europe, having collaborated widely in the international music industry. FEMUA's objectives include giving youth from challenged neighborhoods in Abidjan the free opportunity to attend music concerts, while helping to ease the social tensions from political crises in the country (FEMUA, 2022). With an initial budget of 34 million CFA francs or about 50,000 euros in 2008 (Libération, 2018), FEMUA quickly established itself as one of the most anticipated music festivals in sub-Saharan francophone Africa. Recently, FEMUA's budget reached 3 million euros and contributed 3,000 jobs (NCI, 2021). Beyond its cultural and musical aspects, the festival also advocates for social and humanitarian causes among youths (Jeune Afrique, 2022a). Thus, during 14 editions, FEMUA has built 8 elementary schools and rehabilitated health centers (NCI, 2021). Each year, the festival brings African and European artists in the economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire, the leading economy in the West African Economic and Monetary Union. Côte d'Ivoire is often considered the cultural locomotive of francophone Africa. Abidjan offers an ecosystem that fosters cultural entrepreneurship and creative initiatives, ranging from contemporary art exhibitions to cinema, music, and comedy shows. FEMUA's success may be partly attributed to Abidjan's ecosystem which offers the necessary digital infrastructure and attracts leading players such as international media and music labels. This includes American giants such as Universal Music and Sony which established their headquarters in Abidjan to manage their activities for all francophone sub-Saharan Africa (Agence Ecofin, 2021). So, FEMUA is embedded in the attractiveness of Abidjan for francophone artists and international players in creative industries.

FIMA

The founder Sidahmed Seidnaly (also known as Alphadi) is an established stylist and fashion icon in Africa and increasingly in the West (FIMA, 2022). In fact, Alphadi, through his leadership of FIMA and African fashion, has received multiple prestigious accolades. This includes Oscar for the

best African designer by the Federation of French Haute Couture, Gold Medal for quality in Spain, Golden Scissors in Niger and Côte d'Ivoire, Kora Fashion Award in South Africa, and several other prizes in Togo, Cameroon, the Netherlands, Morocco, and Mali (FIMA, 2022). FIMA is generally themed as a pathway toward Africa's cultural integration, tourism development, and peace building amongst Africans while promoting regional fashion traditions across African countries and beyond (FIMA, 2022). It is often officially sponsored by government agencies, and sometimes even by Niger's President such as during the 13th edition in 2021. During that edition, the FIMA budget was 1.2 million euros, and the festival generated 29.4 million euros for Niger's economy (Afriqinfos, 2021). The festival started in 1998 to contribute to local development by supporting indigenous and pan-African fashion entrepreneurs. It involves many African tailors, top models, stylists, and textile companies that wish to promote their brands and products internationally. The festival is now more than 20 years old and has grown from a local festival (in Niamey) to a national event (in Niger), to become a regional and now a pan-African fashion phenomenon, with some editions held in countries such as Morocco (Jeune Afrique, 2018). In fact, the festival now attracts top stylists and international fashion brands from Europe and North America (FIMA, 2022) where some satellite festivities were also performed simultaneously. The festival also includes entrepreneurial competitions for top models, young designers, and prizes for best artists.

GNAOUA

The founder (Neila Tazi) is one of the top cultural entrepreneurs in Morocco and has led several initiatives in the art business (GNAOUA, 2022). Her key roles included President of the Federation of Cultural and Creative Industries at the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises. The Gnaoua festival originally started in Essaouira, a city that is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, represented by its traditional center called Medina (UNESCO, 2022). The festival was later rebranded and relabeled as the GNAOUA and World Music Festival. It is now officially recognized as a UNESCO Intangible World Heritage and has become one of the biggest artistic and cultural shows in Morocco that is acknowledged in the global cultural industry. Indeed, the festival has enabled the city of Essaouira and the Gnaoua culture to be recognized worldwide. The Gnaoua musical group (i.e., Innov Gnawa) was even nominated for the Grammy Awards (CNN, 2018; Grammy, 2018). This was a prestigious acknowledgment by a major global network that brings high visibility in the world of music in the United States and abroad. GNAOUA is now sponsored by well-known cultural global institutions such as UNESCO and

major international brands (CNN, 2018; Morocco World News, 2019).

Overall, the three festivals appear to benefit from the strong dynamism and connections of their founders who are accomplished entrepreneurs. Through these founders' leadership, the festivals' success and reputation have gone beyond national borders to become international sensations, with several performers and fans from around the globe.

Data Collection

This research used a mix of qualitative and quantitative data and follows Yin's (2015) view to empirically span various sites (i.e., festivals) to collect data from secondary sources publicly available online. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the three festivals based on identical criteria. Although all three festivals are part of the creative industry and particularly the cultural sector, two are focused on music while the third is in fashion. Each of the festivals is more than 10 years old and has a relatively significant social media presence although with different frequencies of use. Moreover, the founders are now all well-known leaders and entrepreneurs in the creative industry in their home countries and internationally.

A variety of information about the three festivals was gathered. The information ranged from media appearances of the festivals' founders, to videos of the actual shows and their content, to online TV interviews with the founders, to commercials by the festivals. We accessed more than 204 sources of information from digital sources to collect data about the three festivals. We gathered qualitative statements, organizational data, reports on managerial actions, promotional strategies, channels, and networks mobilized by the festivals in the three countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco, and Niger). The collected data include documents and texts (Weber, 1990), using the names of the festivals and their founders as key words during the online search. Our sources include both French and English media articles and companies' announcements of sponsorships. Additionally, all three festivals (FEMUA, GNAOUA, and FIMA) have their own official websites from which we obtained information that was then triangulated with other sources to ensure the reliability of the statements and activities. We also relied on their official social media pages as additional sources of information and data triangulation. In fact, all three festivals have social media pages which helped verify our information to ensure greater data accuracy.

Data Analysis

We summarized 48 pages of good quality data about partnering organizations, communication channels, and internationalization actions associated with the three festivals. We aggregated the data around three categories: partners, channels, and strategies. We then assessed the importance

TABLE 1 Description of Festivals

	FEMUA	FIMA	GNAOUA
Creation date	2008	1998	1997
Cultural sector	Music	Fashion	Music
Last edition studied	14 th (May 2022)	13 th (Dec 2021)	24 th (June 2022)
Country (host city)	Côte d'Ivoire (Abidjan)	Niger (Niamey)	Morocco (Essaouira)
Founder – profession	Traore Salif – Musician	Alphadi – stylist	Neila Tazi – entrepreneur
Regular attendees	More than 100,000	Less than 100,000	More than 100,000
Official attendees	Prime minister and ministers	Ministers	Public employees
Festival's pages			
Twitter	11.2K followers	15 followers	4.5K followers
Facebook	62.5K followers	14.3K followers	121.4K followers
Instagram	6.2K followers	92 followers	20K followers
YouTube	6.9K subscribers	952 subscribers	4.2K subscribers
Founder's pages			
Twitter	473.5K followers	455 followers	21.7K followers
Facebook	1.8M followers	29K followers	2.2K followers
Instagram	620K followers	1.1K followers	888 followers
YouTube	1.3M subscribers ^a	16 subscribers	1 subscriber

FEMUA, Festival des Musiques Urbaines d'Anoumabo; FIMA, Festival International de la Mode Africaine; GNAOUA, Gnaoua World Music Festival

^aSubscribers on founder's page plus his music group's (Magic System) page

Source: Compiled by the authors from the official social media pages of each festival (as of June 2022)

of the partners, channels, and strategies mobilized by each festival. The assessment led to the categorization of factors in terms of the frequency of use and their “perceived importance” vis-à-vis the festivals. While we recognize the limits of our interpretation of “perceived importance”, we operationalized it as a frequency of mobilizing a factor such as a partner, a channel, or a strategy for each festival to succeed internationally. So, we used frequencies to determine the perceived importance of mobilized factors. The frequency “Low” indicates a weak level of mobilization (or low perceived importance) of that partner, channel, or strategy; the frequency “Medium” indicates a moderate mobilization (medium perceived importance); and the frequency “High” indicates a strong mobilization (high perceived importance). For the purpose of this empirical categorization, we define the frequency “Low” as equal to or less than 5 times (e.g., the festival used a state partner to promote its activities 3 times); the frequency “Medium” is for 6-10 times (e.g., the festival used a state partner to promote its activities 7 times); and the frequency “High” is for more than 10 times (e.g., the festival used a state partner to promote its activities 15 times). Again, we acknowledge that this categorization approach based on three levels of frequency thresholds has some limitations, but it is interpreted as a clue to the perceived

importance of those partners, channels, or strategies for those festivals. Table 2 shows identified factors organized in empirical categories.

FINDINGS

Creative industries internationalized their activities by mobilizing a variety of tools, some already known in the literature. All three factors (partners, channels, and strategies) are perceived as overall important for the festivals' success and internationalization. This means a variety of partners, types of communication channels, and customized strategies were frequently used in each of those festivals. However, to find the right partners and resources, to convince some impactful media channels, or to craft winning networking strategies during those festivals, the findings show that network and social capital-related factors were more frequently used than resource-related or knowledge-related factors.

Although the degree to which each festival used the three types of factors varies, it appeared clear in the analysis that some festivals mobilized more partners and channels than others. This is particularly true for FEMUA which appeared

TABLE 2 Data Categorization

	FEMUA Factors	FIMA Factors	GNAOUA Factors
Top partners	Government of Côte d'Ivoire Ministry of Culture Ministry of Employment City of Abidjan European Union African Development Bank UNDP and UNICEF Chambers of commerce Youth associations International music labels African music/movies stars Regional influencers Local community leaders MTN Air Côte d'Ivoire Bolloré Group Accor Hotels Group	UNICEF UNESCO Government of Niger Ministry of Culture Ministry of Tourism Ministry of Communication Top fashion artists Renowned stylists African influencers Politicians Local hotels CCFN Jean Rouch Palais beaux-arts Bruxelles	UNESCO Cultural unions Moroccan embassies Municipality of Essaouira Local/national brands Cultural associations Musicians and bands Art entrepreneurs Tourism agencies Hollywood Grammy Awards Renault Maroc Maroc Telecom
Top channels	National TV – RTI Group A+ Ivoire, NCI Comedy shows, concerts Commercials on radio/TV Social media channels/buzz TV5 Afrique, Jeune Afrique Canal+, France24, Trace TV Life TV, Novelas TV Journal Libération Nollywood TV, Nostalgie Africa24, Africa Radio Abidjan.net, Abidjan Show 57 media campaigns	ORTN-Niger France24 Africa24 TV5 Afrique TV5 Monde Facebook posts Cannes Film Festival Jeune Afrique 40 media campaigns	CBS Televisions CNN Euro News RFI Musique Movie productions Theaters National televisions Instagram posts Facebook posts 32 media campaigns
Top strategies	Uses musical social capital Founder is festival's brand Founder's music talent Gets financial sponsorship Obtains high public funding Gives top media interviews	Uses fashion social capital Changes locations/cities Renowned stylist Well-connected founder Lead is seasoned promoter	Uses solid experience High corporate funding Founder is an entrepreneur Global connections Uses cultural capital

Again, to determine the perceived importance of each category, we used the aggregated frequencies for each festival in the relevant sub-categories: 5 or less times were labeled as "Low", between 6 and 10 times were labeled as "Medium", and more than 10 times were labeled as "High". The partner category, channel category, and strategy category each had subcategories. The next section presents our findings.

to have the most institutional and international sponsorships and government support as well as the highest number of channels mobilized to promote the festival. FIMA has received significant institutional support, mainly from the government of Niger but also some corporate sponsorships. GNAOUA relied more on its founder's extensive experience in cultural business management and on global media promotion via international celebrities and influencers, many from Western countries. In fact, GNAOUA is the oldest among the three festivals and is therefore enjoying the advantage of being well-established and marketed by international artists. This gives GNAOUA an advantage in terms of knowledge of the industry and having a global network of cultural artists who support its promotion beyond Morocco. Table 3

presents our categorization of each festival and the perceived importance of subcategories of factors.

All three festivals mobilized a variety of factors to succeed. For FEMUA, the connection to many public partners was frequently mobilized to access resources and secure legitimacy for the festival. FEMUA also frequently used media channels and partners to support its activities. Regarding the strategies mobilized, network-based factors were very frequently used by FEMUA. For FIMA, the pattern appeared different, with government institutions and state media being more frequently mobilized and the network-based factors also being significantly used. For GNAOUA, celebrities and influencers appeared more frequently mobilized while knowledge-based factors were also being highly used.

TABLE 3 Categories and Their Perceived Importance

Categories	Perceived Importance			
	FEMUA	FIMA	GNAOUA	
Partner	Subcategories of factors			
	States and international institutions	High	High	Low
	Local and multinational companies	High	Low	Medium
	Celebrities and influencers	High	Medium	High
Channel	Subcategories of factors			
	State media and public agencies	High	High	Low
	Corporate sponsorship connections	High	Medium	Medium
	Social media campaigns	High	Medium	Medium
Strategy	Subcategories of factors			
	Resource-based	Medium	Medium	Medium
	Knowledge-based	Medium	Medium	High
	Network-based	High	High	Medium

FEMUA, Festival des Musiques Urbaines d'Anoumabo; FIMA, Festival International de la Mode Africaine; GNAOUA, Gnaoua World Music Festival

Overall, FEMUA and FIMA mobilized more network-based strategies than GNAOUA. This suggests that strong social connections and business ties are used more frequently by FEMUA and FIMA, while experience and expertise accumulated through the 24 years of GNAOUA are used more often by the Moroccan festival. FEMUA as the youngest of all three festivals is still at an early stage of its learning curve, but its founder is very connected to the show business industry and therefore engaged in a network-based strategy more often than the two other founders. In terms of social media presence, FIMA's founder is not as connected as the other founders (particularly compared to FEMUA's founder), but he relied more upon his personal network (i.e., fashion social capital). FEMUA's founder has also significantly relied upon his social network in the music industry, while GNAOUA's founder relied upon her social network in the Moroccan and Western art industry. The next section discusses the theoretical implications.

DISCUSSIONS AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This theoretical intersection of views regarding resources, social networks, and knowledge vis-à-vis international success

has been interesting to explore in this study of the creative industries. It offered new insights in understanding the success factors of business ventures in creative industries. The literature has argued that international success relies more on resources (Lahiri et al., 2020; Peng, 2001) and knowledge assets and organizational learning (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). In this study, it is argued that, in creative industries, networks and social capital of entrepreneurs may play a significant, if not a bigger, role for success. Founders of cultural businesses tended to mobilize more network-based factors than knowledge-based or resource-based factors. This insight is partly in line with Zucchella et al. (2007). So, although there is a strong evidence in the literature that unique knowledge and strong resources as competitive factors do contribute to the international success of business in creative industries, the ability of cultural entrepreneurs to mobilize their networks and more broadly their cultural social capital (i.e., music social capital for FEMUA; artistic social capital for GNAOUA; fashion social capital for FIMA), especially their personal connections, appeared very important. Also, the creative industries appeared to rely more on influencers, institutional support, and sponsorships in their activities. This, again, highlights the importance of personal networks and social capital over other factors in the success of ventures in creative industries. This is different when compared to

entrepreneurship in conventional industries such as manufacturing (Baron & Markman, 2000; Seibert et al., 2001). This insight therefore suggests the importance of more social capital mobilization for businesses in creative industries and for founders to cultivate more social skills. From an international success standpoint, such social skills should expand to global social networks.

In terms of contribution to theory, this study is proposing to prioritize among theoretical perspectives that could better explain the international success of businesses in creative industries. From the analysis and findings as well as from a parallel with relevant literature, three key lessons emerge from this research:

- **Lesson 1:** A strong network in creative industries through personal connections to key players is important for international success in creative industries.
- **Lesson 2:** A strong knowledge of creative industries through expertise in the cultural sector is important for international success in creative industries.
- **Lesson 3:** A strong ability to use personal social capital in creative industries to gather core resources is important for international success in creative industries.

Figure 2 shows the prioritization of lessons learned (based on perceived importance) in pursuing international success in creative industries. From this research, it is being suggested that creative industries are more likely to mobilize network-based factors more often than knowledge-based or resource-based factors in their pursuit for success.

More specifically, the theoretical insights gained from this study suggest that networks in the form of personal linkages with major national and international institutions and connections to key players in creative industries appear fundamental to entrepreneurial success for festivals in Africa. It is argued that these linkages and connections are often possessed by the entrepreneurs, in this case the founders of the festivals. Here, it is very clear that the social capital

dimension of festivals (i.e., personal social capital) played a critical (frequent) role in supporting national and international expansion. Therefore, social capital theory, especially from the specific perspective of “social resources” (Seibert et al., 2001), has a strong potential to explain the phenomenon of international success in creative industries. However, knowledge view appeared to have some merit too in explaining success in creative industries, although its factors were less frequently used than social capital factors. The knowledge factor is mostly related to the expertise possessed by the founders through their experiences and their international fame based on prizes and accolades they received. Finally, the importance of having core resources (i.e., money, physical infrastructure, equipment, etc.) as a success factor for creative industries cannot be denied. This resource-based dimension means the festivals and their founders still needed to mobilize financial and material resources to succeed, but this dimension alone did not suffice to create international success in creative industries, at least not in the case of festivals.

Social Capital, Networks, and Leadership Skills in Creative Industries

It is important to discuss the “Who” of creative industries. From existing literature, businesses may succeed nationally and internationally by mobilizing their connections and social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2009; Seibert et al., 2001). Personal relational networks appeared more frequently used than organizational networks in ventures in creative industries. For example, when FEMUA’s founder gave media interviews about the festival’s success, he referred more often to his personal contacts and ties to other artists than his music band’s or FEMUA’s contacts (i.e., he often said “my friend”, “my music collaborator”, “my mentees”, etc.). This means founders’ personal social capital is critical for success. This nuance in creative industries is significant for the literature where organizational social capital was often viewed as

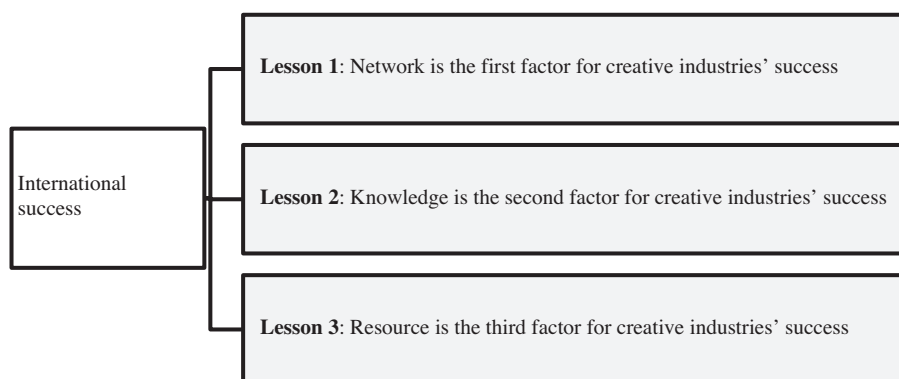


FIGURE 2 Lessons in Explaining the Success of Creative Industries

more critical for business success than individual social capital (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005).

Moreover, social leadership theories place great emphasis on the role of individuals as corporate leaders in achieving organizational goals (Passaris, 2006). Accordingly, the success and internationalization of creative industry businesses can be approached through the prism of their founders' social leadership skills. In this regard, this study also proposes three key social traits of founders that appeared important in entrepreneurship success in creative initiatives: career path, influence, and relational skills (i.e., creative social capital). In fact, the three founders analyzed in this study are accomplished professionals, with careers spanning more than 20 years each. This means they attended or performed cultural shows around the world and developed strong social connections, laying the foundations of their legitimacy and knowledge of creative industries. This also earned them respect and international influence, leading to their high-profile appointments that publicized their festivals. In fact, FEMUA's founder serves as a UNESCO Ambassador (United Nations, 2012), GNAOUA's founder received a world-class nomination (Grammy, 2018), and FIMA's founder was selected for Best African Designer Oscar (FIMA, 2022). FEMUA's founder is also a member of the prestigious economic, social, environmental, and cultural advisory board of the state of Côte d'Ivoire (Presidency Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, 2019), a national body with connections to all key public institutions and decision makers. The wide networks of these founders in creative industries appeared to have contributed toward their core resource mobilization and cultural entrepreneurship success.

The influence of these founders is built on strong social connections with a dedicated fan base of young people committed to their music, fashion, art, and social causes. Among the three founders, FEMUA's leader appeared the most socially connected and active, with more than 1.7 million followers on Facebook and 1.3 million subscribers on YouTube, making him one of the most followed celebrities in Africa. Moreover, the success of these festivals is also fueled through the social relationships that their founders established in the economic and political spheres of Africa and Europe. Many of their top partner organizations joined from founders' personal contacts as they stated in media interviews. Their network includes political and business allies such as prime ministers and other major decision makers (NCI, 2021) as well as first ladies of those countries. In fact, Côte d'Ivoire's First Lady has a foundation that regularly collaborates with FEMUA's foundation on charitable projects. The founders also have strong connections with African and European leaders, as evidenced by the concert of Magic System Group (music band of FEMUA's founder) during the celebration of

the victory of the President in France (Le Figaro, 2017). Such extensive social and political networks helped the festivals.

Through these privileged relational networks, the founders were able to mobilize significant core resources provided by institutional, national, international, corporate, and media partners. For FIMA, the leadership of the founder also played an important role. In fact, the founder is one of the most well-established fashion icons and stylists in Africa (Inspire Afrika, 2016). He has connections to powerful government leaders, influential state media, and top brands in the fashion industry in Africa and globally. For GNAOUA, the founder is also categorized as one of Morocco's top entrepreneurs in creative industries (Jeune Afrique, 2022b). Her extensive experience in cultural business and expertise in the arts enabled her to mobilize the right knowledge and social connections to support the festival. Being the oldest of the three festivals, GNAOUA also enjoys a good learning curve in organizing international cultural activities compared to FEMUA and FIMA. From the Johanson and Vahlne's (1977) theory of internationalization, GNAOUA may have more potential in mobilizing its knowledge asset for success than FEMUA and FIMA. Meanwhile, FEMUA enjoys a better social capital asset than FIMA and GNAOUA. This emphasizes Baron and Markman's (2000) theoretical argument about the cruciality of personal connections for success. Also, this study suggests that the festival with the strongest social connections may access more resources than those with less social connections. Therefore, social capital may help more in accessing the resources and the knowledge needed for success. This means core resource-based view (Peng, 2001; Peteraf, 1993) alone is unlikely to explain success in creative industries. This also means that the three theories (resource, knowledge, and network) are complementary in explaining the success phenomenon in creative businesses, with personal social capital as the leading determining factor.

Cultural Activism and Location to Mobilize Resources in Creative Industries

The literature on international success has highly emphasized the importance of diversification and social communication, choosing locations adequately, and constantly managing opportunism (Verbeke, 2013). In this regard, to market the festivals effectively, founders used cultural activism strategies as well as diversification. With regard to cultural activism strategy, festivals' organizers developed artistic programming around themes that raise youth awareness on societal issues. For example, the issue of illegal immigration to Europe was debated at FEMUA's 11th edition (BBC, 2018; Libération, 2018), while the 14th edition focused on youth entrepreneurship (VOA, 2022), thus attracting global attention and prestigious sponsorships from institutions such

as the United Nations and the African Development Bank (African Development Bank, 2022; United Nations, 2012). With regard to diversification, 50% of invited performers were international artists (FEMUA, 2022) from each African region and from various music genres, ranging from Zouglou to Rap, Congolese Rumba, South African Amapiano, and Senegalese Mbalack to attract more African fans and global tourists. This diversification strategy branded the festivals as pan-African and international phenomena, thereby increasing their popularity globally. Such strategies may have contributed toward festivals' success, particularly in gaining international exposure and African legitimacy.

Another interesting insight from this study is that strategic location choice seemed to contribute in the success of creative industries, especially for FEMUA. In fact, FEMUA's host city, Abidjan, is a major hub for show business. As the major economic hub of Côte d'Ivoire, the city helped the festival in many ways, including branding it as a major francophone event and a leading regional hub in music production. By extension, this means Dunning's (2001) location argument can be called upon to explain festival's success as well as Mathews' (2006) linkage concept. Since Dunning's OLI (ownership, location, and internalization) framework is mainly based on asset-exploitation premise, the festivals mobilized not only other types of assets but also the location's asset. For instance, FEMUA took advantage of Abidjan's strengths to serve its entrepreneurial venture. Meanwhile, Mathews' LLL (linkage, leverage, and learning) framework is mainly based on an asset-exploration premise. So, for creative industries, this means they leveraged the resources available in the city and from local public institutions for success. Businesses in the creative industry could therefore mobilize location, linkage, and leverage advantages to choose specific cities or regions that strategically serve their internationalization objectives and their needs for powerful social networks, unique knowledge, and scarce but pertinent resources.

In addition to factors commonly cited in literature such as networks, resources, and knowledge, international success in creative industries also involved a degree of opportunism. According to Pattinson (2016), opportunism is key in enabling businesses to take advantage of favorable social networks that could provide access to the core resources they need. Reasons businesses behave opportunistically include managerial experience, market distance, and valuable networks (Verbeke et al., 2019). In creative industries, opportunism has particularly been mobilized in FEMUA and FIMA, but less so in GNAOUA. Indeed, the founders of FEMUA and FIMA have strong and privileged connections to government officials and therefore the festivals benefited opportunistically from government sponsorship and

support and access to resourceful social circles of decision makers through excellent friendships between founders and officials. Therefore, the close ties that founders enjoyed with state policy makers gave them the advantage and the opportunity to mobilize the necessary core resources to successfully conduct their activities. For example, the fact that FEMUA's mission focused on promoting peace and reconciliation among Ivorians after the civil war (FEMUA, 2022) gave this festival a privileged status from the government of Côte d'Ivoire. One could therefore speculate about the possibility of social opportunism in these creative industries as festivals build their legitimacy around national peace building goals. This hints at the idea of cultural activism in addition to social opportunism. In fact, FEMUA's founder consistently talked about the festival's mission to create fun and peace through music in Côte d'Ivoire (NCI, 2021). This social narrative seemed to work and is also used by FIMA in the fashion industry.

CONCLUSION

African creative industries are booming and represent a promising avenue for economic and social development. This study offered new insights regarding the factors for international success of creative industries from developing economies' perspective. The findings advance the literature by showing that social capital-based and network views may be more adequate to explain entrepreneurial success in creative industries than resource-based view or knowledge-based view. The study extended the literature by providing additional explanatory factors and perspectives to understand business success in the rising creative industries in developing economies. The study offered three lessons that could be studied further, namely the importance of a strong network in creative industries through personal connections to key players, a strong knowledge of creative industries through expertise in the cultural sector, and a strong ability to use personal social capital to gather core resources for success in creative industries.

More specifically, the study highlighted approaches that three major festivals from Africa adopted to succeed by using cultural social capital vis-à-vis various partners, channels, and strategies. FEMUA and FIMA were more aligned with the network-based pattern, while GNAOUA primarily followed a knowledge-based pattern to succeed. But all the festivals, often through their founders, mobilized network-based and knowledge-based strategies as well as industry-relevant social capital to access adequate resources. Moreover, personal cultural social capital was particularly perceived as important for success in creative industries.

From a policy standpoint, this paper calls for managerial actions that advocate for what works best in promoting cultural businesses and developing creative industries from African perspectives of entrepreneurship toward more international success and economic prosperity of the continent. The study particularly highlights the importance of cultural social capital and networks owned by potential founders of cultural business ventures in supporting their success. This research also suggests that entrepreneurship in creative industries may be more likely to succeed if led by insiders who possess strong cultural social capital rather than those who have financial resources or general knowledge but lack the necessary social connections and networks. Finally, in all three festivals, connection to governments and public support was an important factor. To succeed, festivals need public institutions to back their initiatives and have targeted marketing and communication strategies across digital platforms and media.

Although this study provides new insights about business success in creative industries, the paper has some limitations that include the limited number of cases (only three), the specific context of the cases (only in francophone Africa), and the type of data mobilized (only publicly available online documents with secondary data interviews with the founders). Also, we acknowledge the limitation of our definition of “perceived importance” of explanatory factors in our data analysis. Therefore, these shortcomings limit the generalizability of our findings to the whole creative industries, to anglophone Africa, or to other regions of the world. Further research is needed through larger samples of creative industries' businesses and more regional studies while considering specific factors such as the linguistic and cultural differences across contexts and economies.

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