

A Prognosis of South Africa's Cultural and Creative Industries: A Perspective Analysis from within the Creative Economy

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The aim of this article is to explore how innovation in policies, commercialisation strategies, sustainable financing models, and collaborative networks can drive the growth and sustainability of the South African cultural and creative industries. This research examines key issues raised by key role players in the South African creative industries under relevant themes, including, innovation in policy and technology, the commercialisation of research, sustainable financing and building networks. Using Latent Dirichlet Allocation methodology, this research examines how cross-sector policy interventions and collaborative innovation support the sustainability and economic growth of South Africa's cultural and creative industries. An analysis of themes related to innovation, commercialisation, sustainable funding, and cross-sector collaboration, particularly through tourism, hospitality and education. The overall findings indicate that the creative industries play a significant role in the South African economy, and much needs to be done to support this sector. Collaboration between tourism, hospitality, creative sectors, and educational institutions is important in developing sustainable business models and providing platforms for marginalised groups. A multidimensional approach is effective in developing the creative industries in South Africa.

Introduction

The cultural and creative industries in South Africa are increasingly recognised as a key driver of economic growth, job creation, and the deepening of sustainable opportunity for local communities (Adebola, Oyekunle & Sirayi, 2018). For many developing countries, the cultural and creative industries could be considered one of the most dynamic sectors of world commerce where countries often assume that the cultural or creative economy is a key element in their development strategies (Beukelaer, 2014). The cultural and creative industries have long been recognised for their potential for job creation, and to promote social inclusion by creating avenues for job creation and driving urban regeneration efforts, positioning the creative sector as both a catalyst for economic growth and economic revitalisation (Oyekunle, 2020). The impact of creative industries on local economies within South Africa are recognised as leading growth sectors on either the local, regional or national level (Baur, Saba, Biyase, Zwane, Kirsten & Ayemele, 2024).

The "creative industries" can broadly be defined as a group of economic activities that have the capacity to drive innovation and create employment, particularly via intellectual property, such as in the fine arts, artefacts and crafts. These industries focus on the production, reproduction, promotion, distribution, or commercialisation

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of goods and services with content rooted in cultural, artistic, heritage, or educational origins, as well as fields related to management in these areas. While other synonyms and variations of the term exist, the key concept revolves around leveraging creative output for economic and societal benefits (Silva, Marques & Galvão, 2024). Yet, Boğa and Topcu (2020) also remind us that the cultural and creative industries may face a variety of challenges, including limited access to sustainable funding, fragmented networks, and inadequate integration of innovative technologies. Further, where funding is available, there is a danger of a grant mentality on shorter projects rather than on long-term sustainability.

Because of this, our research applies a multidisciplinary approach to better understand the role of the creative economy in a rapidly digitizing global markets and in how sustainability can be ensured in this sector. The "marketisation" of culture and the "culturalization" of the market proposes a twofold dynamic: on one hand, high culture is becoming increasingly commercialised, blending with market-driven forces. On the other hand, cultural content is progressively influencing and shaping the production of commodities. There is an overarching interdependence between culture and commerce, where cultural values and aesthetics are integrated into the marketplace, and the market increasingly drives cultural expressions (Ellmeier, 2003).

The creative industry is strongly multidisciplinary (Silva et al., 2024), with research into this field covering a wide range of fields across a variety of disciplines. While this may appear logical on the surface, this also highlights a notable challenge to advancing research into the arts and culture sector, forcing researchers to expand their area of research beyond their discipline, so that a wider comprehensive academic analysis in this area can be achieved.

Yet, some of the limitations to research around arts and culture sector can be attributed to the problem of 'silo' thinking, which is often synonymous with, what the literature often refers to as, 'organisational thinking' (Bento, Tagliabue & Lorenzo, 2020). Essentially, 'silos' within either disciplines, institutions or organisations, may act as obstacles that prevent the flow of communication between different areas and through such a process may infer possible gains that could be generated through collaboration.

Bento et al. (2020) states that such 'silo' thinking segregates knowledge into silos, and silos comprise barriers to achieving broad-based goals, and can pose a threat to cooperation. This lack of cooperation creates barriers that impede coordination and hinder the collaborative behaviours essential for functioning and even survival of the cultural and creative industries. Bento et al. (2020) further iterate that such siloed thinking obstructs the sharing of perspectives, vital information flow, goal integration, and the development of practical tools, and resources across different units or departments within, or even from outside organisations or institutions.

To overcome this challenge of silo thinking within the research on the cultural and creative industries, the approach proposed in this paper applies a multidisciplinary

approach which explores themes such as, the role of innovation in arts and culture policies, the commercialisation of research, sustainable financing models, and the importance of building collaborative networks. The aim of this research attempts to overcome the siloed approach by addressing multiple stakeholders, role-players and practitioners across different spheres of the cultural and creative industries to deepen the understanding of the challenges experienced within the cultural and creative industries.

The research further seeks to apply a multidimensional perspective to share insight and develop prospects for the future of the sector by identifying strategies which could develop the sustainability and global competitiveness of the South African cultural and creative industry.

Background

The creative economy contributes significantly to the South African Economy (Adebola et al., 2018), with the creative industries gradually being acknowledged for their role as a sustainable development strategy that tackles job creation, innovation, and social inclusion. Yet, there is often confusion around cultural policies and their conflicting objectives (Booyens, 2012). In 2020, South Africa's cultural and creative industries contributed R161 billion to the national GDP, accounting for just under 3% of total economic output, a share comparable to that of the agriculture sector. Within this, the Design and Creative Services domain led with R51 billion (32%), followed closely by Audio-visual and Interactive Media at R48.4 billion (30%). Visual Arts and Crafts contributed R23.4 billion (15%), while Books and Press added R21.5 billion (13%). Smaller contributions came from Performance and Celebration (6%) and Cultural and Natural Heritage (4%) (Observatory, 2024).

While previous research into the role of the creative industries has focused on themes such as creativity, clustering of cultural industries, and the role of culture industries in urban regeneration (Rogerson, 2007), a need for more comprehensive approach to the research that supports cross-sector collaboration across sectors to promote sustainable development within the cultural and creative industries within the social environment. Neglecting to the arts and culture within the broader context of an individual's social environmental risks, there tends to be the production of a one-dimensional cultural policy, thus limiting its depth and relevance (Hadley, Collins & O'Brien, 2020).

This then proposes the question of: "How can cross-sector policy interventions and collaborative innovation support the sustainability and economic growth of South Africa's cultural and creative industries??" The importance of this policy approach is strongly supported by Beukelaer (2017), who emphasises that the 'Western' orientated policy framework tends to impose its own definitions of cultural and creative industries onto an African context. This leads to a disconnect between the policy models being applied and the actual working conditions of

cultural stakeholders across Africa. There is also a political dimension around the self-interest of the state, public vs private institutional dynamics, and market dynamics, and whilst these may provide potential platforms for employment creation, policy makers, apart from considering these dynamics, should not underestimate the often-precarious living and working conditions of those that operate within this sector (Ellmeier, 2003).

What we already know is that the cross-sector connections between hospitality, tourism, the arts and culture is already driving sustainable development within the creative industries, as seen in the works of Forristal (2022), Darbellay and Stock (2012), Woodside, Crofts and Harrill (2007), Zhong, Bottorff, Li, Thiamwong and Beltran (2024) and Afifi, Atef and Al Busaidi (2018). While these sectors are often seen as distinct, their combined potential to create synergies for economic and cultural growth remains underexplored. This requires a deeper analysis of the complex interplay between cultural expressions and the social, economic, and environmental policy shaping them (Hadley et al., 2020). The potential contribution of this cross-sector collaboration approach to improve upon policy applied in the cultural sector could impact on potential opportunities for local artists, improve cultural tourism experiences, and promote innovation within the hospitality industry. Ellmeier (2003) highlights the value placed on cultural products and experiences, which now play a key role in shaping economic transactions and consumer behaviour.

To develop cultural policies, a thorough understanding of the national socio-economic context is required. This thus ensures that the policies reflect the specific needs and dynamics of the cultural industry. Additionally, culture, viewed from an anthropological perspective, is closely tied to work, social activities, and the broader realm of ideas, emphasising the need for cultural policies that integrate these elements into their framework (Hadley et al., 2020). Beukelaer (2017) stresses that it is crucial to deepen research within Africa's cultural sector, as the continent cannot simply adopt pre-existing policy models, and hope for success. Instead, Africa must develop its own conceptual policy frameworks and apply unique approaches to develop the cultural industries, allowing for a more meaningful and practical approach to the cultural and creative sectors across the continent. However, Ellmeier (2003) reminds us that policy makers should be mindful of the social implications of such policy. The "marketisation" of culture and the "culturalization" of the market indicate two interrelated trends. Culture is becoming increasingly commercialised where cultural content plays a significant role in shaping the production of commodities while representing a non-alienated, emotional and value exchange. But the economy is viewed as rational and functional, reflecting the separation which exists in market-based societies.

However, the separation between market and culture that exists within the market-based economy is often bridged through the embedded social networks which support the creative and the cultural sectors. The knowledge development occurring within these embedded networks and relationships is supporting the creation of new platforms and practices. A significant aspect of this is the use of

shared spaces as mediums for engagement, which can take various forms, such as incubation centres or shared facilities, or even virtual platforms which facilitate collaboration and exchange in non-traditional environments (Gilmore & Comunian, 2016). To derive a complete understanding of such dynamics that exist within a local context, this study draws from the experiences of role players, practitioners and key stakeholders.

Methodology

This study applies a qualitative mixed-methods approach derived from thirty-two symposium participants who represent different sectors and industries within the South African cultural and creative industries. The population of interest for this study comprised professionals and stakeholders working in or with South Africa's cultural and creative industries. A purposive sampling approach was used to select 32 participants for the symposium, including artists, academics, policymakers, and creative entrepreneurs. Participants were chosen based on their active involvement in CCIs and their potential to contribute to policy, innovation, and collaboration-focused discussions.

The focus of the symposium was divided into four thematic areas: innovation in arts and culture policies, commercialisation of research, sustainable financing and commercial business models and, building networks and collaborations. Individual participants chose to participate in each of the four thematic areas based on their experience, and their interest in the respective thematic areas. Feedback derived from the discussions, relating to the four thematic areas, plus a summary of the overall symposium, were collected for analysis. Word content was extracted, cleaned and pre-processed. The most frequently used words were identified, and n-grams (bi-grams) were extracted to explore common word pairs. Word clouds and histograms were developed from the data to visualise these patterns and provide insights into the key themes discussed during the symposium. The study employed a Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) method for topic modelling within the analysis. Topic modelling refers to a set of algorithms designed to uncover latent topics within a document.

There are two main types of topic modelling approaches that could be used, and these include linear topic modelling and probabilistic topic modelling (Qomariyah, Iriawan & Fithriasari, 2019). Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) is a Bayesian hierarchical model that represents a collection of text data as a mixture of different topics.

Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) was selected for this study as it offers a systematic and data-driven approach to uncovering underlying thematic structures within large sets of qualitative responses. Given the cross-sector and exploratory nature of the symposium, which brought together a range of stakeholders from across the cultural and creative sectors, LDA provided an effective means of analysing unstructured text data without the need to impose predetermined

coding categories. While traditional qualitative methods such as thematic analysis or grounded theory are valuable for deep, interpretive insight, they often rely heavily on manual coding, which may introduce subjectivity and limit scalability.

Topic modelling is a technique used to uncover the underlying themes within large, unstructured sets of discussions, organizing the data based on these discovered themes. Furthermore, the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) is a better suited to analysing these relationships, making it more suitable for identifying patterns across multiple discussions (Qomariyah et al., 2019). Six to eight distinct topics from the corpus of data used in this study. The optimal number of topics was determined by evaluating the model's perplexity across a range of topics. This allowed for the extraction of relevant topics such as policy, creative industries, and sustainable business models. Word clouds for each topic were generated to visualise the prominent words within each identified topic.

To further interpret the participants' feedback, sentiment analysis was conducted using the VADER sentiment analysis tool, which categorised text into positive and negative sentiments. VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and sEntiment Reasoner) is a lexicon and rule-based sentiment analysis tool that is particularly effective for analysing social media text or any informal, short-form text (including transcriptions from discussions or interviews). It is widely used due to its balance between computational efficiency and human-like accuracy in sentiment classification (Gilbert & Hutto, 2014).

VADER sentiment is a lexical sentiment classifier used for initial sentiment labelling of texts. A sentiment lexicon is a collection of words annotated with semantic scores, typically ranging from -1 to 1. VADER sentiment analysis can aggregate individual word sentiment scores to generate an overall sentence score. It accounts for the impact of booster words (e.g., "very" in "very happy") and negation words (e.g., "not" in "not happy") when determining sentence sentiment. However, VADER's default configuration uses an English sentiment lexicon, including English negation and booster words (Borg & Boldt, 2020).

This analysis provided insight into the overall disposition and perception of the participants regarding the discussed themes. Borg and Boldt (2020) mention that by grouping the feedback by sentiment and topic, we can potentially identify areas within the cultural and creative industries where processes and strategies could be supported. Areas of concern or opportunities for improvement in organisational approaches to supporting cultural and creative industries could thus be highlighted, guiding future policy recommendations and strategic decisions.

Various tools were used to conduct these analyses, helping to identify patterns and insights within the collected data. Perez-Llamas and Lopez-Bigas (2011) mention that a simple yet effective approaches include clustering, and correlation analysis, which have been employed to extract key themes and explore the relationships between different topics and sentiments. The visualisation of data and results is crucial for contextualising information, particularly when analysing and comparing multiple conditions, and an effective visual representation allows for clearer

interpretation and communication of complex data, enhancing understanding across various aspects being studied (Perez-Llamas & Lopez-Bigas, 2011). These techniques allow for a deeper understanding of how various aspects of the cultural and creative industries (cultural and creative industries) are connected, providing a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities within the sector.

A correlation matrix was generated to assess the relationships between the identified topics, visualised using heatmaps. Freedman and Osicka (2008) mention that heatmaps can be used for visualising complex, multi-dimensional data by representing one dimension through colour. In this research, heatmaps have been used to explore the relationships between assorted topics discussed during the symposium, helping to identify correlations and areas of thematic overlap or divergence. By mapping sentiment and thematic discussions onto heatmaps, this method provides a visual representation of the intensity and connection between key themes, such as innovation, commercialisation, and sustainable financing. Positive and negative correlations between topics are identified, indicating areas of overlap or divergence in the participants' discussions.

To test the robustness of the analysis, several statistical methods were employed to ensure the validity and significance of the data collected from the symposium. One of the key approaches was the calculation of perplexity in the model, which measures how well the model fits the data. Lower perplexity values indicated a better fit, suggesting that the topics identified from the symposium feedback were meaningful and provided a solid foundation for the subsequent analysis (Rieger, Jentsch & Rahnenführer, 2024). By testing perplexity across a range of topics, we were able to identify the optimal number of topics, ensuring that the final model provided robust insights into the key themes discussed.

The thematic framework of the symposium was developed in advance, based on two key National and Provincial Research Projects which examined the economic impact of the Cradle of Humankind on the South African economy¹. This approach ensured that the discussions were based in relevant theoretical and policy-oriented contexts while remaining open-ended enough to accommodate diverse viewpoints. The pre-selection of themes, namely: innovation, commercialisation of research, sustainable business models, and network-building. It was therefore not intended to restrict participant input, but to create a structured and meaningful discussion around strategic areas identified as priorities for the sector's long-term sustainability and growth. Moreover, this structure enabled the application of analytical methods such as topic modelling and sentiment analysis, which benefit from well-defined thematic parameters.

The analysis undertaken here will be applied under each of the following themes:

1. Baur P., Saba C., Biyase M., Zwane T., Kirsten F., Ayemele C., 2024, Socio-Economic Report on The Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site 2024, Gauteng Department of Economic Development, University of Johannesburg, March 2024. & Baur P., Saba C., Biyase M., Zwane T., Kirsten F., 2023, Report on The Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site and Dinokeng Projects, Gauteng Department of Economic Development, University of Johannesburg, April 2023.

Theme 1: Innovation in arts and culture policies and practices by exploring policy, creative and technological platforms, including the XR and the Metaverse, to support and generate opportunities for the cultural and creative industries.

Theme 2: Commercialisation of research by discussing models and strategies for monetising arts and culture effectively, bridging the gap between academic research and practical application, identifying priority research areas, and expanding accessibility to research case studies and opportunities.

Theme 3: Sustainable funding and commercial business models used in identifying and developing sustainable funding sources for ongoing and future project and building cross-sector business models for viable cross-sector commercial projects with cultural and creative industries.

Theme 4: Building networks and collaborations by leveraging connections for stronger synergies and a wider impact on the arts and culture sector.

The summaries of the results are presented in the form of a table. The table is divided into the following six sections: Section 1 includes a word cloud of the most common word combinations used by the respondents within this specific theme used in the symposium. Section 2 indicates the top six topics identified through the LDA analysis is presented as word clouds from the highest probability to the lowest probability. The probability of each topic is indicated in section 3 using a bar graph to be indicating the range of the probability of each of the topics identified in the LDA. Section 4 applies a heatmap cross correlation table to indicate the correlation between the identified topics. This is then supported in section 5 through a histogram to indicate the log-probabilities and goodness of fit of LDA model. Section 6 explores the measured sentiment distribution as shown indicating the range of positive to negative sentiment per point raised by individual participants in the discussions.

Theme 1: Innovation in Arts and Culture Policies and Practices

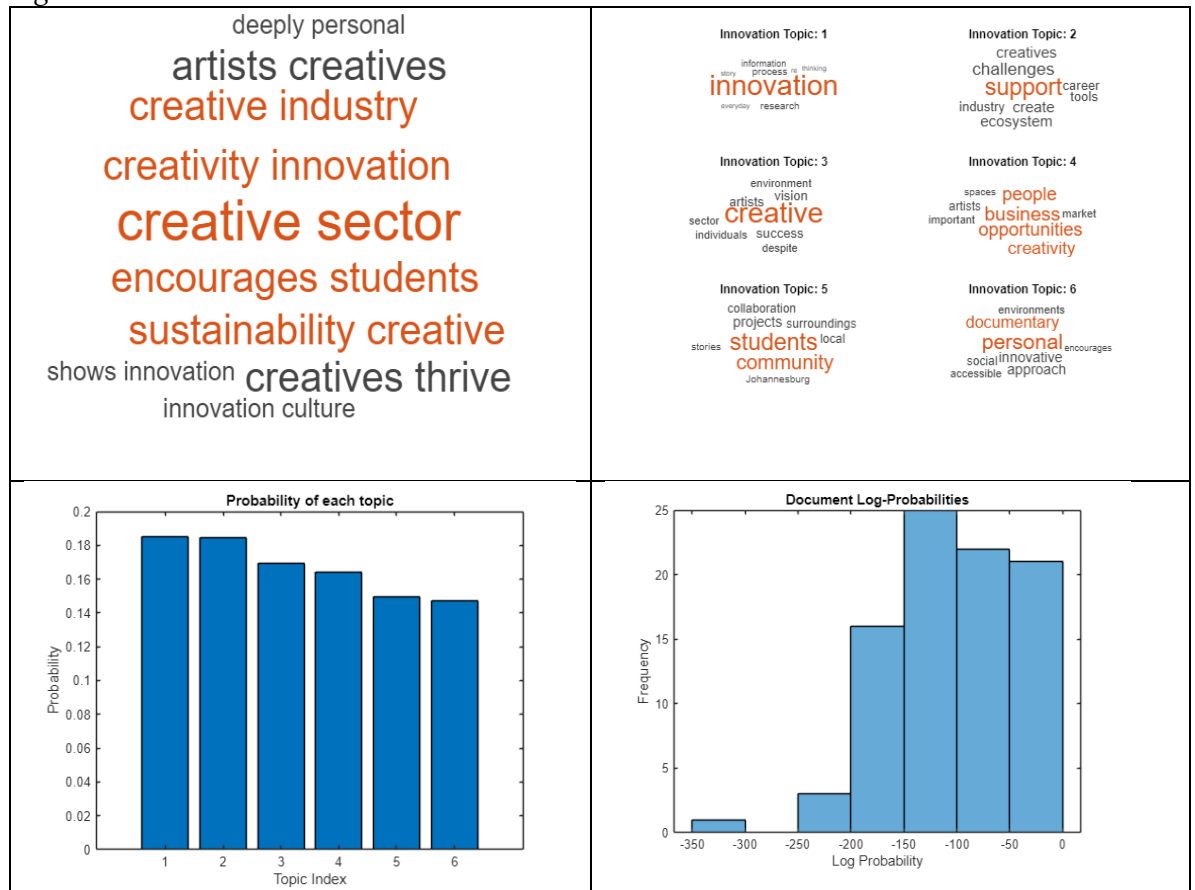
Theme 1 focuses on innovation in arts and culture policies and practices, emphasising the role of everyday experiences and cultural heritage in driving creativity within the cultural and creative industries. Drawing from innovation systems theory and the diffusion of innovations framework, the discussion explores how policy reform, informed by participatory and creative approaches, can unlock new opportunities within the cultural and creative industries (CCIs).

Innovation is framed through developing or advancing practice, using local resources, and community-driven solutions. Creative approaches are applied in educational settings to inspire students to draw from their personal narratives and local environments, making their work impactful and socially relevant. The integration of indigenous knowledge and community-based funding models, such as the development and support of stokvels², create sustainable platforms that promote

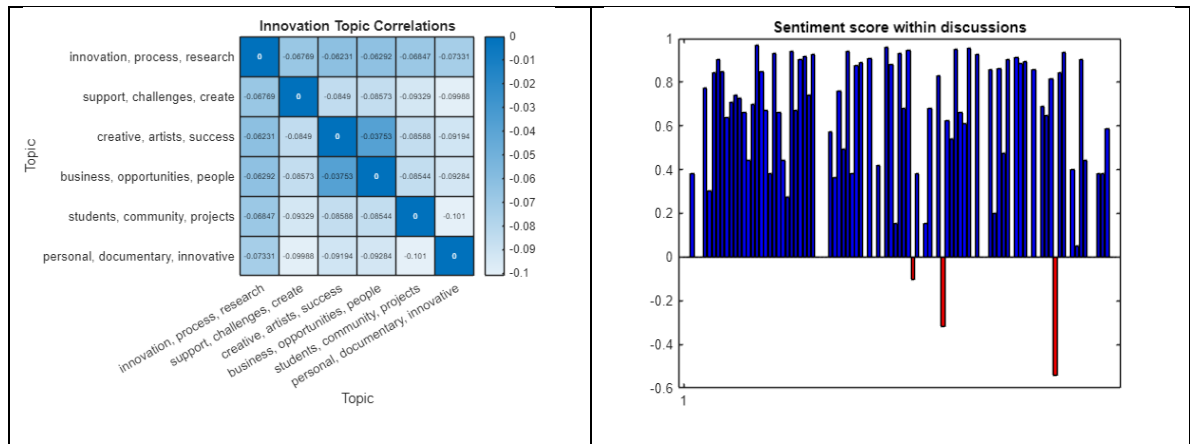
2. Stokvels are community-based self-help initiatives aimed at addressing issues of poverty and income insecurity. As a form of informal social security, they enable members to meet their basic

economic growth and cultural preservation. This broader approach to innovation in cultural and creative industries encourages collaborative efforts and adaptability to real-life conditions, supporting long-term sustainability and cultural development.

Figure 1. Innovation in Arts and Culture Policies and Practices



needs by pooling resources. In addition to fulfilling immediate needs, stokvels provide opportunities for members to save, invest, and build wealth over time by accumulating assets. Notably, stokvels also play a significant role in promoting the empowerment of women, offering them a platform to participate in financial decision-making and gain greater financial independence Sally, M. & Edwell, K. (2014). *The role of stokvels in improving people's lives: The case in orange farm. Johannesburg. South. Africa. Social Work, 50(4): 504-515.* <http://dx.doi.org/10.15270/50-4-388..>



The word cloud emphasises several key themes related to creativity, innovation, and sustainability within the creative sector. At its core, it highlights the importance of the 'creative sector' and 'industry' as significant drivers of both cultural and economic growth. The central focus on 'creativity' and 'innovation' suggests that these are critical elements for ensuring that artists and creatives thrive in a competitive environment. 'Sustainability' emerges as an important theme, indicating a need to balance innovation with the economic viability of creative work. The word cloud also emphasises the role of 'education' and 'mentorship,' with terms like "students" and "encourages" implying the importance of supporting the next generation of creatives. Individual experiences are highlighted, particularly in the context of 'storytelling' and 'documentary production,' suggesting that deeply personal narratives drive much of the innovation in this space. Finally, the mention of making creative approaches 'accessible' and 'repeatable' reflects a desire to ensure that innovation in the arts is inclusive and scalable, allowing broader participation in the creative economy.

Six themes were chosen for the LDA analysis, based on the order of probability.

- The first theme emphasises innovation as a central theme, focusing on processes, information sharing, and research. This suggests that innovation is seen not just in terms of creativity, but that it also be a structured, systematic process that involves critical thinking and the integration of current information. This theme highlights the need to develop outcome-based research through personal and shared narratives to drive creative progress.
- The second theme revolves around the support required for creatives to overcome industry challenges. It emphasises the need for an enabling ecosystem that provides tools and career development opportunities. This topic reflects on how innovation in arts and culture is often linked to external support systems, including industry collaborations and mentorship.
- The third theme centres on the vision of artists and their ability to achieve success despite obstacles. It highlights how innovation can come from

artists' determination to create and succeed, even when faced with challenges. The theme also reflects how personal vision and resilience are key components of the innovation process within the arts.

- The fourth theme links creativity with business opportunities, highlighting the role of market access in driving innovation. It suggests that for many artists, innovation is not just about the creative process itself, but also about finding ways to monetise their work and tap into market potential.
- The fifth theme focuses on community collaboration and the role of students. It suggests that collaboration between students and local communities on artistic projects is a key driver of creative innovation, providing opportunities for learning and the development of innovative ideas through collective action.
- The sixth theme highlights the personal and social dimensions of creativity, particularly in the context of documentary work. It emphasises innovation through storytelling that is both accessible and engaging, focusing on individual experiences and social issues.

The histogram of Document Log-Probabilities provides insight into the likelihood of the model fitting the data in terms of how well it assigns probabilities to the discussions in the dataset. The x-axis represents the log probabilities, ranging from -350 to 0, while the y-axis shows the frequency of discussions corresponding to each probability range. From the histogram, we can observe that most discussions have log probabilities between -150 and -50, suggesting that the model assigns higher probabilities to these discussions. However, there is a small number of discussions with log probabilities lower than -200, that might indicate outliers or discussions that the model struggled to fit well. The peak around -100 to -150 represents the largest group of discussions. The distribution suggests that the model fits the data well for most discussions.

Overall, the heatmap shows mostly weak negative correlations between the topics, suggesting that these areas were discussed independently. The strongest correlation (0.101) is observed between "students, community, projects" and "personal, documentary, innovative", which suggests a strong link between community-based projects involving students and the creation of personal, innovative work. The close relationship between these topics' highlights how educational and community-led projects are essential for creativity and developing new forms of artistic expression. Another noticeable correlation (0.0564) exists between "business, opportunities, people" and "students, community, projects", indicating that discussions around business opportunities and people-centred innovation were closely tied to student involvement in community projects. The role of students in community engagement appears to be a central theme in how innovation can be applied to economic and cultural development, with a focus on local projects that have the potential to create new business models and market opportunities. Additionally, the correlation (0.0375) between "creative, artists, success" and "business,

opportunities, people" indicates some overlap between discussions on artistic success and the creation of business opportunities. This suggests that the commercialisation of creative work, through the development of business models and market strategies, was viewed as contributing towards the success of artists. The link between creative output and business strategies highlights how innovation in the arts is not limited to artistic production but also includes the ability to market and monetise creative works.

Overall, while many of the topics were discussed independently, the heatmap reveals key intersections between student involvement, community projects, and business opportunities. These connections suggest that education, community engagement, and entrepreneurship are seen as vital components of innovation in the arts and culture sector. For South Africa, innovation in the arts, tied to business opportunities and community-driven initiatives, presents an avenue to both preserve cultural heritage and promote economic sustainability.

The strong focus on education and mentorship indicates that investing in training young artists within the creative industries through structured support systems could support the sector's adaptability. The correlation between community projects and business opportunities shows that South Africa's arts sector has potential for broader social and economic impact, particularly if local projects are tied to market opportunities. This could encourage entrepreneurship within the creative sector and create job opportunities, especially for youth and marginalised communities.

The sentiment graph provides insight into how participants expressed their opinions on the theme during discussions. The graph indicates a broad range of sentiment, with a predominant portion of the responses showing positive sentiment, represented by the bars above the zero line. This suggests that many participants were optimistic about the potential for innovation in arts and culture policies. They likely expressed support for new ideas around policy reform, community-driven projects, and the integration of technology, all of which were viewed favourably as means to support the creative sector. However, the presence of negative sentiment bars below the zero line reflects some concerns or criticisms that were raised during the discussions about efficacy in these arenas.

The negative sentiment scores from Theme 1 highlight several critical concerns regarding the future of innovation in the arts and culture sector. A recurring theme is the lack of a broader strategy, which, if not addressed, could make even well-intentioned efforts unsustainable in the long term. Participants expressed that without comprehensive support systems and strategies, artists and creatives will continue to face challenges in achieving sustainability, particularly in securing consistent funding and institutional backing. Another concern raised was the stigma associated with certain locations, like Johannesburg, being perceived as unsafe and crime-ridden, which could negatively impact tourism and cultural engagement.

To deepen the interpretative value of the thematic analysis, the top five contributions, ranked according to sentiment scores were examined to highlight

the most positively and negatively perceived aspects offer insight into stakeholder perspectives across the cultural and creative industries.

1. *"The speaker highlights the importance of sustainability for creative individuals and organizations celebrating those that have survived for decades despite the high failure rate of many ventures the goal is to ensure long term success for artists beyond the typical short term life span of creative initiatives"*
2. *"a personal experience in a taxi ride serves as a powerful metaphor for documenting everyday life the interaction between the speaker and fellow passengers leads to a discussion about plants and personal memory the man's story about his grandmother nurturing peace lilies connects innovation to caregiving and memory preservation the lilies symbolize life and care drawing a parallel between innovation and nurturing environments"*
3. *"These projects illustrate how the innovative teaching method starting with personal stories and familiar surroundings helps students connect with their work on a deeper level the student's ability to create impactful documentaries shows how innovation is nurtured by inviting them to explore what is already within their reach"*
4. *"Bold leadership clear vision and strategic planning are required to create an ecosystem that not only supports individual success but also ensures a thriving robust creative industry that can provide opportunities for future generations"*
5. *"The speaker draws on historical examples like JFK's moon mission and South Korea's post war rise to demonstrate the importance of having a bold long-term vision even when the technology and resources are not yet in place a strong vision can inspire collaboration innovation and the mobilization of resources"*

The top five positively ranked contributions reflect a strong, future-oriented optimism within the cultural and creative industries. Central to these perspectives is the emphasis on sustainability, sustainability, and long-term success for creative practitioners, particularly in a sector known for short-lived ventures. Personal experience serves as powerful metaphors, linking innovation with memory, care, and emotional connectivity. There is also a clear endorsement of educational strategies that draw from personal experience to deeper student engagement. Additionally, the responses emphasize the role of strategic foresight, proposing that ambitious and long-term goals supported through collaboration, could drive innovation in the industry.

However, there are clear challenges, as indicated by the lowest ranked sentiment score.

1. *"Stigma comes from word of mouth how can technology be used to put water to the fire of the stigma of jhb being unsafe and crime infested"*
2. *"The failure of orbit a jazz club initiative in Johannesburg is used as a case study to emphasize the consequences of not fostering a supportive ecosystem despite"*

efforts and funding the lack of a community driven system to support such initiatives led to its downfall"

3. *"Without these components artists and creatives will continue to struggle with sustainability"*
4. *"Having courses for learners in townships indigenous skills no innovation due to copycatting influence of ai using ai to brainstorm students heavily reliant on ai lazy thinking"*
5. *"a domestic issue of how or the role of media plays a significant role in perpetuating the negative perception of people become desensitized because of what they consume people don t take pride in their surroundings parts of Soweto that are flagship communities for tourists, they are treated as royalty because they contribute heavily to those community economies understand the value of culture and how it can contribute to the continuation of business people need to be accountable and responsible for your surroundings if not taken care of these places can become redundant broken window theory feelings of unsafety our actions and feelings have consequences corporate can do so much they can run out of interest message on not littering restore pride"*

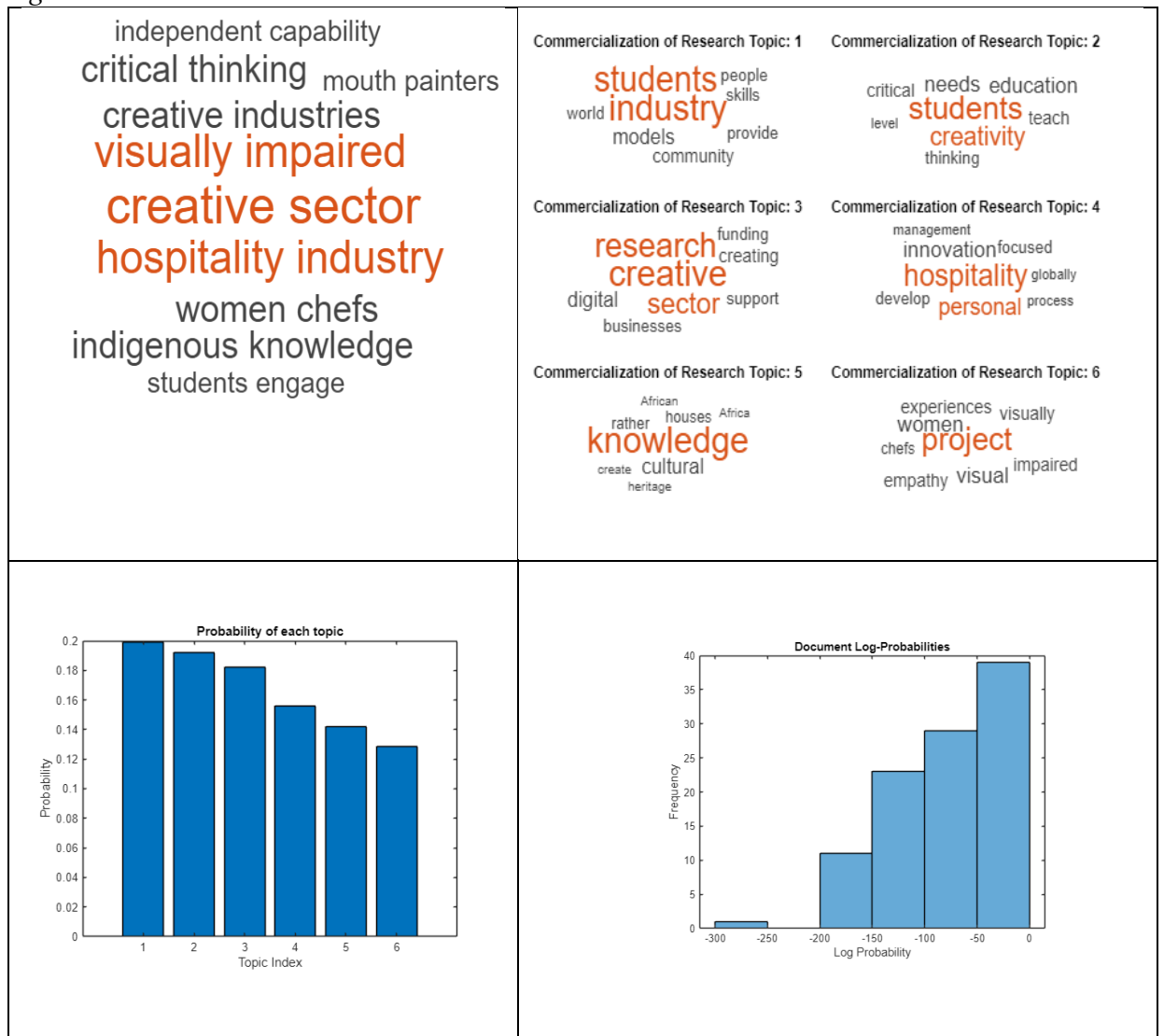
The lowest five sentiment scores reveal a range of concerns and critical reflections on the systemic barriers affecting the cultural and creative industries. Central to these responses is a sense of frustration with the lack of supportive ecosystems, as illustrated by the failure of initiatives like the Orbit jazz club, where community-driven backing was insufficient to ensure sustainability. A recurring theme is the challenge of negative perceptions, particularly around safety and socio-economic decline in urban areas like Johannesburg and Soweto. The role of media in reinforcing harmful stereotypes and diminishing civic pride is also noted, possibly indicating a deeper need for cultural accountability and environmental stewardship. Additionally, concerns about the overreliance on artificial intelligence in educational contexts raise questions about creativity, originality, and critical thinking among learners, especially in disadvantaged communities.

Theme 2: Commercialisation of Research

The theme addresses the 'Commercialisation of Research' by exploring models and strategies to effectively monetise South Africa's arts and culture sector. Grounded in the theory of knowledge transfer and cultural entrepreneurship, the focus is placed on identifying mechanisms that bridge epistemic divides between academia and industry. It emphasises bridging the gap between academic research and practical application through partnerships between universities and industry incubators. The theme focuses on the development of skills programs and business incubation models that support entrepreneurship, particularly in digital content and heritage sectors.

There is a strong focus on aligning research with economic data, creating opportunities to monetise cultural and heritage assets, and expanding research accessibility through case studies and emerging technologies like AI and the metaverse. The theme also highlights the need for innovative funding models beyond government reliance, encouraging sustainable long-term strategies to commercialise research.

Figure 2. Commercialisation of Research in Arts and Culture Policies and Practices



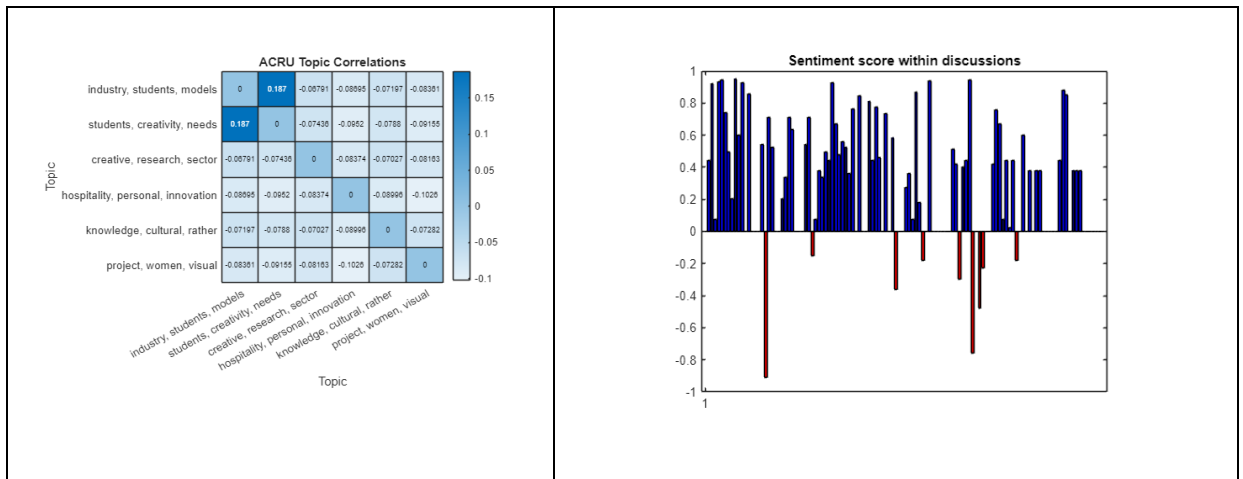


Image 1 in figure 2 highlights key themes related to the commercialisation of research within South Africa's creative sector. At the centre is the "creative sector," emphasising its importance as a driver of economic and cultural growth. Terms like "critical thinking" and "students" suggest a focus on education, indicating that critical thinking among students and, in addition, connecting them with industry professionals to support practical approaches to skills transfer, is essential for research commercialisation. This connection between academia and industry helps students develop real-world skills that can be applied in the creative industries. Another significant theme is the inclusion of "indigenous knowledge" and "cultural heritage," reflecting the economic potential of traditional practices and knowledge systems. The commercialisation of indigenous knowledge represents a growing opportunity to monetise South Africa's rich cultural assets, emphasising both preservation and economic development. Furthermore, terms like "visually impaired" and "women" indicate a socially conscious approach to commercialisation, focusing on inclusivity and creating opportunities for underrepresented groups in sectors like culinary arts and creative businesses. There are opportunities for marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities and women.

The LDA addresses various aspects of research monetisation within the creative sector.

- The first topic emphasises the role of students and industry collaboration, indicating that students play a crucial role in bridging academic research and practical industry applications. By aligning research with industry needs, students can develop essential skills and contribute to business models that support the commercialisation process.
- The second topic focuses on critical thinking and creativity, stressing the importance of developing such skills through education. This highlights the need for academic institutions to cultivate innovation and problem-solving capabilities in students, preparing them to transform research into

marketable products and services. The remaining topics explore additional dimensions of research commercialisation.

- The third topic discusses the need for funding and support to enable the commercialisation of research in the creative sector, with a particular focus on digital businesses.
- The fourth topic ties innovation to the hospitality industry, suggesting that hospitality management can benefit from research that is focused on enhancing individual experiences and operational processes.
- The fifth topic emphasises the commercialisation of cultural knowledge and heritage, particularly within an African context, emphasising the importance of protecting and monetising indigenous knowledge.
- Lastly, the sixth topic highlights the role of inclusivity by addressing the experiences of women and the visually impaired in the creative sector, advocating for commercial projects that empower marginalised groups and promote social equity. Together, these topics present a comprehensive view of how research can be applied to different sectors, focusing on skills development, industry collaboration, cultural heritage, and inclusivity to drive the commercialisation process.

The histogram presents the document log-probabilities, which measure how well the LDA (Latent Dirichlet Allocation) model fits the dataset. Most discussions fall within the range of -150 to 0, indicating that the model assigns higher probabilities to these discussions. The peak around -50 indicates that a considerable number of discussions align well with the identified themes of research commercialisation. However, some discussions have log probabilities below -200, indicating that there are outliers. This suggests that the LDA model fits most of the data well, though a few outliers exist, but this may require further investigation.

The highest correlation in the heatmap (0.0627) is observed between the topics "knowledge, cultural, rather" and "research, creative sector, support", indicating that conversations about the role of cultural knowledge in research are closely related to discussions on how the creative sector can be supported through research commercialisation. This suggests a positive link between leveraging indigenous knowledge and the need for research to be applied within the creative industries. It indicates that cultural heritage and local knowledge systems are seen as valuable assets that, when combined with research, can drive innovation and create marketable products or services in the arts and culture sector. Another moderate correlation (0.0564) exists between "business, opportunities, people" and "students, creativity, needs", which points to the interconnection between business opportunities and the role of students in fulfilling the needs of the creative sector. This suggests that students, through their education and creative thinking, are seen as key contributors to creating sustainable business opportunities within the creative industries. Educational institutions and training programs play a significant role in bridging the gap between academic research and practical commercialisation,

preparing students to contribute to the creative economy in a business-oriented manner. Additionally, the heatmap shows a weak but noticeable correlation between "hospitality, personal, innovation" and "business, opportunities, people" (0.0462), indicating that the hospitality industry may be seen as an emerging area where business opportunities for creatives can be created through innovation and individual experiences. This connection suggests that collaborative projects in arts, culture and hospitality could offer new avenues for commercialising creative research, especially by integrating cultural assets into tourism.

The sentiment analysis graph presents a range of sentiment scores, showing a mix of positive and negative reactions throughout the discussions on research commercialisation. The bars above the zero line represent positive sentiment, with participants expressing optimism about the commercialisation strategies and their potential benefits. However, several bars below the zero-line show instances of negative sentiment, reflecting criticisms or concerns raised during the discussions.

The negative sentiment scores reflect several significant concerns about both workplace environments and emerging technologies like AI. One recurring issue is the toxic workplace culture, where employees express frustration over unnecessary stress caused by managers' verbal abuse, such as shouting and swearing. This highlights the need for clearer communication and a healthier work environment, especially in high-pressure creative industries. Another concern centres around the role of AI in research, with participants expressing fears about biased data, particularly from Western sources, and the lack of proper compensation for individuals who contribute to AI-driven knowledge systems. There is apprehension about AI's potential to steal intellectual property and make the creative sector vulnerable to data loss. Additionally, concerns are raised about the decolonisation of education and the need to develop critical thinking skills to address the gaps in how AI functions and affects the creative and research industries.

1. *"there is a danger with ai people say we are behind but we still own intellectual property which is important we need to be careful with ai cause everything we feed to ai it owns it and if we plug in model it trains itself on our own knowledge e.g it does not know indigenous knowledge but rather copies from humans and that's our intellectual property let's us build our own platforms that preserves our intellectual knowledge as Africans e.g ai platforms are able to create our music which is our intellectual knowledge how do we protect ourselves from ai"*
2. *"Traditional investors tend to favour sectors like agriculture over creative industries even when creative businesses have strong business plans this has led to the incubator creating an alternative funding model including a creative capital reserve fund to address gaps in access to investment"*
3. *"The program places great importance on maintaining strong relationships with the industry ensuring that education aligns with real world expectations internships and partnerships are key allowing students to engage directly with the industry and gain feedback"*

4. *"the speaker highlights the importance of using art education to foster empathy community involvement and inclusive design by challenging students to think beyond the visual the project helped them develop a deeper understanding of the diverse ways art can be experienced in essence the presentation focused on how art education can go beyond traditional boundaries to promote inclusivity empathy and personal growth with a strong emphasis on process driven learning and engaging with the community to foster a deeper connection to the art and its impact on society"*
5. *"The South African creative industries incubator was established to support sustainability entrepreneurship and thriving businesses in the creative sector addressing gaps in the ecosystem the incubator provides business incubation and acceleration services offering support in areas like product development and business acceleration across multiple creative industries e.g music digital content"*

The top five positively scored contributions under the theme of Commercialisation of Research reveal a shared commitment to safeguarding intellectual property, fostering innovation, and aligning education with real-world industry needs. A strong concern is voiced around the implications of artificial intelligence for cultural ownership, particularly regarding indigenous knowledge and creative outputs like music, with calls for the development of African-owned digital platforms to protect and commercialise local creativity. Several participants highlight the structural barriers in traditional investment, where creative ventures are often overlooked in favour of more conventional sectors like agriculture. The significance of embedding students in industry contexts through internships and partnerships is also emphasised, with education seen not only as a means of technical training but as a transformative process that nurtures empathy, inclusive design, and community engagement.

1. *"However, the workplace environment presents difficulties they express frustration over unnecessary shouting and swearing from managers feeling that they can handle the pressure without such behaviour they want clear instructions without the added stress of verbal abuse"*
2. *"AI is dangerous e.g personal research and surveys can be lost on digital knowledge and get lost on the internet"*
3. *"Models of ai are biased as they provide data from the east and west the models ai provides need to compensate the people who provide the knowledge ai is biased and western and rather learns and steals"*
4. *"we humans are the first machines and therefore ai is not innovative and we can make it do what we want it to do first we need to realize our power ai lacks critical thinking and we need to teach students more on critical thinking"*
5. *"a key challenge in the sector is the lack of commercialization much of the sector is dependent on government funding leading to a project-based mindset where businesses often fail to focus on long term sustainability"*

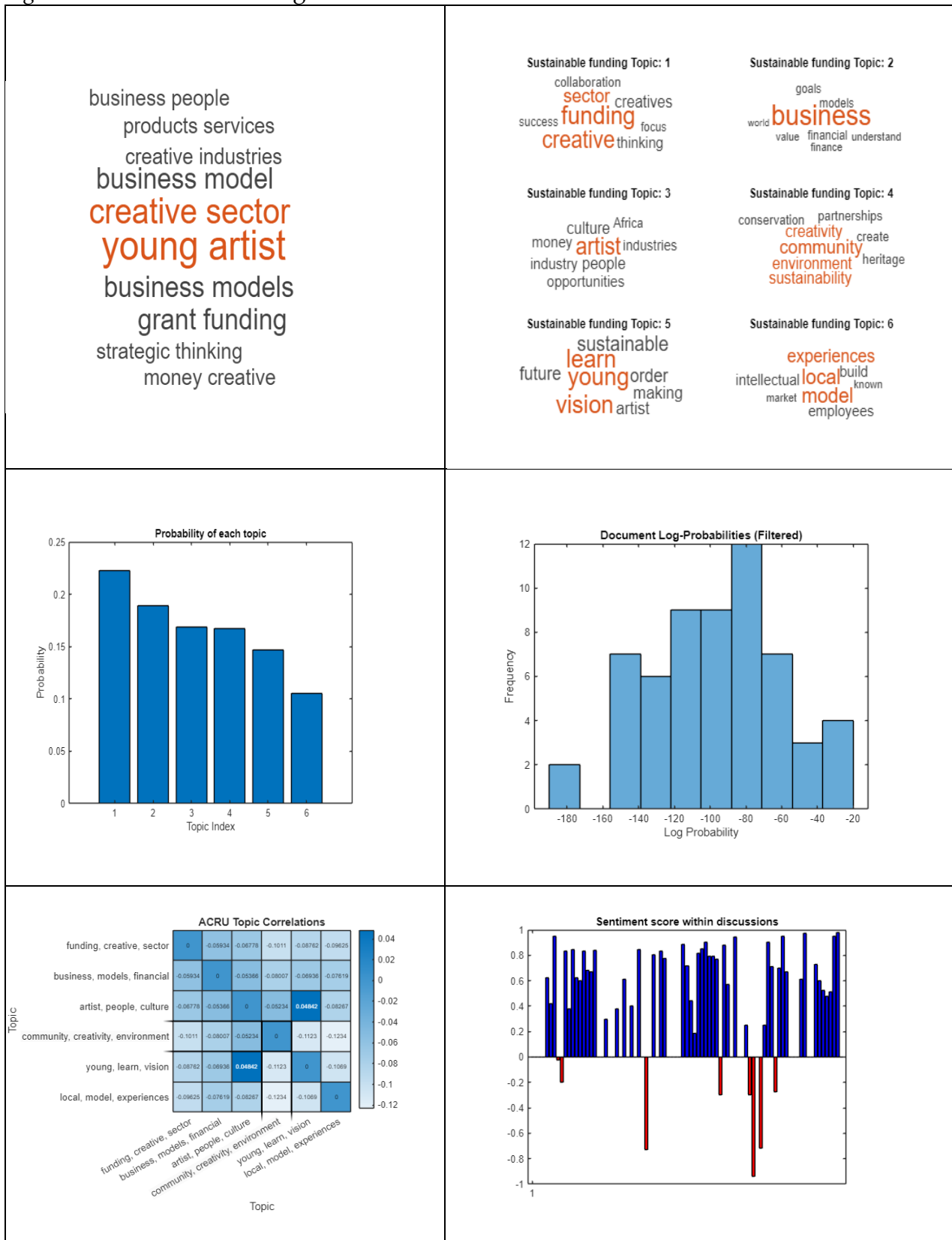
The lowest sentiment responses under the theme of Commercialisation of Research highlights a series of concerns and critiques regarding both structural and technological barriers to progress in South Africa's creative economy. A recurring issue is the perceived overdependence on government funding, which fosters a short-term, project-based approach that undermines the long-term sustainability of creative enterprises. Participants also express discontent with toxic workplace environments, highlighting a need for more supportive and professional management practices that facilitate, rather than hinder, creative output. A strong thread of scepticism surrounds the integration of artificial intelligence in the creative sector. Respondents caution against AI's potential to misappropriate intellectual property, particularly when it draws from biased, non-African datasets, thereby erasing local knowledge systems. The fear of data loss, lack of transparency, and insufficient critical engagement with AI tools is also prevalent, with calls for a greater emphasis on critical thinking and digital literacy within educational and professional contexts.

Theme 3: Sustainable Funding and Commercial Business Models

There is a need for creative industries to move beyond reliance on grant funding and adopt more sustainable, entrepreneurial approaches in financing. This theme is situated within the broader framework of sustainability theory and cross-sectoral innovation and highlights the disconnect between the role of the financing infrastructure and the creative industries. Financial support is often lacking despite the significant contribution of the creative sector to the economy. To overcome these barriers, creatives must develop structured financial models, collaborate across sectors, and strategically seek funding beyond the traditional grants. Cross-sector collaborations, such as partnering with industries like finance, tourism, and technology, are key to diversifying income streams and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Moreover, the theme emphasises the importance of collaboration, diversification, and financial planning. Creatives are encouraged to build business models that integrate commercial and cross-sector approaches, tapping into new markets and monetising creative outputs through innovative products and services. By moving away from short-term project-based thinking, the goal would be to empower creatives to create lasting, scalable solutions that not only contribute to cultural and creative development but also ensure financial independence and sustainability for ongoing and future projects.

Figure 3. Sustainable Funding and Commercial Business Models



Based on the respective graphs in figure 3, the theme of sustainable financing and commercial business models highlights the discussions around sustainable funding and business models in the creative sector, particularly the role of young artists and their need for financial independence. The terms "business model," "creative sector," and "grant funding" explores transitioning from traditional grant-based funding to more sustainable business-oriented financial models. The inclusion of terms like "income streams," "products," and "services" implies that creative professionals are encouraged to think strategically about diversifying their revenue sources, focusing on offering products and services that can generate continuous income. The terms "strategic thinking" and "partnerships" point to the importance of collaboration and creative solutions to break financial barriers, while "social media" and "businesspeople" emphasise the potential for creatives to engage with broader business networks and use modern platforms to expand their market reach. Overall, the word cloud suggests that young artists should be empowered to create scalable business models, reducing dependency on grants.

The LDA reveals six distinct topics, each emphasising aspects of how creative industries can secure long-term financial sustainability.

- Topic 1 focuses on funding, creative thinking, and collaboration, suggesting that the creative sector must shift towards innovative thinking and partnerships to access diverse funding sources. This implies that creative professionals need to engage in cross-sector collaborations to find financial success beyond traditional methods.
- Topic 2 centres around business models and understanding the financial aspects of creative work. It emphasises the importance of setting business goals and gaining financial literacy to establish models that allow creatives to succeed in the market. By bridging the gap between creativity and financial knowledge, the topic highlights the need for creatives to better understand the broader economic landscape.
- Topic 3 highlights the importance of leveraging cultural heritage and the artistic industries in generating funding opportunities, particularly for African creatives. This suggests a focus on turning cultural assets into profitable ventures through industry partnerships.
- Topic 4 discusses the role of community and environmental sustainability in creative business models. It suggests that creative entrepreneurs can build long-term, impactful businesses by incorporating sustainability and environmental conservation into their models.
- Topic 5 emphasises the need for young artists to learn and develop a vision for sustainable business practices, highlighting the importance of mentoring and forward-thinking strategies.
- Finally, Topic 6 focuses on local experiences, and building business models around intellectual property and unique local markets. This topic suggests that creatives can capitalise on their unique cultural context to build

sustainable businesses, particularly by engaging employees and communities in the process.

The histogram of Document Log-Probabilities shows that most discussions in the dataset have log probabilities ranging from -140 to -60, indicating that the model fits the data well. The peak around -80 suggests that a substantial proportion of discussions have a strong fit to the topics identified, reflecting a consistent alignment between the identified themes and the content analysed. There are fewer outliers, as seen by the lower frequencies at the extremes of the range (around -180 and -20), which suggests that for the discussions align well but there was a degree of divergence in the discussions.

The Topic Correlations heatmap indicates a weak to moderate correlation between the identified themes. One of the higher correlations (0.04862) is observed between "young, learn, vision" and "artist, people, culture", which suggests that discussions around the vision for young creatives were linked to conversations about artists and their role in cultural development. This connection implies that youth in the creative sector are seen as integral to building future sustainable funding models, especially as they contribute to, and preserve, cultural heritage. The focus on young creatives centres on the importance of equipping them with the knowledge and vision to develop sustainable business practices that can thrive within the Creative Economy. Another key correlation is between "local, model, experiences" and "hospitality, Africa, industry" (0.0627). This indicates that discussions regarding local business models and experiences were related to how the hospitality industry in Africa can support and enhance these experiences. This suggests that the hospitality sector is seen as a potential driver for creating sustainable funding opportunities through tourism and cultural experiences, with collaborations between local artists and the hospitality industry playing a key role. The low correlations between most other topics indicate that discussions on funding and business models, such as those involving creative sectors, international value, and environmental sustainability, were treated as distinct and separate.

The sentiment analysis graph shows positive sentiment across the discussions, as indicated by the high frequency of positive bars (above zero). This suggests that many participants had optimistic or favourable views on sustainable funding and business models. However, the negative sentiment scores under zero reflect various challenges and concerns within the creative industry in South Africa. A prominent issue is the lack of access to financial resources, despite the significant contribution of the sector to economic growth. Participants expressed frustration about how artists often struggle to access funding, leading to a reliance on grant-based, short-term projects, which impedes strategic long-term planning. Another key sentiment highlights the importance of developing cross-sector collaboration, not just with other artists but also with industries such as finance and agriculture to strengthen business models and access new opportunities. Additionally, there is a focus on the

struggles of young artists, who often face rejection and are fearful of failure, which discourages risk-taking and innovation.

The top five positively scored responses under the theme of Sustainable Funding and Commercial Business Models reflect a strong focus on strategic thinking, proactive engagement, and alignment with broader developmental goals.

1. *"one need to value ideas artists need to understand the value of intellectual property portfolios consists of intellectual property intellectual assets intellectual capital tells which of the business model would make sense every business has its own way to operate and academic model will tell how one should go about running the business activity or does it work and apply science models will tell if it's true or not do not borrow use business model without deep understanding of the model it is important to build industrial clusters this is the process of building companies in the specific area and check the skills that will be required and build equal system around that build these companies to be competitive not just to survive this helps because in other countries we will be known for this"*
2. *"the most challenge that art and culture industry face is for artist who do art for art s sake artist has to do art in order to effect change in the world their art have to influence the current discourse they should look at art as an instrument or catalyst technology ... goes hand in hand with Africa continental free trade create pathways for artists and business people to do trade do business within the continent agenda talks about vision Africa growth and there are there are goals around that now the art industry need to understand all these so that it can operate efficiently"*
3. *"in conclusion the speaker calls for a shift from reliance on grant funding towards sustainable entrepreneurial approaches they emphasize the importance of collaboration diversification of income sources and innovative thinking to ensure the long-term success of the creative sector"*
4. *"first thing is to find a mentor in order for them to guide you and share their experiences so that you will learn from that you can find them online reach them via LinkedIn or any other social media it does not have to be someone you know normalise spending time with successful persons ask them out for tea and ask them questions engage with them and ask them how they get successful"*
5. *"he suggests that breaking down these barriers and being more proactive in finding opportunities e g Instagram collaborations exhibitions in public spaces can help artists reach new audiences and find success"*

Participants emphasise the importance of understanding and leveraging intellectual property (IP) as a foundational asset for business sustainability, noting that a deep grasp of suitable business models that are grounded in both academic and industrial experience would support competitive creative enterprises. The call to shift away from a reliance on grants towards diversified income streams highlights a pressing need for entrepreneurial approaches rooted in innovation, collaboration, and long-term planning. Moreover, respondents advocate aligning

artistic practices with frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) to unlock funding and trade opportunities. Mentorship is also promoted as a vital tool for growth, encouraging creatives to actively seek guidance from successful figures in the field. Finally, leveraging digital platforms and public engagement spaces is seen as a practical method for expanding visibility and accessing new markets.

1. *"making a mistake in life a young artist is possible therefore make those make and learn quickly from them rectify them where possible because mistake is a mistake nelson Mandela is not remembered of the freedom because he was living a free stress life no he is remembered because he was living the most painful life Gandhi is not known or famous because of his food but he was remembered for hunger mistakes are the ones that shape the future but the most imperative thing is to learn from them as a young artist avoid assumptions assuming about things because that is trap or it very dangerous"*
2. *"the first thing is to start doing something you wish to achieve in life most of South African young people are waiting to be given which not good they fail to remember that in order to go ahead you need to take one step at a time as you moving forward you would have to put more effort and sacrifices identity yourself as to where you want to be in the future after identifying yourself where you want to be know your goal and make a foundation of that goal do not avoid be afraid of failing making mistakes even you fail get your back quickly"*
3. *"He also stresses the size of the creative industry s contribution to SA's GDP showing that the sector has money, but creatives often lack access to it"*
4. *"The speaker stresses that the focus on grant funding keeps the sector in a project-based mindset making it difficult to find time for strategic long-term thinking it is important for the sector funders and investors to focus on long term sustainability rather than short term projects"*
5. *"The hotel aims for zero waste using practices like bokashi enzyme composting to recycle kitchen waste and grow food for the restaurant through aquaponics recycling initiatives have created jobs including roles like glass crushing"*

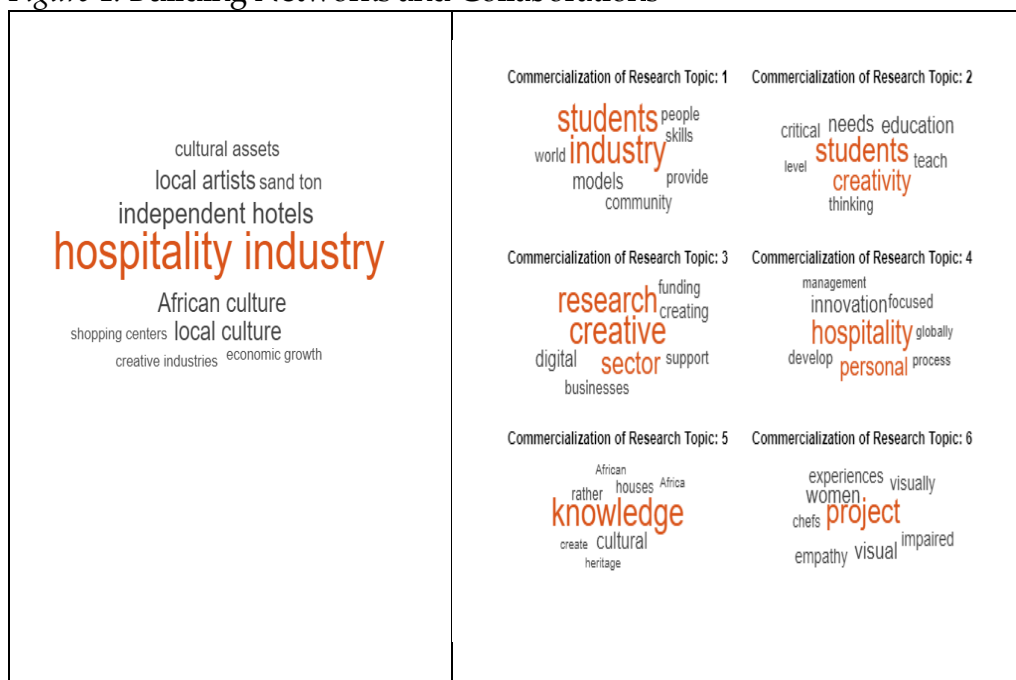
The lowest sentiment-scored responses reveal underlying concerns about access, sustainability, and mindset within the creative sector. Participants acknowledge the importance of sustainability, especially for young artists, where mistakes are inevitable and valuable for growth and long-term development. However, a recurring frustration is the sector's overreliance on grant funding, which develops a short-term, project-based mentality at the expense of strategic planning and sustainable models. Despite the sector's significant contribution to South Africa's GDP, there is a perceived disconnect between its economic potential and the actual accessibility of funding for creatives. Moreover, while initiatives such as waste-reducing hospitality projects are innovative and support job creation. They also highlight the need for

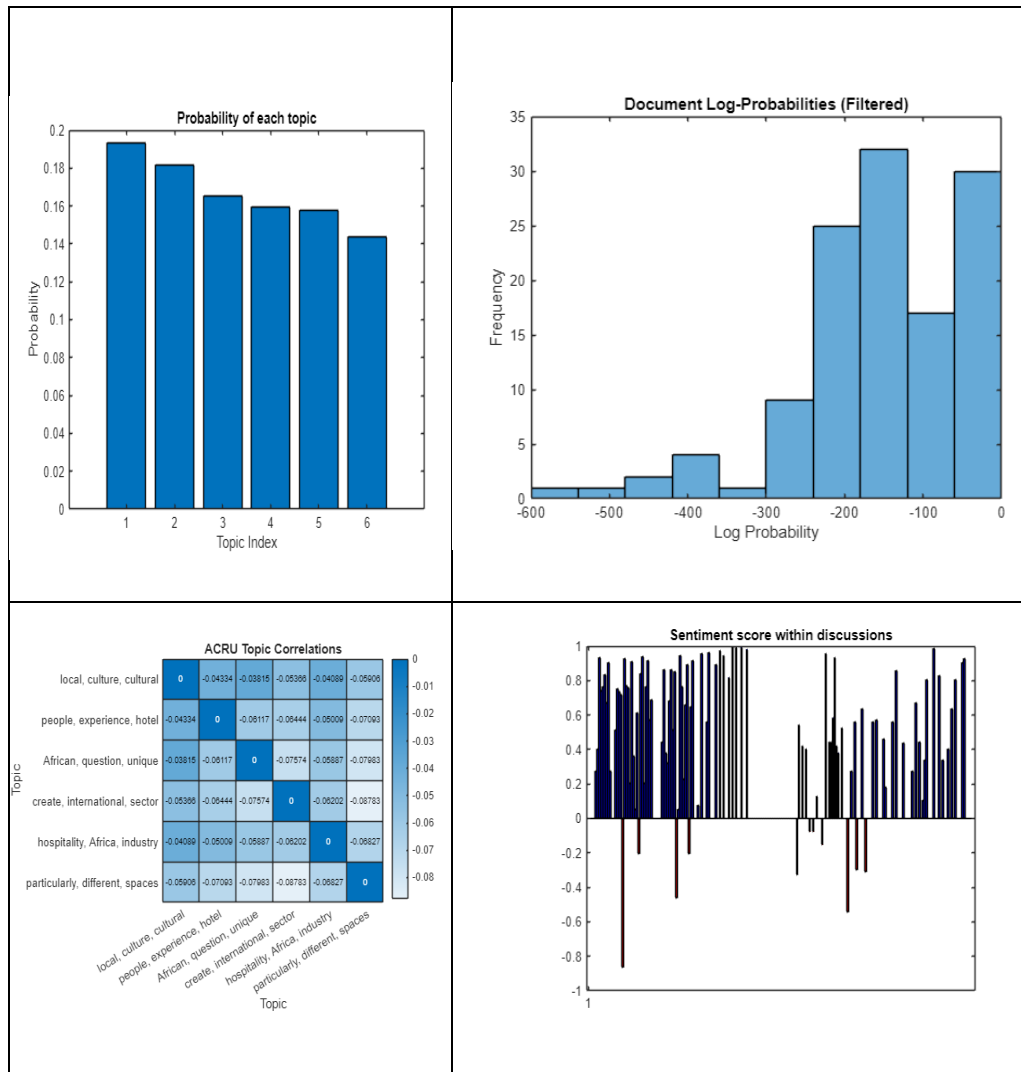
better integration between creative entrepreneurship and sustainable economic practices.

Theme 4: Building Networks and Collaborations

The theme focuses on the practical application of networking in the arts and culture sector, emphasising the importance of synergies which could be developed to increase their impact. Grounded in network theory and the concept of social capital, by developing cross-sector partnerships, especially between arts, tourism, hospitality, and even sports, creative projects can reach broader audiences and gain financial and social sustainability. Collaborations between local and international communities are seen as important for cultural exchange and economic opportunities, particularly for township-based artists. Additionally, the theme emphasises collaborative entrepreneurship, where stakeholders from different sectors work together to create platforms for artists, community projects, and cultural tourism. The focus is on breaking down silos between creative industries and other economic sectors, such as hospitality, to promote local cultural assets, while also encouraging inclusive business models. Through these collaborations, not only is the creative work elevated, but the local community is empowered, offering sustainable growth and a wider cultural and economic reach for South Africa's creative industries.

Figure 4. Building Networks and Collaborations





The word cloud places a strong emphasis on the hospitality industry and its connection to local culture and cultural assets within the context of building networks and collaborations. Key terms like "local artists," "independent hotels," and "local tourism" suggest that a significant focus is on how the hospitality sector can support and promote the creative industries. This collaboration may support business development, create value for local communities, and highlight African culture. Independent hotels and hospitality businesses are identified as key players in driving local cultural experiences, potentially using partnerships with artists and creatives to enrich the guest experience and promote cultural exchange. The word cloud also reflects the importance of integrating local artists and cultural offerings into tourism and hospitality, with terms like "shopping centres," "sports tourism," and "international tourists" indicating the wide-ranging opportunities for collaboration. By connecting African culture with the hospitality sector, both industries can support economic opportunities and cultural visibility.

The topics identified in the LDA analysis highlight different aspects of how collaborative efforts can drive growth in the arts and culture sectors.

- The first topic emphasises the integration of local culture and community collaboration, particularly within industries like hospitality, which can support and promote local artists and cultural platforms. The focus on community and grassroots collaboration suggests that cultural heritage can be better showcased and supported through partnerships with local businesses, particularly independent hotels.
- The second topic centres on people and experiences, underlining how collaborations between the hospitality and creative sectors can develop cultural tourism.
- Another key topic focuses on access to research and institutional collaboration within Africa, bridging gaps between research institutions and the creative sector. Stronger partnerships with academic institutions can promote knowledge-sharing and support innovation.
- International collaboration is also significant, with a focus on creating value through global business partnerships that expose local talent on the international stage. Tourism and hospitality play a major role, as collaborations between artists and the tourism sector can drive growth by promoting African cultural experiences to a broader audience.
- Finally, the analysis highlights the importance of providing diverse spaces and opportunities for underrepresented artists, particularly within universities and hospitality settings, showcasing the potential for innovation and cross-sector growth in the arts through these unconventional platforms.

The histogram of Document Log-Probabilities shows most discussions falling between -250 and zero, suggesting that the model fits the data well, as most log probabilities are within a range that indicates strong alignment with the themes identified. A notable cluster is around -200, suggesting that most discussions align well with the identified topics. There are fewer discussions with extreme log probabilities, with minimal outliers.

The correlation heatmap reveals weak correlations and are mostly independent. This indicates that the discussions on the various themes, such as local culture, international partnerships, hospitality, and industry collaborations, were segmented, each focusing on various aspects of the theme without significant overlap. The highest positive correlation (0.0627) occurs between the topics "hospitality, Africa, industry" and "particularly, different, spaces", suggesting a link between discussions on how the hospitality industry in Africa can create unique spaces and opportunities for collaborations, especially for local artists. This implies that in the discussions, hospitality was seen as an important platform for highlighting African culture and creating innovative spaces for artists to interact with both local and international audiences. Another moderate correlation (0.04862) is found between "African,

question, unique" and "hospitality, Africa, industry", indicating that discussions about African identity, culture, and uniqueness were connected to how the hospitality industry could promote and capitalise on these attributes.

The sentiment analysis shows positive sentiment, as indicated by the numerous bars above the zero line, reflecting optimistic views on collaboration and networking within the arts and culture sector. However, some negative sentiment bars, which fall below zero, suggest that there were challenges or concerns. A significant issue raised is the negative perceptions of South Africa, especially among international tourists.

These perceptions, often stemming from concerns about safety and crime, have led to shorter tourist stays and hindered the growth of hospitality and tourism sectors. Additionally, participants emphasised that peer reviews and social proof are becoming more influential than traditional advertising, suggesting that negative online feedback may also be contributing to these perceptions. Another challenge is the excessive cost of travel and accommodation, which can make South Africa seem like an expensive destination. Despite this, there is a lack of proper marketing and exposure, especially for smaller hotels and local ventures. The discussions also touched on the difficulty of overcoming systemic issues, with one speaker comparing it to the need for creating new neural pathways to address long-standing problems. Furthermore, the issue of criminal activity affecting street vendors, who must pay protection fees to criminals, was highlighted as another significant barrier to collaboration and entrepreneurship.

1. *"The speaker raises several critical issues surrounding the use and protection of local culture and resources in South Africa they emphasize how South Africans are consuming foreign products and platforms like apple Spotify Netflix and Disney while failing to capture the full value of their own cultural assets ... they argue that unless there is equal representation from all sectors including artists academics and other stakeholders the conversation will remain fragmented with each group talking past one another instead of building collaborative solutions"*
2. *"The speaker is curious about how large organizations known for their involvement in job creation and other sector's view arts and culture within their policy frameworks they suggest that these organizations while doing significant work might not yet have fully aligned efforts with cultural development or cultural policy implementation ... the development of the creative industries by helping local talent access international markets and networks these agencies contribute to economic growth and the global visibility of south African culture the speaker raises the question of whether these efforts can be scaled and applied nationally to boost arts and culture beyond just one region such as cape town"*
3. *"But if you look at these ... it promotes it yeah it's not one or the other it's telling the story yeah it's not an either or"*
4. *"Certain tourists might seek a basic experience only interacting with obvious surface level ... the conversation also touches on the importance of storytelling in*

the promotion of culture the way a culture is presented and narrated can make a significant difference in how it is perceived and valued by tourists when done right storytelling allows tourists to connect with the local community and its history leading to a richer more fulfilling experience"

5. *"The speaker highlights the independent hotel sector in South Africa noting that while these hotels are not part of major international chains, they have the potential to compete with the larger branded hotels ... creative partnerships with local artists festivals and community driven activities however the speaker notes that there is a lack of collaboration within the independent hotel sector particularly about travel agents and tourism services independent hotels could benefit from more partnerships and marketing strategies that highlight their unique offerings and create synergies across the sector"*

The highest-rated responses under this theme emphasise the importance of strategic collaboration across sectors to amplify the impact of South Africa's cultural and creative industries (CCIs). Participants emphasized that while global platforms provide exposure, they often result in the extraction of local value without sufficient reinvestment in domestic communities. There is a strong call for policy safeguards that ensure equitable returns for local creatives and protect intellectual and cultural assets in the digital realm. Furthermore, tourism agencies offer creatives access to international markets through animation and film platforms. Respondents advocate for more inclusive and multi-stakeholder engagements, noting that authentic storytelling and immersive tourism experiences are more likely to preserve, rather than dilute, cultural heritage. Importantly, independent hospitality operators are urged to collaborate with local artists and festivals to offer unique, culturally grounded experiences that cater to younger, experience-driven travellers.

1. *"References the broken window theory, a concept suggesting that neglecting small signs of disorder like broken windows leads to a sense of community decline and increases crime the speaker explains that in the hospitality industry fixing broken windows and maintaining a beautiful environment is crucial for success"*
2. *"The speaker transitions into a discussion about the negative perceptions of South Africa especially among international tourists he reads a u s travel advisory that warns of high crime rates civil unrest and safety concerns in SA cities this type of messaging contributes to the fear that potential visitors have causing them to limit their stays to short periods on average tourists spend just days in Johannesburg due to safety concerns"*
3. *"The speaker concludes by reiterating the need for storytelling collaboration and cultural integration in the hospitality industry he stresses that locals need to focus on sharing positive stories about the country both at home and abroad to shift the negative perceptions that currently dominate"*

4. *"He argues that peer reviews and social proof are becoming more important than traditional advertising in today's economy as people increasingly rely on the opinions of others when making decisions"*

The lowest five sentiment-rated responses under Theme 4: Building Networks and Collaborations reflect concerns surrounding the broader socio-economic context in which cultural and hospitality collaborations take place. A recurring issue raised is the negative international perception of South Africa, particularly regarding safety and crime. Respondents cited examples such as travel advisories that discourage extended tourist stays in cities like Johannesburg. These perceptions pose barriers to cultural tourism and economic growth. There is also concern over the lack of positive storytelling from within South Africa to counteract these dominant narratives. Participants noted that trust and peer validation are becoming more influential than traditional advertising, emphasizing the need to harness public opinion and reputation management through collaborative storytelling. The low sentiment indicates a collective awareness that unless these perceptions are addressed through cohesive strategies and support collaboration between hospitality, the cultural sector, and institutions, efforts to build sustainable networks and attract long-term investment will remain hindered.

Discussion

The arts and culture sectors are a significantly key component of the South African economy. The South African Department of Arts and Culture aims to support sustainable Local Economic Development (LED) and promote job creation by safeguarding, nurturing, and advancing South Africa's arts, culture, and heritage sectors. The primary objective is to develop an environment that sustains social cohesion and accurately reflects the values of a democratic nation (Baur & Venter, 2019). The importance of this is paramount, in that the cultural sector should be understood as a dynamic and evolving system of knowledge, norms, and values, rooted in the experiences of individuals and self-identified groups. It encompasses their interpretations and creations, through which they find meaning, substance, and expression in their lives, relationships, and both tangible and intangible works (Erasmus, 2005).

The analysis in this paper reflects the role and the significance of the arts and culture sector and examines the relationship between the arts and culture industries on other economic sectors, and the spillover effects of arts and culture into the hospitality and tourism sectors. There is a clear linkage and flow between and across the diverse cultural sectors. The dynamic identified in the analysis gives us insight into the mechanism through which local cultural assets and creative industries can drive economic growth, particularly through the hospitality sector by offering inimitable experiences tied to African culture, local artists, and indigenous knowledge.

Policy frameworks in South Africa have a substantial influence on the direction, inclusivity, and sustainability of the cultural and creative industries. As identified in this research, a critical shift is required toward the development of cross-sectoral cultural policies which reflect the realities and working conditions of the creative practitioners within the industry. Current policy approaches that operate in isolation and may fail to acknowledge the embedded networks that link arts, culture, tourism, hospitality, and education. The importance of collaboration between hospitality, businesses and the creative sector to support business models would support innovation within the sector, through a collaborative process which facilitates the integration of resources, the exchange of services, and the co-creation of value. This concept is supported by the works of Marasco, Martino, Magnotti and Morvillo (2018), whom propose that when drawing insights from multiple theoretical perspectives, that this collaborative innovation empowers firms to engage in strategic entrepreneurship by strengthening their capacity for continuous innovation.

Not only do these partnerships contribute to economic development, but they also promote local cultural industries and provide support platforms for young artists and marginalised groups (e.g., people with disabilities, woman entrepreneurs and those previously disadvantaged). This is supported by Maconi (2020), who mentions that art can serve as a powerful means to challenge prevailing narratives about disability and highlights existing inequalities. The arts have become a significant platform for activism, promoting inclusion as a force that invites participation and acting as a political tool to amplify voices that are often marginalised or overlooked.

The integration of intellectual property, critical thinking, and innovation in production and financing, create the opportunity to leverage cultural heritage. Linking innovation to the cultural sector should not be undermined. According to Potts (2009), the creative industries are an integral part of the innovation system, not by being forced into a traditional science–technology framework, but because of their essential role in the socio-cultural adoption and retention of new ideas. While the creative industries generate art, culture, and entertainment, they also play a less obvious but crucial role in dynamically reshaping the socio-cultural and economic landscape in response to the continuous growth of knowledge. It is this contribution to the innovation process that effectively links the creative industries to broader discussions of innovation systems and policy.

The role of innovation, creativity, and community in driving the cultural and creative industries by engaging students and local communities in creative projects, highlights how educational institutions contribute to innovative ideas and practices within the sector. In addition, there is a need for collaboration across creative industries, businesses, and funding bodies through strategic partnerships. This should not only apply to local partnerships, but the relationship should extend to foreign partnerships too. Evans and Foord (1999) support this by stating that funding for arts and culture supports the sector, recognising arts and heritage projects as potential drivers of employment and economic growth. These projects can operate as independent enterprises with local economic benefits or serve as part of a broader

cultural infrastructure that plays a key role in economic development. Although there is growing scepticism over the more ambitious claims regarding arts and heritage as 'cultural enterprises,' they have proven to be popular and effective tools for revitalising former industrial cities. This rebranding makes these areas more attractive for investment from both national and international companies in the financial and business services sectors.

There is a significant opportunity through such partnerships to support tourism and capitalise on local culture to drive both the hospitality and creative sectors. The role of local culture and the hospitality industry in providing unique cultural experiences is a key feature. This can only be supported by developing strong business models and a clear vision for the future of the cultural and creative industries, and this is especially significant for young artists and creative professionals. Furthermore, the integration of artists' goals with business strategies using goal-setting and strategic business models, even by integrating business models with technology, could support artists' ambitions in a competitive marketplace. There is a noticeable shift from traditional creative products that generate direct revenue to a service-based system that provides businesses with a unique competitive edge. This transition may challenge the originality of creative content across suppliers, and the collective nature of content creation could alter the role of creators, whose creativity was once the primary competitive advantage. While similar trends can be seen in other digital content sectors, the changes in creative industry business models are distinct, as they involve a blend of innovation with various resources like skills, talent, technology, and organisational practices (Lyubareva, Benghozi & Fidele, 2015).

The integration of artists' goals with business strategies touches on the need to understand different approaches to creating value and ensuring that creatives have access to the funding and resources needed to bring their ideas to life, while also addressing potential barriers. Access to industry knowledge and research is essential for navigating challenges and maximising opportunities, particularly in the context of global markets. This is strongly supported by the works of Ruiz, Colbert and Hinna (2017), whom stress that the growing importance of research into the arts and culture sector, along with regional cultural policies, is driving the need for professionalisation. It is at this critical juncture that academia should step in to support the creation and dissemination of knowledge. In this regard, academia holds a unique advantage, as the topic is already a well-established part of academic study in many universities and research centres, particularly in countries with advanced economies.

The role of students and emerging talent in driving innovation is also highlighted in this study, with additional emphasis on education and mentorship. Accessing or driving new research to strengthen industry knowledge is a key feature derived from the respondents. A key concept derived here is that focusing on gains from personal experiences and knowledge is critical for navigating the challenges faced by artists and professionals in the sector. Hennekam and Bennett (2017) emphasise that it is the very unpredictable nature of the creative industries which drives the need for workers to continuously update their skills, competencies, and industry

knowledge as self-directed learners. This instability is further intensified by the rapid emergence of innovative technologies and the necessity of working across various sectors and tasks. The complexity of creative projects often involves global teams with diverse backgrounds, necessitating strong intercultural skills.

The development of policies should incorporate mechanisms for co-creation, interdisciplinary support, and resource sharing. Tailored policies that address funding, digital integration, and the commercialisation of indigenous knowledge will further support marginalised groups and youth-led creative enterprises, supporting inclusive economic growth. This is supported in the works of Sullivan (2016), in that the diverse capabilities of digital technologies make them the preferred medium for collecting, managing, representing, and sharing cultural heritage.

It is important to mention that throughout the symposium, topics were discussed independently, without significant overlap in the themes. However, there appeared to be clustering that emerged from the separately themed discussions. A prime feature derived from the discussion indicated that when participants were talking about local culture, they also touched on issues related to financial opportunities and how cultural experiences could be developed into something financially sustainable. Furthermore, a strong focus on supporting local culture within the hospitality industry to enhance the tourism experience was detected. While business models were a key discussion point, they were viewed separately from broader questions about value creation in the creative industries.

In general, it was found that participants foresee that development of suitable technology-based business models and that the sector requires significant financial support with the development of new and innovative approaches to ensure sustainability within the sector.

Conclusion

An analysis of the discussions from the symposium emphasises the importance of collaboration, particularly for artists looking beyond the creative industry to form partnerships with other sectors, such as tourism and hospitality, to access essential resources and support, and thereby promote broader economic optimisation. Such support can come in the form of financial support, research development, mentorship programs and partnerships, both national and international. Additionally, the need for entrepreneurship development and business model innovation, with a focus on growing technological acumen is highlighted, especially for young people who must continuously innovate throughout their careers. The undervaluation of South Africa's cultural assets, such as heritage, art, and preserving traditions were a key theme raised by the speakers. The conversations also focused on the working conditions within the hospitality industry, stressing the need for a shift toward better treatment of workers. Lastly, by leveraging on local creativity, such as by using street artists to beautify urban spaces, and supporting tourism, may create

economic opportunities for local creatives, urban regeneration, growing the green economy, and further supporting the local hospitality sector. The importance of implementing cross-disciplinary approaches to research and development within this sector may contribute towards deepening innovation and lead to additional positive spillover effects into other sectors of the economy.

For the economy to capitalise on this, there is a need to develop suitable policy which operates outside of siloed thinking by incorporating multidimensional approaches to collaboration between different sectors of the economy. Such policy could be applied from many angles and take on many forms, with the common goal of bolstering the cultural and creative industries.

Policies which address breaking silos between hospitality, tourism, arts, culture, technology, environmentalism, business and finance could potentially support building new relationship between different sectors of the economy.

From this perspective, interdepartmental policy coordination units should be established to bridge the divide between departments responsible for arts and culture, tourism, small business development, and higher education. These units can develop cross-sector strategic plans and funding pipelines to foster collaboration and reduce siloed governance structures.

Policies must prioritise support for community-based creative clusters through the development of shared spaces, such as artist incubators, digital media hubs, and cultural marketplaces. These should be supported by dedicated funding streams linked to community development programmes. In line with this, public procurement policies should be amended to require a percentage of contracts in events, branding, and education to be sourced from local creative enterprises, especially those led by youth and marginalised groups.

Capacity-building interventions should be embedded within national arts funding strategies. These should focus on digital skills training, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial development. Government-supported mentorship programmes, in collaboration with universities and industry leaders, should guide creatives in navigating funding models and leveraging intellectual property.

National policy should mandate cultural impact assessments through suitable monitoring and evaluation processes in tourism and urban development planning. The role of deepening digitalisation to this would significantly impact the industry, by providing suitable support platforms. A critical and often overlooked aspect is the need for digitalisation in monitoring and evaluating the creative economy. Policymakers should adopt data-driven approaches to assess the impact and reach of CCIs using tools such as real-time dashboards, geospatial mapping, and machine learning analysis which could further support the industry.

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