

ARTISTIC IMPLICATIONS OF *NSIBIDI* AS ENTREPRENEURIAL IMPERATIVE FOR SOUTHERN AND EASTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The downturn of the economy in Nigeria and the social attitudes of the people, as regards the arts, are one of the major impediments to art education and practice in Nigeria. The primary concern of most Nigerians is survival, which encompasses the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter. Art and cultural interests are not pecuniary preoccupations to them. Thereby, people pay little interest to such concerns. Sadly, artists on their own have not done enough to establish art as a social imperative, especially through offering sustainable sources of income; probably, if people were made to experience the relevance of arts in society, it would have been a motivator for many to study and practice the same. This study views this as a problem; it presents a critical analysis of the *nsibidi* concept among the people of the Cross River Basin, comprising western Cameroon, Cross River State, Akwa Ibom State, and Abia State. This study adopts *nsibidi* as a cultural component to verify its artistic implications as an economic imperative for the practitioners, especially within the geographical scope of the study. The objectives of the study include investigating how *nsibidi*, as a cultural component of the Cross River Basin people, can be employed as content in artistic themes and subject matters and made relevant as an entrepreneurial and economic imperative. The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach and conducts investigations using both primary and secondary data. The findings are summarised with recommendations for stakeholders of the arts, education, vocations, and economic

resource authorities to study and adopt where applicable for improvements from adverse attitudes.

Keywords: environmental scrutiny, observation of external factors, market surveys, demographics, technological inputs.

Introduction

Like most disciplines in Nigeria, art education and practice have not risen to the level of general expectations. Art practice most times cannot afford practitioners maximum sustainability. Artists must undertake additional endeavours to complement their practices and meet their responsibilities, both social and domestic. The impediments artists struggle with are numerous, from self-inflicted hindrances such as time management, creative and administrative management, marketing difficulty and general uncertainty, social hindrances like undervaluing artists' labour and expertise, lack of patronage, compromising artistic values through mass productions etc., and institutional issues as government policies, and pedagogic constraints. Besides these few mentioned, Effiong (2013) observed that the colonial experience and government policies contribute to some impediments to art education and practice in Nigeria. The European missionaries and Christian ideologies presented many aspects of art as fetish and idolatrous, they saw most African cultural aspects as heathen, and since most of the themes and subject matter of art are derived from cultural components, the missionaries influenced the converts to nurture unacceptable postures towards arts.

Among such native cultures and arts was a script-writing format of the Cross River Basin people known as *nsibidi*. *Nsibidi* is an ancient art, a traditional writing pattern practised through the ages, explored for several conceptions, and adopted for numerous studies. *Nsibidi* is an Ibibio word meaning "What is to come?". The meaning is to depict the complex and puzzling attributes in seeking an understanding of what the scripts and symbols denote. It was used as a communication tool among participating communities predominantly across the Cross River Basin region to depict shared knowledge, common heritage, and belonging. When it was later adopted as a masquerade cult communication tool, it took on an esoteric demeanour. This has been a major reason the scripts are viewed with fear and refrain. *Nsibidi* is composed of intricate artistic characters that have

been widely used as embellishers in art and as a medium of visual communication.

The geographical scope of this study is delineated within the Cross River Basin enclave. It spans from Western Cameroun from Ndiain Division, it spreads to Cross River State, Akwa Ibom State, and Abia State. The Cross River Basin comprises various ethnic nationalities, including the Balondo/Oroko in Cameroon, Ejagham, Efik, Efut, Annang, Ibibio, and Oron in Cross River, as well as the Arochukwu people in Abia State. According to Agbiji, Agunwamba, and Eshiet (2024), the Cross River basin is bounded by latitudes $4^{\circ} 00' \text{ N}$ and $6^{\circ} 50' \text{ N}$ and longitudes $7^{\circ} 40' \text{ E}$. The region is home to rich agricultural resources and boasts a breathtaking geographic landmass, featuring scenes such as waterfalls, mountains, serene seas, and meandering brooks, as well as hills, valleys, and fields of lush greenery. The region is also rich in various shades of cultural heritage, given its diversity in ethnic composition and traditional artistic expressions, such as wood carving, traditional textiles, and pottery. The area's fascination with its unique natural and cultural heritage offers opportunities for exploration and discovery; it has inspired the indigenes to develop ideas and strategies for trades and proficiencies, whose available resources serve as raw materials for fabrication and procurement. This area is the birthplace of *nsibidi*.

Different studies have been embarked on *nsibidi*. Such studies from Effiong (2024), have recommended that *nsibidi* should be introduced in the art curriculum of secondary schools; this is because it is believed to have the ability to motivate learners to undergo critical thought, proffer higher intellectual surge, inspire vocational development through aesthetic content, and can inspire sustainability to the Nigerian cultural consciousness and boost the heritage. These nurture and sustain the rich cultural history from being eroded. If the attributes enumerated here are analysed, they are means to ends, but this study takes a different perspective of adopting *nsibidi* to achieve an end by itself. Most times, when people criticise the liberal arts and humanities, they insinuate how such disciplines can ensure sustainability through entrepreneurship, technology, and commercial career lines. This study investigates how artistic implications of *the nsibidi concept can be adopted to boost entrepreneurship, technology, and commercial capacity as an economic imperative*

in the South-South, Eastern Nigeria in particular, and the Nigerian nation in general. Given the social experiences, the academic philosophy of Nigeria, and the fast pace of technological growth and globalisation process, there is a need to strategise and attain current and relevant trends. The study's geographical scope is because *nsibidi* is practised within the enclave. However, it is believed that with cultural evolution, and if success is attained from initial proposal and prospect, the programme will become a national and possibly a global phenomenon with time.

Adopting *nsibidi* in the art of the people of Cross River Basin is akin to relating specific genres of music, food, or dress patterns to particular areas. Afro and Congo music, reggae music, or salsa, are popular music genres in specific areas. Afro is in vogue in Nigeria; Congo music is in vogue in East Africa; reggae in the Caribbean islands; and salsa amongst the Spanish commonwealth nations. These music genres had taken deep roots in the specific domains but, with time, had evolved to universal acclaim, appealing to cross sections of international audiences. As in the genre of music, the same context can be applied to foods; bread, pizza, broccoli, and soups. These originated from specific areas and were made popular in the areas of their produce, but with time, their wealth of benefits has spread beyond boundaries and has been incorporated from different cultures to serve as food for consumption and sources of trade and commerce beyond their abodes of origins. Cultural features have similar tenets, as observed by Linnikova (2024); art transcends boundaries of geography, language, and culture, yet is deeply rooted in specific cultural contexts. This study adopts *nsibidi* on same pedestal, though originated in a particular domain, the intricate characteristics can be adopted to become a source of economic boost to the origins, and the national polity in particular. This study investigates the latent unexplored insight in *nsibidi* in view of highlighting artistic attributes and how they can drive trade and industry. To achieve this, it presents objectives which include;

1. to identify *nsibidi* components as concepts that can motivate art and entrepreneurship.
2. determine the effect of adopting *nsibidi* scripts as materials in art entrepreneurship
3. determine the pertinence of materials and tools selection and its functionality in creative wares and design production

4. to investigate the aspects of arts, practices, and approaches that *nsibidi* can be propagated to boost entrepreneurship.
5. recommend, among others, positive social attitudes and government policies as they relate to arts entrepreneurship.

The peoples' Background

The Cross River Basin enclave comprises people of diverse ethnic groups and cultures. Different communities have documentation of migrational patterns ranging from far beyond the present domains. These have been homes to different traits and characters, cultures, and beliefs; however, through long residence together, many concepts have become unified through cultural evolution. Cultural plays and games are similar and even language and dialects reveal mutual influences and adaptations. The region comprised ancient civilisations, including the Annang, Balondo, Efik, Ejagham, Ibibio, and Igbo. There are other ethnic nationalities, but this study is chiefly concerned with above mentioned through the *nsibidi* connect, which is the study's area of concentration. As observed by Abasiattai (1987) and Akpan & Iseyen (2022), the advent of European explorers to the coasts of Calabar was a motivator for the boost of trade and commerce; with this came connections with trans-Saharan exchanges and trans-Atlantic slavery. The spread of *nsibidi* took this pattern, spreading *nsibidi* from the Cross River Basin to Cuba, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, etc. The root of the background has transcended further with the recent interests of Jordan Williams, an American of Cuban descent, who has done very intensive research, exploration, and adaptations of *nsibidi* in his numerous media endeavours.

Nsibidi was and is still a significant cultural and historical concept amongst the people. It was an ancient communication tool. The different communities had their respective *nsibidi* which they created to aid communication; it was a generally used concept. However, different sects, like social organisations, adopted *nsibidi* for their uses. There were *nsibidi* for marketing, worship, or games. There were *nsibidi* for court, medicine, and agriculture. Esoteric aspects of *nsibidi* commenced when esoteric societies like *ekpe*, *ekpo*, and *akata* adopted *nsibidi* and shrouded theirs in secrecy for their rituals. *Nsibidi* was used as scripts and symbols to convey myths and legends and served as documentation of events. *Nsibidi* became forms of artistic expression and design patterns adorned in homes as

decorative on walls, as tattoos on the human body, textile designing, wood carving, bronze and brass tapping, and pottery wares. *Nsibidi* equally had religious significance, the divinities in the masquerade sects as *ekpe* and *ekpo* communicated in their ritual displays.

Nsibidi predate colonialism. It was and is still a symbol of shared values and heritage. It was a unifying force amongst the different ethnicities and served as a means of extracting communal engagements. It symbolises community identity and is a silent but salient measure of attaining communal resilience. *Nsibidi* has been a source of language fusion and documentation. The major languages of the participants are featured in the harmony of *nsibidi*. It has also been a prominent source of artistic identity, forming a distinct character of art traits for trends and pronouncing the roots, traditional features, and preservation as artifacts. The economic prospects of *nsibidi* can be viewed in tourism, artistic industries, packaging and branding. The intricacies of writing patterns and the designs are aesthetic appeals and can attract visitors and guests to boost tourism.

In another review, this study analyses the assertions of Owosu (2000), stressing that Africa is the source of world symbols and semiology; it elucidates the reverence of Africa to symbols. The analogy observes the embodiments of symbols in Africa, the important role they play in all aspects of African life, and that most symbols are viewed as sacred, presented in arrays of creative styles viewed to be inspired spiritually. The analogy is extended to link how important the Cross River Basin people view *nsibidi*. The people believe in symbolism in general and *nsibidi* in particular in their traditional life; they view it as their identity; this is evidenced in the inculcation of *nsibidi* to different facets of socio-cultural life.

Art and crafts were produced for use as wares and tools. Such items were relevant as worship offerings, agricultural tools, household equipment, and beauty ornaments; these arts and crafts had *nsibidi* inscribed on them as a means to define their origins. Incorporating Indigenous symbols into art is a preoccupation of many artists that has been practised since ancient times, and it identifies with identity and inspires interest in the roots of such symbols. In the opinion of Owusu (2000), symbols signify the importance that the African attaches to their cosmic existence and its unity

with the earth and their habitation. They are sacred items and insignias that connect the spiritual insights to be viewed physically. This study posits that the relationship between spiritual and physical can only be concretised through tangible advantages; such importance can only be complete through the fulfilment of economic sustainability, upholding social heritage through trade and industries, and spiritual satisfaction that provides answers to the inner cravings and physical yearnings of humanity. There is an attempt to capture these aspects here, depicting the social, spiritual, and economic significance of *nsibidi* in the lives of the South-South and Eastern dwellers, as well as in Nigeria as a whole.

Theoretical framework

This study adopts 2 theories as a framework to align. The first is Peter Drucker's theory of Opportunity-Based Entrepreneurship. Drucker, in the theory, emphasises entrepreneurship as a purposeful and systematic process of identifying and exploiting opportunities that dictate business scope, directions, and purpose. Drucker views entrepreneurship as a discipline rather than a trait. Business opportunities do not just happen; they require a disciplined and responsible approach to discover them. The *nsibidi* scripts have been in existence; much has been done to develop entrepreneurial prospects from them. However, is the effort enough? Are the results worth the effort? If not so, what should be done? How can the concept be strategically explored, improved upon, and incorporated into adaptations to yield dividends befitting sustainable sources of livelihood?

Drucker goes further to proffer that entrepreneurship requires a systematic approach to attain success. Harnessing the variables and modestly following sequences to establish business actions and programmes. The right choice of raw materials yields good products; in this context, the raw materials are *nsibidi*. Therefore, the components, quality, and character must be harnessed in conjunction with factors that Drucker terms the Components of Opportunity-Based Entrepreneurship. To achieve positive goals, the analogy emphasizes five major components as indices for opportunity-based entrepreneurship: recognition of opportunity, mobilisation of resources, innovation, risk management, and strategic planning.

1. Recognition of opportunity: This refers to the ability to detect a prospect when viewed and the equal acumen to translate it into a viable aspiration. It involves identifying needs and bridging gaps to solve specific problems while also generating monetary value from such ventures. It relates to senses that need to be developed, as there are many resources seeking knowledge on how to harness them for the ultimate accumulation of finances.

2. Mobilisation of resources: this refers to assembling resources as raw materials to form the products, finances to procure materials and services, human capital, and technological assess where need be to attain desired purposes. Within this scope this refers to harnessing the different components and presenting them in different media with the final intent of making money. It involves sorting *nsibidi* symbols to be used in design, so that the make meaning of the desired concept, the materials to be used whether wood, leather, raffia, or metal. And the technical know how as the artist manipulates the materials to achieve bag, shoe, chair, or table for sale.

Keypoints: resource mobilisation, resource allocations to pursue different plans.

3. Innovation; this refers to creativity, ingenuity, skills and ability to think beyond the regular existence. Improved products can be acquired from previous models, and original ideas too can be created from virgin initiatives. Innovations may be replicated in services as well as cogent art works. Some aspects of art entrepreneurship may not be obtained from direct art products, but other conceptions replicated in concepts like tourism. Instances of innovations include prospects of Effiong (2015), who proposed a possibility of adapting *nsibidi* as traffic signs, and computer keyboards pad tags, etc. In 2024, Jordan Williams, Udochi Okeke, Chiadikobi Nwaubani, and Oreen Yosouf adopted the *nsibidi* scripts for unicoding. The proposal is to the Unicode Consortium, Inc. A 501 non-profit organisation, incorporated in Mountain View, California. The scope includes maintaining and publishing the Unicode Standards developed with intents to replace existing character encoding schemes that are limited in size and scopes, and incompatible with multilingual environments. The success of this places *nsibidi* as a universal ICT arbiter.

Keypoints: improvements from previous products, inventing new concepts, proposing social relevance of concepts.

4. Risk management: Drucker specifically referred to risk management as balancing risks with prudent decision making. Every business or entrepreneurial venture involves certain measure of risks. Such risks may include lack of appeal from the business to attract patronage, pricing, and social relevance of product. The ability to strategise so as not to incur losses in the events of miscalculations is what is termed risks management.

Keypoints: evaluating potentials and risks, correlate monetary involvement with profit margins.

5. Strategic planning: this involves taking all variables into consideration in planning for success. Such variables include materials prices, viability, profit margin, factors for localisation, social psychology, human capital capacity of proprietor or entrepreneur. It involves a draught of sequence to implement tactics of specified goals and objectives to achieve success. It views risks involved, possibility of management, and implementation of policies to achieve success.

Keypoints: evaluate opportunity, study feasibility, and forecast social psychology and needs.

The study viewed other entrepreneurial theories, it made particular review of the causation and effectuation theory as postulated by Sara Sarasvaty. The theory of causation and effectuation distinguishes between 2 entrepreneurial approaches. Elaborated in Causation and Effectuation: Toward a Theoretical Shift from Economic Inevitability to Entrepreneurial Contingency, Sarasvaty (2001), asserts Causation, predicting and controlling outcomes, and Effectuation: creating and shaping outcomes. The 2 theories of Drucker and Sarasvaty differ in terms of adoption for theorisation, Drucker's theory highlights caution, systematic entrepreneurship, and opportunity recognition, while Sarasvaty (2001), theory of causation and effectuation operates a diction of leap-before-you-look: taking action before understanding the consequences. Most theories however focus on aspects of entrepreneurial alertness and resource mobilisation, but this study opines that sometimes integrating multiple

theories in frameworks provide comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurship, especially in a multidisciplinary study like this; harnessing *nsibidi* art in entrepreneurship, hence the study adopts the Druker's theory.

***Nsibidi* art as motivation for entrepreneurship**

Stephenson & Jarillo (2009) define entrepreneurship as the process by which individuals pursue opportunities without regards to the resources available at the particular time. Barringer (2013), views entrepreneurship as assemblage, integration of resources including money, people, models, legality, and risks bearing ability, with intentions of transferring idea into viable business. (Stephenson & Jarillo 2009) pertinent focus in their definition is resilience, while (Barringer 2013), in his definition focuses on innovation, adaptability, and resilience. Considering the 2 views, the concept of entrepreneurship can be said to be involved with effective and strategic planning to harness materials, ideas, and human capital in manners to create wealth and sustainability. Distinctively, there are different factors that make up the concept of entrepreneurship; they include are not be limited to innovation, proactivity, creativity, strategic planning and risk taking, within this scope this study is concerned with adopting the artistic components of *nsibidi* and harnessing them with these factors of entrepreneurship as highlighted here to make it economically viable to provide sources of livelihood, and ensure economic sustainability, primarily for the people of the Cross River Basin, and for Nigeria and beyond.

From origins *nsibidi* scripts were basically ideograms, pictograms ventured to *nsibidi* because *nsibidi* never had complete vocabularies to present all intentions and meanings. Different communities through this devised adjuncts to compensate and serve as missing links. The communities, associations, and societies created *nsibidi* to suit their needs and in the wise creations with pictographic backgrounds were introduced. *Nsibidi* pictograms are replicas of beings both animate and inanimate that reside strong connect to the arts. They are bridges between writing and art, and depict artistic characters and styles of the people. The scripts are styled towards the community's needs and depict many interests of those eras.

Artistic implications of *nsibidi*

The *nsibidi* concept is an art form. The components that contribute to make it art are vast, ranging from visual imagery, typographic fonts, and huge aspects of logography. The various levels at which artists adopt its intricate patterns in designs, and even theoretical expressions of creative exercising conform to the attribute of artistry, which as annotated by Effiong (2019), kowtow towards the elements and principles of design. *Nsibidi* can be presented as performing arts within the concepts of audio or music as verbal *nsibidi* are related with speech and exclamations rendered in purposeful aesthetic formats.

Idiographic symbolism: *Nsibidi* is wealthy in idiographic symbolism; it is the original modes of *nsibidi* presentation from the aboriginal creators. It represents concepts, objects, and ideas. The intricacies of patterns are linear and abstractive, and offer pleasing imagery that can be adapted to achieve artistic balance, harmony, or texture depending on the artist's needs in his art.

Pictographic symbolism: Pictographs represent images, depending on the psychomotor strength, the artists can capture images in appealing manners, pictographic *nsibidi* can be strong formats to create attractive interests to appeal to communal psychology, this offers motivations towards patronage. Imageries have capacity to present narratives that convey emotions. Images of local characters will definitely inspire interests of the community. Pictographs are effective vehicles of concepts and ideas for elaborate understanding to attract patronage in enterprise.

Logographic symbolism: *Nsibidi* as logograms are efficient in representing the sounds of words to depict impressions and intents. It is effective in conveying complex ideas, symbols transcend language barriers thereby can be understood beyond operators, and logographs add visual appeal to texts.

***Nsibidi* and entrepreneurship**

The major prospect of *nsibidi* in marketing is the unique African identity. *Nsibidi* symbols are characterised by distinctive cultural attributes that can be identified as exclusively African any time. These can resonate across diasporic audiences with distinct brand differentiation and aesthetic

appeal. Some of these entrepreneurial approaches are adopted here to correlate *nsibidi* economic pertinence.

Branding: In the modern era, branding has become one of the most important principles in entrepreneurship. It comprises imagery, spoken perception, identity, and class. These are conveyed through logos, trademarks, and slogans. They offer distinctions in business, build recognition, and create values. *Nsibidi* symbolism in branding offers intricate designs that inspire creativity and captivates audience appeal. The harmony of geometric and natural patterns, within a backdrop of *nsibidi* inspired fonts and typography can be adapted to convey strength and resilience. This in turn inspires inner appeal and nostalgia through ethnic ambience or individual identity. For people of the geographical scope in particular, and Nigerians in general, *nsibidi* brand identity evokes native pride and identity, same feeling a patriot feels when viewing a flowing flag amidst a melody of national anthem, same feelings when the national team scores in an international football match, regardless of economic experiences of the era, this are periods where nobody is interested about tribe, tongue, or creed, the ethnicity at this moment is Nigerian. Branding with native characters evoke unity and oneness with the object of interest.

Cultural tourism: Tourism has to do with travelling to view scenes and objects that are milestones in particular areas. *Nsibidi* inspired tourism has to do with visits to sites, viewing manuscripts, or assessing components of the culture. The Ikom monolith site is a good example of such locations. A visit to such area will reminisce the past in the future. An elaborate feature of *nsibidi* in museums will add to the Africaness in aesthetic appeal. Artifacts and relics with *nsibidi* inscriptions evokes a wealth of heritage and native values. Cultural festivals to celebrate *nsibidi* relevance and significance, added with tales and displays can evoke the lost experiences raise appeal, and cause tourists to look forward to visit such sites and experiences as measures of relaxation, business, research, and trade. In the olden days, there were *nsibidi* as forms of masquerades, clad in white and armed with swords and other native paraphernalia; they were adorned with *nsibidi* inscriptions drawn with white kaolin on their bodies and were known enforcers of laws and decisions of community leadership. Even currently few people know of this aspect of *nsibidi*, reviving this in festival formats with other embellishments can create deep festival sense as

tourism potentials. These all can serve as measures of tourism. Tour guides make money through the endeavour, in the Bambasu and Serengeti Games Reserves in East Africa, tour guides live and retire on their occupations and experience stable sources of livelihood. If these programmes are nurtured and the operators are committed and consistent, such monetary remunerations can be achieved.

Intellectual property: Intellectual property refers to independent creations as discoveries, inventions, literary and artistic works. Designs, specialised images and symbols are involved. These are used to derive benefits through earned recognition and finances when others adopt such properties as models for further adaptations. Making money through intellectual properties involve incurring legal and corporate administrative controls, these are spelt as entitlements when those works are used as sources of adjustments for enterprise. Intellectual properties are protected by law to enable creators earn recognition and financial benefits from their works. The different aspects include patents, trademarks, copyrights, and industrial designs. In established *nsibidi* tourist sites as discussed above, or individual and customised adaptations for specific packages and media, such as the innovations and the translating analogies of *nsibidi* to contemporary usage by the American media artist Jordan Williams, patent licensing fees and permit must ensure payments for uses of such analogies on scholarship, advertisement, posters and billboards. Trademark royalties on packages and projects can be merchandised and brands sold. *Nsibidi* can become prominent icons for such designs since it is heritage symbol across ethnicities. If the scripts and symbols are adapted in crafts, fabrics and fashion sales, they can motivate patronage as they are symbols representing a people, inspiring pride and native patriotism, not only to the people of Cross River Basin, but to the nation and the African diaspora at large. Service based offers as seminars and tutorials on *nsibidi* are huge attraction in the western world. In the current era where digital media is a routine experience blogs and platforms have copyright rites, and good remunerations accrue from followership of such media.

Crafts and art productions: *Nsibidi* can be made to become prominent themes and subject matters as far as Airport Arts are concerned, these have become sought after in recent times and good organisation and strategic merchandise can further establish it as a tradition as far as art and craft

sales are concerned in specific market outlets. Since *nsibidi* offer authentic and distinct African designs and patterns, inculcating the designs in fabrics can offer unique fashion sense, same intricate designs and symbols attract interests in jewelry, furniture and home decorations, ceramics wares, shoes, bags, etc. craft fairs and exhibitions in forms of galleries, cultural centers, and fashion shows are avenues to boost employment opportunities for artisans and generate revenue. Specific villages renowned for *ekpe* or *nsibidi* interests can be chosen as model centers and hives for local artists workshops. Trades on *nsibidi* wares and crafts motivate appeal. Interfaces with such artisans and craftsmen can become avenues of job creation through tourism guides, remunerations for artisans, and avenue for local economic growth. These can also serve as avenues for community engagements and cultural sustenance motivations, such can be guilds and workshops where people come to pay and become apprentices.

Digitality and media: *Nsibidi* inspired graphics illustrations can present unique identity and appeal to wide sections of audience due to their African content. Animations are gradually attracting much attention in the media universally, inculcating *nsibidi* in media boosts this due to its universal attraction, example includes the hype and acclaim that trailed the *nsibidi* infested movie, Black Panther. Effiong (2024) wrote of an American, Jordan Williams. Williams has advanced much on *nsibidi* and has become a prominent name as long as propagating *nsibidi* is concerned. His interests in propagating *nsibidi* has employed the use in his creative and applied expressions in media, he has made comparative analysis of *nsibidi* with the Chinese glyphs and Egyptian hieroglyphics, and has elucidated *nsibidi* content in Abakua liturgy. He has presented the spiritual implication on adopted *nsibidi*, seeking for a universal readership, and transcribed *nsibidi* in Abakua for comparative analysis with Bible dictions. Besides the use of *nsibidi* in print, electronics, and new media, Williams has espoused the scripts as designs in fabrics, shoes, and vast other formats. His designs are replicated with *nsibidi* images, but with seeming western backgrounds. Possibly his further practice in *nsibidi* will depict the traditional African characteristics, when he would have become used to the traditional modes of designs as operated by natives which are purely African.



Fig: 1. Adaptations of *nsibidi* designs in T-shirts and shoes (canvas) by Jordan Williams

***Nsibidi* cultural center and African parlour:**

Another aspect where the concept of *nsibidi* can serve as framework for entrepreneurial adaptation is through establishing *Nsibidi* Cultural Center. The establishment of such center is another core interest of the much mention Jordan Williams in this study. Williams has evolved programmes for commencement of the center in Akwa Ibom State, and interests include preserving, promoting, and celebrating African cultural heritage. Though termed after *nsibidi*, this may not limit the activities of the center to only *nsibidi* oriented programmes. The name is identification of cultural roots, and the center becomes a depot of cultural and traditional bank for information that showcases *nsibidi* and diasporic African cultural heritage in general. *Nsibidi* manuscripts and historical artifacts are preserved when such are presented in assessable and readable enclaves for the public. This context offers platforms for artists in residency programmes, affiliated with museums and cultural institutions, public and private institutions, cultural businesses and entrepreneurships.

The center needs a craft center where crafts that are *nsibidi* and non-*nsibidi* inspired are available. Works rendered in materials as fabrics, shoes, caps, bags etc, are for sale. An exhibition gallery, library and resource center, and gifts shop are necessary. An African Parlour presents avenue to foster community engagements as hosting talks and invitations for corporate discourses and appeals. These expose artists and artisans to corporate patronage and supports, and can serve as a center for academic discourses, research data bank, and workshop space. Here also resides space for lectures for *nsibidi* and other artistic themes and subject matters of interests. There are provisions to host mini festivals, folk plays and traditional music

and dance performances. Sponsorship of periodic cultural parleys, cultural competitions and awards can revive extinct plays and lost heritages affording opportunities to kill 2 birds with one stone; foster source of livelihood, while preserving culture.

Affiliation that enhances this scope of entrepreneurship is African kitchen. This can immensely compliment the cultural center, traditional cuisines are made available, eaten in wares of wood, gourds, brass and aluminum materials with various designs of spoons all embroidered with *nsibidi* designs. This is a sure way of preserving some native culinary skills as *nyan ekpang ye efere otong, esin udod okoh*, a fast eroding gastronomic delicacy of coastal Ibibio people.

Marketing and advertising: In all the analogy to establish *nsibidi* pertinence as an economic imperative, articulating the intricacies without substantial showcase may rot the investment in oblivion. Every business venture needs pulsating marketing strategy which advertising is an important aspect. Models and guidelines to marketing and advertising differ depending on industry, campaign goals, and target audience. However, amongst some popular advertising and marketing some major aspects are outlined to include social media marketing influencing, content marketing, event marketing, and paid advertising.

Belch & Belch (2020), proffer guidelines to effective advertising campaigns to include outlining marketing strategy with the marketed materials, identifying targeted customers and demographics, adopt persuasive messaging techniques. This study adopts these as relevant in marketing and advertising *nsibidi* wares. Based on how the product is, media channels to reach targets must include digital, social, and print media. The ads must illustrate features effectively to grab attention through visual and audio applications. It is proper to adopt truthful and transparent advertising campaigns. There is need for organising artists to follow relevant methods based on how *nsibidi* is to resonate with target audiences and drive positive results.

Packaging has a way of driving interests, branding and packages incorporating native symbols can boost the identity and marketability of local products. Taking a flag as a symbol, the same attraction a flowing flag

is viewed amidst melody of national anthem, is the same feel one derives when seeing the native symbol in a package. There is the native patriotism when one watches his national football team playing. There is a magnetic force when one sees the design of native culture on a product brand. This draws interest and attracts patronage and a feeling of attachment and pride towards what belongs to the self. This nurture and projects interest and pride and becomes a driving force to acquire and own the symbols of the native land.

Summary and conclusion

Nsibidi has been established as components that can influence modern art through the embodiments and nature. To borrow styles and create new formats can culminate to originations of new artistic trends and movements. As observed by Sanmiguel (2020), Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque were influenced by their encounters with African masks, coupled with the painting styles of Paul Cezanne. The 3 of them were all influenced by the carving styles of masks of the Makonde people of northern Mozambique and Southern Tanzania. These were influences that originated what became cubism. It is possible that adapting *nsibidi* artistic styles in exploration has already commenced an artistic movement. This has capacity to inspire and innovate artistic expressions through connections from the past as has been highlighted. By embracing *nsibidi* as an economic imperative, the South South, and Eastern Nigeria can unlock new artistic, cultural, and economic opportunities, attracting growth and development while preserving cultural heritage. *Nsibidi* is endowed with futuristic competence which collaborates traditional African traits

To highlight and bring the prospects of variables as *nsibidi* to bear is beyond restricted efforts of creative artists and art educators. The media artists, performing, and the literary artists must all make concerted efforts to hype and showcase the artistic components; they must all propagate the entrepreneurial, vocational, and technical contents and correlate its tangible socio-economic relevance in the life of the people. Given the turn of the Nigerian economy and the world at large, it is imperative to harness prospects of activities not just for socialisation, scholarship, or liberalisations. Operations must be reduced to tangible impactful measures in the polity.

Different approaches to raise *nsibidi* entrepreneurship have been raised. From marketing and advertising, cultural center and African exchange parlour, digitality and media, crafts and art productions, intellectual property, cultural tourism, and branding. If these are properly harnessed, they can avail optimum productions and superlative levels of success in operations. However, it is worthy of note that all the different approaches to achieve effective entrepreneurship are important. Each compliments the other and vice versa. The wide reach capacity of digitality in social, and other media components must be harnessed to boost the potentials of branding, else a very proficient brand campaign can be present with no proper driving tools and forces, making it appear as if both the branding and digital medium are inefficient. A beautiful African Parlour can operate, but it will be more convenient for people to have break after hectic sessions, and the kitchen can be helpful in this guise. If one does not go to buy wares or engage in some exercise, one can go to eat in the kitchen, both ways there is avenue to make money which is the basis to foster entrepreneurship.

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