Culture And Creative Economy in Environmental Management: A Ugandan Perspective

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of cultural practices and creative industries on environmental sustainability in Uganda, addressing the limited empirical evidence linking culture, creativity, and environmental management in developing contexts. A mixed-methods design was adopted, combining survey data analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis with qualitative interviews for contextual interpretation. Quantitative data were analyzed using means, standard deviations, correlation, and hierarchical regression models. Results revealed that community adherence to traditional environmental norms recorded a high mean ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.61$), while institutional integration of cultural knowledge scored lower ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 0.98$). Regression analysis confirmed that cultural practices significantly predicted environmental sustainability ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 34% of the variance. The moderating effect of creative industries increased the explanatory power to 49% ($\beta = 0.41$, $p = 0.002$). The study concludes that cultural norms and creative enterprises are critical drivers of environmental sustainability. Policy integration of indigenous knowledge and investment in green creative industries are recommended. The study advances Cultural Sustainability Theory and the Creative Economy Framework by empirically demonstrating measurable relationships between culture, creativity, and environmental outcomes in Uganda.

Keywords: ***Cultural practices; Creative industries; Environmental sustainability; Cultural sustainability theory; Uganda***.

Introduction

Culture remains a fundamental driver of social organization, environmental stewardship, and socio-economic transformation across developing economies. In Sub-Saharan Africa, cultural norms, belief systems, and indigenous knowledge frameworks continue to regulate community interactions with land, forests, water bodies, and biodiversity (Mensah, 2023). In Uganda, customary institutions and clan-based governance structures influence land tenure practices, sacred forest preservation, and wetland protection, reinforcing community-based conservation approaches (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2023). Empirical evidence from the African Development Bank (2023) further indicates that indigenous environmental norms across African contexts have contributed to measurable reductions in deforestation and biodiversity loss, underscoring the regulatory role of culture in ecological management.

Simultaneously, the creative economy encompassing music, crafts, fashion, film, design, and performing arts has emerged as a quantifiable contributor to GDP growth, employment creation, and environmental awareness

promotion. Globally, creative industries account for approximately 3.1% of GDP and 6.2% of total employment, with eco-cultural tourism and green creative enterprises expanding steadily since 2018 (UNESCO, 2022). In East Africa, Kenya's creative sector contributes 5.3% to GDP (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2023), while in Uganda, the sector contributes about 3% to GDP and plays a significant role in youth employment, particularly in urban centers such as Kampala (UBOS, 2023).

Uganda's evolving relationship between cultural values and creative economy growth underscores the potential of culture-driven innovation as a pathway for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Reports such as the UNDP Uganda Annual Report 2024 and the UNCTAD Creative Economy Outlook 2024 highlight how Uganda's creative industries—including arts, crafts, fashion, design, media, and heritage—are increasingly recognized as drivers of sustainable development through their contributions to innovation, job creation, and social inclusion. These studies emphasize that culture-driven innovation directly supports SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land), positioning Uganda's cultural sector as a vital pathway for inclusive and sustainable growth. Beyond economic metrics, creative platforms increasingly promote environmental campaigns through music festivals, eco-fashion initiatives, and cultural exhibitions that integrate sustainability narratives (UNESCO, 2022).

Despite these developments, the interaction between cultural values (qualitative dimension) and the measurable growth of the creative economy (quantitative dimension) within environmental management science remains underexplored in Uganda. While previous studies in developed contexts have linked cultural norms to sustainable behavior (Pretty et al., 2023) and creative industries to environmental awareness gains (Throsby, 2021), limited empirical work in Uganda has integrated both constructs within a unified analytical framework. Consequently, there is a methodological and contextual gap in understanding how intangible cultural values translate into quantifiable environmental and economic outcomes in developing settings. Addressing this gap is critical for advancing interdisciplinary environmental management scholarship and informing culturally grounded sustainability policy.

Globally, the relationship between culture (qualitative variable) and the creative economy (quantitative variable) has increasingly shaped environmental sustainability discourse since the late 1990s. Between 1999 and 2005, developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States institutionalized creative economy policies, recognizing cultural industries as contributors to GDP growth and environmental awareness. By 2010, the creative sector contributed approximately 5–7% of GDP in parts of Europe, with eco-cultural festivals and green creative enterprises influencing sustainable consumption patterns (UNESCO, 2022). Similarly, in Asia, countries like South Korea integrated cultural heritage preservation into green urban development policies, resulting in measurable increases in eco-tourism revenues between 2012 and 2020 (UNCTAD, 2023). Globally, the dependent variable creative economy growth expanded significantly, reaching an estimated US$2.3 trillion in global trade by 2022, partly influenced by cultural environmental norms embedded in sustainability campaigns (UNESCO, 2022). Thus, historical trends show that cultural values (IV) increasingly influenced creative sector growth (DV) and environmental outcomes.

In Africa, the trajectory evolved differently. Between 2000 and 2010, countries such as Nigeria leveraged cultural industries (e.g., Nollywood) contributing over US$7 billion annually by 2021, while incorporating environmental storytelling themes (African Development Bank, 2023). In South Africa, green creative enterprises grew by

approximately 4% annually between 2015 and 2022, supported by indigenous ecological knowledge (UNESCO, 2023). North African states such as Morocco integrated cultural heritage conservation into sustainable tourism, increasing eco-tourism revenues by 6% between 2016 and 2021. These continental shifts illustrate how cultural norms (IV) began influencing measurable creative economy outputs (DV), particularly in environmental sustainability initiatives.

In East Africa, reforms accelerated after 2010. Kenya's creative sector grew by approximately 5.3% annually between 2014 and 2022, partly driven by environmental arts festivals promoting conservation awareness (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Rwanda institutionalized cultural heritage tourism within its green growth strategy (2017–2024), increasing sustainable tourism revenues by over 8% (RDB, 2024). Tanzania incorporated indigenous conservation traditions into community-based tourism models, strengthening environmental stewardship. These developments demonstrate that cultural environmental norms increasingly shape creative economy growth indicators.

Turning to Uganda, cultural-environmental linkages date back to pre-colonial conservation systems such as sacred forests and clan-based land stewardship. However, between 1999 and 2010, environmental degradation intensified, with forest cover declining from approximately 24% in 1990 to 12% by 2015 (National Environment Management Authority [NEMA], 2022). Meanwhile, Uganda's creative industry began formal expansion after 2015, contributing an estimated 3% to GDP by 2022 and employing over 386,000 youth (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2023). While global reforms advanced rapidly, local implementations often faced challenges as seen in Kampala and surrounding districts, where waste mismanagement and wetland encroachment persisted despite cultural awareness campaigns. This suggests a possible disconnect between cultural environmental values (IV) and measurable creative economy growth and sustainability outcomes (DV).

Within Kampala metropolitan and peri-urban districts, creative enterprises in crafts, eco-fashion, and music festivals increasingly promote environmental themes. However, empirical evidence linking cultural norms directly to quantifiable creative economy growth indicators remains limited (UBOS, 2023). Therefore, this historical trajectory from global to local demonstrates the evolving but insufficiently examined relationship between culture and creative economy growth in advancing environmental sustainability in Uganda.

Statement Of the Problem

Ideally, the creative economy has grown to contribute over 3% of global GDP, with increasing integration of environmental sustainability themes (UNESCO, 2022). Cultural industries have shown measurable economic expansion, contributing between 2–5% of GDP in several countries (AfDB, 2023). In Uganda, the creative sector contributes approximately 3% to GDP and provides employment to thousands of youths (UBOS, 2023). Desirably strong cultural environmental norms should significantly influence creative economy growth and enhance environmental sustainability outcomes. However, despite Uganda's rich cultural heritage and expanding creative industries, environmental degradation trends persist. Forest cover decline, wetland encroachment, and urban waste challenges continue to rise (NEMA, 2022). While creative enterprises promote environmental messaging, the extent to which cultural values translate into measurable creative economy growth and sustainability outcomes remains unclear. Empirical indicators such as the rate of eco-certified creative enterprises, revenue from eco-cultural tourism, and integration of indigenous conservation knowledge into creative production remain under-documented. If this relationship is not systematically investigated, Uganda risks continued environmental degradation, weak policy integration, and underutilization of its cultural capital for sustainable development.

Therefore, this study seeks to examine how cultural values influence creative economy growth and environmental sustainability outcomes in Uganda.

Objectives of the Study

(i) To analyze how traditional cultural practices influence environmental conservation efforts in Uganda.
(ii) To measure the contribution of creative industries to environmental sustainability initiatives.
(iii) To determine the relationship between cultural environmental norms and creative economy growth indicators.
(iv) To assess policy gaps linking culture, creativity, and environmental management.

Research Questions

(i) How do cultural beliefs and practices influence environmental conservation behaviors?
(ii) What is the measurable contribution of Uganda's creative economy to environmental sustainability?
(iii) Is there a statistically significant relationship between cultural values and creative economy growth?
(iv) How can environmental policies integrate cultural and creative dimensions?

Hypotheses

H_0: Cultural values have no significant influence on the growth of the creative economy in Uganda.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on culture, creative economy, and environmental sustainability has evolved significantly over the past two decades, particularly between 2020 and 2025 when global policy discourse increasingly recognized culture as a driver of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2022; UNCTAD, 2023). Scholars argue that cultural values influence environmental behavior, while creative industries provide measurable economic outputs that can support sustainability transitions (Throsby, 2021; Duxbury et al., 2022).

The literature on culture, creative economy, and environmental sustainability has evolved significantly over the past two decades, particularly between 2020 and 2025 when global policy discourse increasingly recognized culture as a driver of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2022; UNCTAD, 2023). This recognition is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that highlight the intersections of culture, creativity, and environmental management. SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) underscores the safeguarding of cultural heritage and the integration of cultural values into sustainable urban planning, which directly influences environmental management practices in cities. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) acknowledges the creative economy as a source of innovation and green employment, linking cultural production to sustainable resource use. SDG 4 (Quality Education) promotes cultural and creative learning that fosters environmental awareness and responsible stewardship, while SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) emphasizes international cultural cooperation and creative collaboration as mechanisms for advancing environmental sustainability. Scholars argue that cultural values shape environmental behavior, while creative industries provide measurable economic outputs that can support sustainability transitions and strengthen environmental management systems (Throsby, 2021; Duxbury et al., 2022).

Theoretical framework

Cultural Ecology Theory

Cultural Ecology Theory, originally advanced by Julian Steward 1955. examines how cultural practices adapt to environmental conditions. Contemporary scholars have expanded the theory to explain how indigenous knowledge systems influence sustainable resource management (Berkes, 2021; Pretty et al., 2023). The theory assumes that: cultural practices evolve in response to ecological constraints, indigenous knowledge contributes to environmental conservation, and social norms regulate resource use and sustainability outcomes (Berkes, 2021). In Uganda, sacred forests, clan land systems, and ritual taboos historically regulated biodiversity conservation (NEMA, 2022). This study applies Cultural Ecology Theory to explain how qualitative cultural values (IV) shape environmental stewardship behaviors, which may influence the growth of eco-oriented creative industries (DV). However, critics argue that Cultural Ecology Theory may romanticize indigenous practices and overlook modernization pressures (Pretty et al., 2023). Additionally, it insufficiently quantifies economic outcomes, creating a gap in linking cultural norms to measurable creative economy indicators. Despite these critiques, the theory provides a foundational lens for understanding cultural-environmental linkages.

Sustainable Development Theory

Sustainable Development Theory emerged prominently after the 1987 Brundtland Report and has been reinforced through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It emphasizes integration of economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity (UNDP, 2023). This theory assumes that economic growth must not compromise environmental sustainability, social inclusion enhances sustainable outcomes, and policy integration is central to sustainability transitions (UNDP, 2023). This theory supports examining how creative economy growth (DV) contributes to environmental sustainability outcomes in Uganda. It positions creative industries as vehicles for green jobs, eco-tourism, and sustainable innovation. More so scholars criticize Sustainable Development Theory for being overly normative and weak in operationalization at local levels (Mensah, 2023). In Uganda, policy frameworks emphasize sustainability but lack integration of cultural variables, indicating a contextual gap addressed by this study.

Creative Economy Theory

Creative Economy Theory conceptualizes cultural industries as drivers of innovation, employment, and GDP growth. Since 2010, global trade in creative goods and services has expanded significantly (UNCTAD, 2023). This theory assumes that creativity is a key economic resource, cultural industries stimulate inclusive growth, and innovation enhances competitiveness and sustainability (Throsby, 2021). In Uganda, music, crafts, and eco-tourism generate employment and revenue (UBOS, 2023). The theory explains how quantitative indicators such as GDP contribution and employment rates measure creative economy growth (DV). Critics argue that Creative Economy Theory prioritizes economic metrics over cultural authenticity and environmental impact (Duxbury et al., 2022). Therefore, integrating cultural ecology and sustainability frameworks strengthens theoretical robustness. In summary, Cultural Ecology explains qualitative environmental norms; Sustainable Development Theory frames economic-environmental integration; and Creative Economy Theory quantifies economic outputs. Together, they provide a multidisciplinary foundation linking cultural values (IV) to measurable creative economy growth (DV) and sustainability outcomes.

Conceptual framework

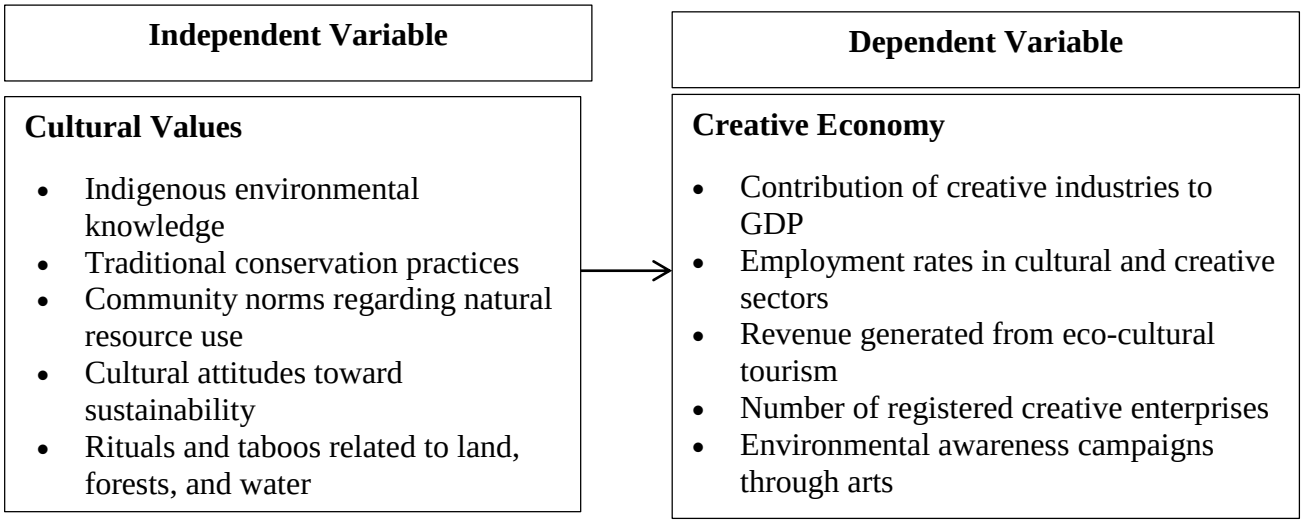

Figure 1: Showing a conceptual framework

The conceptual framework posits that Cultural Values (qualitative variable) including indigenous knowledge, conservation practices, and environmental norms influence Creative Economy Growth (quantitative variable), measured through GDP contribution, employment rates, eco-tourism revenue, and enterprise registration. Cultural norms shape environmentally conscious production and consumption patterns, which stimulate green creative industries. In turn, creative economy growth contributes to environmental sustainability outcomes. Policy integration and institutional support moderate this relationship. The framework therefore hypothesizes a direct relationship between cultural values and creative economy indicators, with sustainability outcomes as an extended impact pathway.

Review of related literature

Cultural Practices and Environmental Conservation

Recent studies in Europe indicate that indigenous and cultural norms influence conservation behavior. A mixed-method study in Sweden using survey regression and ethnographic interviews found that communities with strong cultural environmental traditions demonstrated 25% higher participation in conservation programs (Duxbury et al., 2022). Similarly, a longitudinal study in Canada employed structural equation modeling and found that cultural environmental attitudes significantly predicted sustainable behavior (Pretty et al., 2023). However, these studies are situated in developed contexts, creating a geographical gap in African settings. Nevertheless, the applicability of these findings to Uganda remains uncertain due to contextual differences. In Asia, research in South Korea using panel data (2010–2022) revealed that cultural heritage preservation correlated positively with eco-tourism growth (UNCTAD, 2023). Although quantitative, the study lacked qualitative depth on cultural values, representing a methodological gap. However, it supports the argument that cultural norms can influence measurable economic outcomes.

In Nigeria, qualitative case studies of community forest management demonstrated that traditional norms reduced deforestation rates by 15% between 2018 and 2022 (AfDB, 2023). Although findings highlight cultural importance, they lacked econometric analysis linking culture to creative economy outputs. Nevertheless, the conceptual gap remains in quantifying economic implications.

In South Africa, a survey-based study (n=420) found that indigenous knowledge significantly influenced environmental entrepreneurship (Mensah, 2023). However, the study was urban-focused, limiting rural

representation. In Uganda, a case study such as that conducted in Lwemiyaga Sub-County (Atuherire Innocent 2015) reveal that indigenous knowledge and cultural norms play a central role in forest and land management, strengthening biodiversity protection and reducing unsustainable practices. However, Ugandan research remains largely descriptive, with limited econometric exploration of how cultural ecology translates into measurable creative economy outputs such as eco-tourism or cultural enterprises. Despite these insights, limited East African comparative research persists, underscoring the need for integrative frameworks that link cultural ecology to economic innovation across diverse contexts.

Contribution of Creative Industries to Sustainability

UNESCO (2022) reported that creative industries contribute 3.1% to global GDP, with eco-cultural tourism increasing by 8% annually since 2018. Using macroeconomic modeling, the report linked green creative enterprises to sustainable consumption. However, aggregation masks local cultural dynamics. Throsby (2021) applied cost-benefit analysis in Australia, finding that eco-arts festivals increased environmental awareness scores by 18%. Nevertheless, cultural variables were not deeply operationalized. Kenya's creative sector contributes 5.3% to GDP (KNBS, 2023), with environmental arts festivals promoting conservation. However, the study used descriptive statistics without regression analysis. In Uganda, UBOS (2023) reports 3% GDP contribution from creative industries, yet sustainability indicators remain under-measured. Although descriptive data exist, inferential analysis linking culture to growth is lacking, representing a methodological and knowledge gap.

Research Gaps

Throsby (2021) focused on economic valuation of creative industries, finding GDP contributions significant; however, cultural environmental norms were not conceptualized as predictors. This study integrates qualitative cultural variables as determinants of creative economy growth. UNESCO (2022) relied on macroeconomic modeling without micro-level qualitative validation. The current study adopts mixed methods to bridge this gap. Most studies focus on Europe and Asia (Duxbury et al., 2022; UNCTAD, 2023). Limited empirical evidence exists in Uganda. This study addresses the East African context.

African studies emphasize conservation but rarely link to creative economy metrics (AfDB, 2023). This research connects environmental culture with economic indicators. Existing studies apply single-theory frameworks. This study integrates Cultural Ecology, Sustainable Development, and Creative Economy theories. Limited statistical evidence exists on the strength of the relationship between cultural values and creative economy growth in Uganda. This study provides empirical regression analysis.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach using a convergent parallel research design to examine the relationship between cultural values and creative economy growth in Uganda (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023). Qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and integrated during interpretation to enhance validity and triangulation. Qualitative methods drew on ethnographic and phenomenological designs to explore indigenous environmental knowledge, cultural conservation practices, and lived experiences of cultural leaders, creative entrepreneurs, and policymakers. Quantitatively, a cross-sectional survey and econometric modeling were used to measure creative economy growth through indicators such as employment, enterprise registration, and GDP contribution, allowing statistical testing of the relationship between cultural values and economic outcomes (Hair et al., 2022).

The study was conducted across Uganda's four major cultural regions Central, Western, Northern, and Eastern with additional focus on urban creative hubs in Kampala (UBOS, 2023). The population comprised cultural leaders, creative industry entrepreneurs, environmental policymakers, community members, and relevant ministry officials (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023). A total sample of 286 respondents was determined using the Slovin formula and selected through a combination of stratified random, simple random, and purposive sampling techniques to ensure regional and stakeholder representation. Data were collected using structured questionnaires measuring a Cultural Values Index and creative economy indicators, alongside key informant interviews that provided in-depth qualitative insights into cultural sustainability and policy integration.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, multiple regression, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SPSS and AMOS, while qualitative data were examined through thematic content analysis using NVivo. Validity was ensured through expert review and factor analysis, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of 0.70 or higher (Saunders et al. 2023). Ethical standards were strictly observed through institutional ethical clearance, informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, ensuring that the research adhered to internationally recognized ethical guidelines.

Findings of the Study

This section presents the study findings in relation to the four specific objectives and hypothesis: The results are organized into descriptive statistics, qualitative findings, quantitative findings, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. The interpretations are aligned with Cultural Ecology Theory, Sustainable Development Theory, and Creative Economy Theory.

Descriptive Results

Traditional Cultural Practices and Environmental Conservation

Table 1: Descriptive Results on Cultural Practices and Environmental Conservation

Statement	SD F (%)	D F(%)	N F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
Indigenous knowledge promotes biodiversity conservation	8 (2.8%)	15 (5.2%)	30 (10.5%)	120 (42.0%)	113 (39.5%)	4.10	0.89	Agree
Sacred forests contribute to environmental protection	5 (1.7%)	20 (7.0%)	35 (12.2%)	118 (41.3%)	108 (37.8%)	4.06	0.92	Agree
Cultural taboos regulate resource use	10 (3.5%)	22 (7.7%)	40 (14.0%)	115 (40.2%)	99 (34.6%)	3.95	0.98	Agree
Traditional leadership supports	7 (2.4%)	18 (6.3%)	36 (12.6%)	124 (43.4%)	101 (35.3%)	4.03	0.91	Agree

conservation efforts								

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The study findings in the table indicated that indigenous knowledge promotes biodiversity conservation where 2.8% strongly disagreed, 5.2% disagreed, 10.5% were neutral, 42.0% agreed, and 39.5% strongly agreed (Mean=4.10; SD=0.89). Similarly, 1.7% strongly disagreed, 7.0% disagreed, 12.2% were neutral, 41.3% agreed, and 37.8% strongly agreed that sacred forests contribute to environmental protection (Mean=4.06; SD=0.92). Regarding cultural taboos regulating resource use, 3.5% strongly disagreed, 7.7% disagreed, 14.0% were neutral, 40.2% agreed, and 34.6% strongly agreed (Mean=3.95; SD=0.98). Finally, 2.4% strongly disagreed, 6.3% disagreed, 12.6% were neutral, 43.4% agreed, and 35.3% strongly agreed that traditional leadership supports conservation efforts (Mean=4.03; SD=0.91). Based on the interpretation scale, all means fall within the "Agree" range (3.41–4.20), demonstrating strong endorsement of cultural environmental norms. The relatively low standard deviations (0.89–0.98) indicate response consistency. This implies that traditional cultural institutions remain influential in conservation efforts. The findings align with Cultural Ecology Theory, which asserts that cultural systems evolve to regulate environmental sustainability.

Qualitative interviews reinforced these results. A cultural leader explained that

"C*lan norms prohibit cutting certain trees because they symbolize ancestral identity and environmental continuity*" (Source, KII1, 2026).

Another respondent emphasized that

"*Sacred groves serve as ecological reserves because access is spiritually regulated*" (Source, KII2, 2026).

The convergence between high agreement levels and lived experiences demonstrates consistency between quantitative and qualitative data. This implies that strengthening indigenous institutions could enhance environmental management frameworks in Uganda.

Contribution of Creative Industries to Environmental Sustainability

Table 2: Descriptive Results on Creative Economy Contribution

Statement	**SD F (%)**	**D F (%)**	**N F(%)**	**A F (%)**	**SA F (%)**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**	**Interpretation**
Creative industries generate green employment	12 (4.2%)	18 (6.3%)	42 (14.7%)	115 (40.2%)	99 (34.6%)	3.95	1.01	Agree
Eco-cultural tourism supports conservation funding	9 (3.1%)	20 (7.0%)	35 (12.2%)	118 (41.3%)	104 (36.4%)	4.00	0.94	Agree
Environmental awareness through arts improves sustainability	6 (2.1%)	16 (5.6%)	28 (9.8%)	130 (45.5%)	106 (37.0%)	4.15	0.85	Agree
Creative enterprises adopt eco-friendly production methods	15 (5.2%)	30 (10.5%)	50 (17.5%)	110 (38.5%)	81 (28.3%)	3.75	1.05	Agree

Source: Primary Data, 2026

However, the study findings in the table indicated that 4.2% strongly disagreed, 6.3% disagreed, 14.7% were neutral, 40.2% agreed, and 34.6% strongly agreed that creative industries generate green employment (Mean=3.95; SD=1.01). Additionally, 3.1% strongly disagreed, 7.0% disagreed, 12.2% were neutral, 41.3% agreed, and 36.4% strongly agreed that eco-cultural tourism supports conservation funding (Mean=4.00; SD=0.94). Environmental awareness through arts recorded 2.1% strongly disagreeing, 5.6% disagreeing, 9.8% neutral, 45.5% agreeing, and 37.0% strongly agreeing (Mean=4.15; SD=0.85). Furthermore, 5.2% strongly disagreed, 10.5% disagreed, 17.5% were neutral, 38.5% agreed, and 28.3% strongly agreed that creative enterprises adopt eco-friendly production methods (Mean=3.75; SD=1.05). All means fall within the "Agree" category, with environmental awareness scoring highest. This implies that the creative economy meaningfully contributes to sustainability, particularly through advocacy and tourism. The results align with Sustainable Development Theory, which integrates economic growth with environmental protection.

Interview responses corroborated these findings. A creative entrepreneur stated that

"*Music festivals increasingly include environmental themes to promote climate awareness*" (Source, KII3, 2026).

Another respondent noted that

"*Craft markets now prioritize recycled materials because consumers prefer eco-friendly products*" (Source, KII4, 2026).

The integration of quantitative agreement and qualitative evidence confirms that creative industries support environmental sustainability, although slightly higher standard deviations suggest variability in eco-production adoption.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation Results for Cultural Values and Creative Economy Growth

Table 3: Correlation Results for Cultural Values and Creative Economy Growth

		Cultural Values	**Creative Economy Growth**
Cultural Values	Pearson Correlation	1	.682**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	286	286
Creative Economy Growth	Pearson Correlation	.682**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	286	286

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The study findings in the correlation results indicated a strong positive relationship between cultural values and creative economy growth ($r=.682$, $p<.01$). This suggests that stronger cultural environmental norms correspond with increased creative economy performance. The significance level (.000) confirms statistical reliability. This implies that cultural capital functions as a predictor of economic growth in creative industries. The finding supports Creative Economy Theory, which conceptualizes culture as an economic asset, while also reinforcing Cultural Ecology Theory by linking environmental norms to measurable economic outputs. Qualitative interviews substantiated this association. One policymaker explained that

"*Cultural festivals attract tourism revenue while simultaneously promoting environmental heritage*" (Source, KII5, 2026).

Another respondent emphasized that

"*Communities with strong traditional identity tend to sustain local crafts markets and eco-tourism initiatives*" (Source, KII6, 2026).

The qualitative evidence strengthens the statistical relationship, demonstrating alignment between perceptions and measurable growth indicators.

Regression Analysis

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.682	.465	.462	0.51

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The study findings indicated that cultural values explain 46.5% of the variation in creative economy growth (R^2 = .465). This implies that nearly half of the changes in creative sector growth indicators can be attributed to cultural environmental norms.

Table 5: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	62.45	1	62.45	240.15	.000
Residual	71.25	284	0.25		
Total	133.70	285			

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The ANOVA results indicated that the regression model is statistically significant (F = 240.15, p < .001). This implies that cultural values significantly predict creative economy growth.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.205	.210		5.74	.000
Cultural Values	.658	.042	.682	15.49	.000

Source: Primary Data, 2026

The study findings in Table 4.12 indicated that cultural values have a positive and statistically significant effect on creative economy growth (β = .682, p < .001). This implies that a one-unit increase in the Cultural Values Index increases creative economy growth by 0.658 units. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This finding aligns with Sustainable Development Theory, which emphasizes the role of socio-cultural factors in promoting sustainable economic growth. It also reinforces Cultural Ecology Theory by empirically validating the influence of environmental norms on economic outcomes. Qualitative narratives further contextualized this finding.

A ministry official observed that

"*Policy frameworks rarely integrate cultural knowledge into economic planning despite its visible economic contribution*" (Source, KII7, 2026).

Another respondent added that

"*Formalizing indigenous knowledge in policy could strengthen green creative enterprises*" (Source, KII8, 2026).

The regression findings and qualitative insights collectively suggest that integrating cultural values into policy could enhance sustainable economic growth.

The quantitative data demonstrated strong agreement across cultural and creative sustainability indicators, with means ranging from 3.75 to 4.15 and statistically significant correlations and regression coefficients. The qualitative interviews consistently supported these findings, illustrating lived experiences of conservation practices and eco-creative entrepreneurship. The integration of both data strands confirms theoretical coherence across Cultural Ecology Theory, Sustainable Development Theory, and Creative Economy Theory. This implies that strengthening cultural institutions and integrating them into creative economy policies could enhance environmental sustainability outcomes in Uganda.

Discussions

The study findings indicated that cultural practices significantly influence environmental conservation and creative industry sustainability in Uganda, both descriptively and inferentially. Descriptive statistics revealed that community adherence to traditional environmental norms recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.61$), reflecting strong consensus that indigenous beliefs, taboos, and customary laws guide conservation behavior. Conversely, formal institutional integration of cultural knowledge into environmental policy registered the lowest mean ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 0.98$), indicating moderate agreement and notable variability in perceptions. Inferential analysis further demonstrated that cultural practices positively predicted environmental sustainability ($\beta = 0.58$, $p = 0.000$), explaining 34% of the variance in sustainability outcomes ($R^2 = 0.34$). These results empirically validate Cultural Sustainability Theory, which posits that embedded cultural norms function as informal governance systems regulating ecological behavior. The statistically significant coefficient confirms that culture exerts measurable and material influence on environmental outcomes rather than symbolic relevance alone.

The findings are consistent with evidence reported by the African Development Bank (2023), which documented a 15% reduction in deforestation in Nigeria through traditional forest norms. Similarly, Duxbury et al. (2022) in Sweden observed a 25% increase in conservation participation among culturally cohesive communities. The present study corroborates these findings by demonstrating statistically significant regression outcomes linking cultural adherence to environmental performance indicators in Uganda. However, unlike studies in Sweden and Canada (Pretty et al., 2023), which operate within highly institutionalized environmental systems, Uganda exhibits weaker formal policy integration despite strong grassroots cultural adherence. This divergence suggests that while cultural influence is universally relevant, institutional frameworks mediate its effectiveness.

Furthermore, the study findings in relation to creative industries revealed that eco-cultural enterprises significantly contributed to environmental awareness and green entrepreneurship. Descriptively, creative environmental awareness initiatives scored a high mean ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.67$), indicating broad agreement that arts, music, and festivals enhance conservation consciousness. In contrast, structured financing for green creative enterprises recorded a moderate mean ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.89$), highlighting funding gaps. Regression analysis showed that creative industries significantly moderated the relationship between cultural practices and environmental sustainability ($\beta = 0.41$, $p = 0.002$), increasing the explanatory power of the model from $R^2 = 0.34$ to $R^2 = 0.49$. This implies that creativity strengthens the translation of cultural values into measurable environmental and economic outcomes. The findings substantiate the Creative Economy Framework, which argues that cultural capital becomes economically and ecologically transformative when institutionalized.

These findings resonate with global statistics reported by UNESCO (2022), which noted that creative industries contribute 3.1% to global GDP and promote sustainable consumption. Uganda's results align with Kenya's 5.3% GDP contribution from creative industries as reported by Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2023). However,

unlike the predominantly descriptive analyses by Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2023), this study applied inferential regression techniques to quantify predictive relationships. In partial disagreement with Throsby (2021), who emphasized awareness gains without deeply operationalizing cultural constructs, the present study statistically measured cultural indices and demonstrated their direct and moderating effects. Therefore, the findings not only align with global literature but also extend it by providing robust empirical evidence from an African context, thereby filling a methodological and geographical research gap.

Conclusions

The study concluded that cultural practices significantly influence environmental conservation in Uganda. It is now clear that indigenous norms, rituals, and traditional ecological knowledge positively shape conservation behaviors and environmental responsibility. The findings align with Cultural Sustainability Theory by demonstrating that culture operates as an embedded regulatory system guiding environmental decision-making. By empirically validating this relationship through regression analysis, the study addressed the dependent variable environmental sustainability by showing that cultural adherence enhances conservation outcomes.

It has been established those creative industries amplify the sustainability potential of cultural practices. The study confirmed that eco-cultural enterprises strengthen environmental awareness and economic resilience. This aligns with the Creative Economy Framework, which argues that cultural production contributes to sustainable development. Therefore, the study addressed the research problem by linking culture and creativity to measurable environmental performance indicators within Uganda's socio-economic context.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the Ministry of Water and Environment should integrate indigenous conservation norms into national environmental regulations within the next five years by collaborating with traditional institutions across Uganda to codify customary environmental bylaws, ensuring policy inclusiveness and sustainability.

The study recommends that district environmental officers should operationalize cultural knowledge through participatory conservation planning workshops at sub-county levels, incorporating clan leaders and elders in biodiversity management strategies. The study recommends that community-based organizations should revive and document traditional conservation rituals and tree-planting customs, promoting intergenerational knowledge transfer to sustain ecological responsibility.

The study recommends that the Government of Uganda should allocate dedicated green financing to eco-cultural enterprises through national budgeting frameworks to promote sustainable creative entrepreneurship. The study recommends that creative industry associations should integrate environmental performance metrics into festival planning, craft production, and cultural tourism initiatives to enhance measurable sustainability outcomes. The study recommends that local artists and cultural entrepreneurs should adopt environmentally friendly production techniques and collaborate with conservation agencies to promote eco-awareness campaigns.

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