

Intellectual Property, Innovation and Economic Development in Nigeria: Challenges, Opportunities and Policy Pathways

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Abstract

Globally, Intellectual property is widely recognized as a strategic instrument for promoting creativity, encouraging technological progress, and fostering long term economic development. Countries that protect and commercialize new ideas tend to record higher levels of industrial growth and productivity. Nigeria has expressed strong ambitions to build an innovation driven economy under its Vision 2050 blueprint, its industrialization plans, and its participation in the African Continental Free Trade Area. However, the ability of the country to convert creativity and research outputs into economic value depends on the effectiveness of its intellectual property system. This paper examines the relationship between intellectual property, innovation, and economic development in Nigeria. It reviews Nigeria's legislative and institutional landscape, the emerging innovation ecosystem, and the opportunities and constraints within the current framework. The paper adopts a doctrinal and policy analysis approach, drawing insights from comparative jurisdictions. It argues that Nigeria requires a modernized, development focused intellectual property framework that supports research, encourages private investment, strengthens competitiveness, and unlocks the economic power of its creative and technology driven sectors.

Keywords: Intellectual Property, Innovation, Economy, Development

1. Introduction

Intellectual property is central to modern knowledge economies because it protects the commercial value of creative and innovative activity.¹ Nations that prioritise innovation tend to outperform others in global competitiveness, industrial capability, and inward investment.² For developing economies such as Nigeria, intellectual property provides a pathway to diversify the economy, reduce dependence on natural resources, and promote sustainable growth.

Nigeria has set broad development goals that envision a technologically advanced economy by 2050. These ambitions are supported by policies such as the **National Digital Economy Policy**,³ the **Nigeria Industrial Revolution Plan**,⁴ and participation in the **African Continental Free Trade Area**.⁵ However, the realisation of these objectives requires an intellectual property system that aligns with global best practices and supports domestic entrepreneurship.

This paper examines three central questions. First, how does intellectual property influence innovation and long term growth? Second, does Nigeria currently possess the legal and institutional capacity to support innovation driven development? Third, what policy reforms are necessary to strengthen the economic contribution of intellectual property? The paper draws insights from legal texts, policy documents, reports from government agencies, and comparative studies.

2. Conceptual Framework

Intellectual property refers to the legal rights granted to creators and inventors that allow them to control the use of their works.⁶ These rights include patents, trademarks, copyrights, industrial designs, trade secrets, geographical indications, e.t.c. Each category protects a different form of creativity, ranging from technological inventions to artistic works and brand identity.

¹ World Intellectual Property Organization, *World Intellectual Property Report: The Changing Face of Innovation* (WIPO 2022).

² World Bank, *World Development Report: Knowledge for Development* (World Bank 1999).

³ National Information Technology Development Agency, *National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy 2020–2030*.

⁴ Federal Government of Nigeria, *Nigeria Industrial Revolution Plan*.

⁵ African Union, *Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area* (2018).

⁶ World Intellectual Property Organization, *Understanding Intellectual Property* (WIPO Publication).

Innovation refers to the creation of new or improved products, processes, or services. It may be incremental, where existing ideas are refined, or disruptive, where new solutions significantly alter existing industries. Modern growth theories, especially those influenced by Joseph Schumpeter⁷ and subsequent endogenous growth models, recognise innovation as a key driver of long term economic expansion.

Economic development refers to structural transformation, rising productivity, improved standards of living, and enhanced competitiveness. Intellectual property contributes to development by rewarding creativity, encouraging investment in research, and supporting the growth of knowledge based industries. The relationship between intellectual property, innovation, and economic growth is therefore both economic and strategic.⁸

3. Intellectual Property System in Nigeria

Nigeria's intellectual property system is built on a collection of statutes enacted at different periods and for different policy objectives. The Trademarks Act of 1965 governs the registration and protection of marks used in trade and business.⁹ It provides for the registration of goods and service marks, certification marks, and defensive marks, although several provisions remain outdated when compared to modern international standards. For example, the Act does not expressly recognise nontraditional marks such as sound marks, colour marks, or three dimensional marks, even though these have become commercially important in digital and creative industries.

The **Patents and Designs Act of 1971** regulates the grant and protection of patents and industrial designs.¹⁰ The Act is based on an older model that does not require substantive examination of applications before grant. As a result, patent quality is often questioned because registrations may be issued without a rigorous assessment of novelty, inventive step, or industrial applicability. This has implications for innovation, technology transfer, and investor confidence. Nevertheless, the Act remains the primary legal mechanism for protecting technological inventions in Nigeria.

⁷ Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (Harper 1942).

⁸ Keith Maskus, *Intellectual Property Rights in the Global Economy* (Institute for International Economics).

⁹ Trademarks Act, Cap T13 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004

¹⁰ Patents and Designs Act, Cap P2 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004.

Copyright protection is governed by the **Copyright Act of 2022**,¹¹ which replaced the previous Act and represents one of the most significant legislative reforms in the Nigerian intellectual property landscape. The new Act introduces broader rights for authors, improved exceptions and limitations for education and research, stronger enforcement mechanisms, and recognition of digital rights management technologies. It also expands the mandate of the Nigerian Copyright Commission, giving it enhanced investigative and prosecutorial powers. This reform was driven by the government's desire to support the creative industries, particularly music, film, software, and digital content.

The **National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion Act** regulates the transfer of foreign technology to Nigeria.¹² It requires registration and approval of contracts involving patents, trademarks, know how, and technical expertise. The aim is to ensure fair value for Nigeria in cross border technology deals, prevent restrictive business practices, and promote capacity building. However, in practice, the NOTAP approval requirement has sometimes been criticised for creating delays, discouraging foreign investment, and limiting the flexibility of Nigerian companies engaging in global technology partnerships.

Nigeria's institutional framework for intellectual property administration is decentralised. The Trademarks, Patents and Designs Registry under the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment manages registration and maintenance of trademarks, patents, and industrial designs. Due to limited staffing, outdated filing systems, and infrastructure challenges, the Registry faces significant backlogs and slow processing times. Recent moves toward digitisation have improved access but gaps remain in examination standards, record keeping, and online transparency.

The **Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC)** is responsible for copyright administration, enforcement, and anti piracy operations. It conducts raids, prosecutions, and public awareness campaigns. It also manages licensing structures and collective management organisations. The Commission has played an important role in protecting Nigeria's creative industries, although piracy remains widespread, especially in digital media and broadcasting.

¹¹ Nigeria Copyright Act 2022

¹² National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion Act Cap N62 LFN 2004.

The **National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP)** oversees technology transfer agreements and promotes local content in technology acquisitions. It also supports research commercialization and works with universities and research institutions to encourage patenting and licensing activities. However, the agency often struggles to balance regulatory oversight with the need to foster an enabling environment for innovation.

The **Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON)** complements the intellectual property regime by setting product standards and reducing the circulation of counterfeit goods. Counterfeiting poses significant risks to consumer safety, brand integrity, and investor confidence, and SON's regulatory functions are essential to addressing these challenges.

At the international level, Nigeria is a member of the **World Trade Organisation (WTO)**.¹³ As a WTO member, Nigeria implements the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement, which sets minimum standards for IP protection and enforcement. Nigeria is not a member of the *African Regional Intellectual Property Organisation* or the *Organisation Africaine de la Propriété Intellectuelle*, which means IP registration must be filed individually in each African country. However, Nigeria is actively participating in the development of the AfCFTA Intellectual Property Protocol, which aims to harmonise IP rules across the continent and improve cross border protection.¹⁴

Recent policy shifts, including the Copyright Act 2022, the Startup Act 2022, and ongoing efforts to modernise trademark and patent regulation, reflect increasing recognition of intellectual property as a tool for economic diversification, investment attraction, and knowledge driven development. Nevertheless, the system still requires significant reform to align with global best practices and fully support Nigeria's emerging innovation ecosystem.

4. Innovation Landscape in Nigeria

Nigeria's innovation ecosystem is anchored by universities, public research institutions, private sector hubs, and an increasingly active venture capital environment. However, national expenditure on research and development remains far below global averages.¹⁵ Estimates place

¹³ WTO Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) 1994.

¹⁴ AfCFTA Protocol on Intellectual Property Rights (Draft Negotiation Text).

¹⁵ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Global R&D Expenditure Database*.

Nigeria's R&D spending at less than one percent of GDP, which is significantly lower than that of emerging economies such as South Africa, India, or China. This underinvestment limits scientific output, slows technological advancement, and reduces the pipeline of patentable inventions.

Despite these constraints, academic institutions continue to generate important research in fields such as agriculture, engineering, pharmaceuticals, and renewable energy. Universities have established intellectual property and technology transfer offices to support patenting and commercialisation, but these offices vary widely in capacity. Many lack trained personnel, adequate funding and strong partnerships with private industry. As a result, much university research remains uncommercialised, and only a small fraction of publicly funded research translates into marketable products.

Indigenous knowledge systems form a significant but often underutilised component of Nigeria's innovation landscape. Traditional knowledge in agriculture, herbal medicine, textiles, crafts, food processing, and cultural expression provides opportunities for developing niche products and securing geographical indications. However, weak documentation, inadequate legal protection, and limited commercial structures constrain the development of indigenous knowledge into scalable, export ready industries.

The private sector has become the most visible engine of innovation in Nigeria. Over the past decade, the country has developed one of Africa's largest technology ecosystems, concentrated primarily in Lagos¹⁶ but increasingly spreading to Abuja, Kaduna, Enugu, Port Harcourt, and Ibadan. Technology hubs, incubators, and accelerators have supported thousands of startups in sectors such as financial technology, agricultural technology, health technology, education technology, artificial intelligence, blockchain, logistics, and digital commerce.¹⁷ The success of Nigerian fintech firms in attracting global investment demonstrates both the creative capacity of Nigerian entrepreneurs and the potential of technology driven industries to contribute substantially to GDP, employment, and exports.

Government policy has gradually shifted toward a more innovation oriented framework. The National Digital Economy Policy outlines a strategy for expanding broadband access, fostering

¹⁶ GSMA, *The Mobile Economy Sub-Saharan Africa Report*

¹⁷ Nigeria Startup Act 2022.

digital skills, and promoting e governance. The Nigeria Startup Act 2022 represents a significant effort to create a coherent regulatory environment for startups, particularly in relation to funding, intellectual property support, tax incentives, and sandbox frameworks for emerging technologies. Additional initiatives include research grants, innovation challenge funds, and public procurement programmes designed to support homegrown solutions.

However, gaps remain in transforming ideas into commercially viable products. Intellectual property commercialisation is still weak due to low awareness, limited expertise in IP valuation, and insufficient collaboration between creators, investors, and research institutions. Many innovators do not register patents, trademarks, or designs, which limits their ability to scale, attract financing, or protect their market advantage. Furthermore, the dominance of the informal economy means that a large proportion of creative and innovative activities occur outside formal legal structures.

Nigeria's innovation landscape is vibrant and full of potential but requires stronger institutional support, increased investment in research, and a more strategic integration of intellectual property into economic planning. With the right policies and a more robust IP ecosystem, Nigeria can convert its creative capacity into sustained economic growth and global competitiveness.

5. Nexus Between Intellectual Property and Economic Development in Nigeria

Nigeria's creative and technology sectors contribute significantly to GDP and have become major sources of employment. Nollywood, one of the world's largest film industries by output, has evolved from informal production and widespread piracy into a structured sector that attracts domestic and foreign investment.¹⁸ Improvements in copyright enforcement, digital distribution platforms, and licensing arrangements have strengthened revenue streams for filmmakers and distributors. Music, another fast growing sector, has also benefitted from stronger copyright awareness. Nigerian artists generate significant income through streaming, performance rights, brand endorsements, and international collaborations.¹⁹ These sectors demonstrate how the protection and commercialisation of creative works can drive job creation, export growth, and cultural diplomacy in Nigeria.

¹⁸ UNESCO, *The African Film Industry Report* (2021).

¹⁹ IFPI, *Global Music Report*

The technology sector provides further evidence of the developmental value of intellectual property. Nigerian fintech startups have attracted billions of dollars in foreign direct investment, largely because investors recognise the value of proprietary software, data systems, and business models. Intellectual property rights, especially in software and trademarks, help innovators differentiate their products, protect their competitive advantage, and scale across borders.

Small and medium enterprises represent more than 80 percent of businesses in Nigeria and contribute an estimated 50 percent to GDP.²⁰ However, most SMEs do not protect their intellectual property, which exposes them to market losses and limits their ability to scale. Stronger intellectual property awareness and affordable registration mechanisms would enhance SME competitiveness and support local content development.

Intellectual property also supports foreign direct investment, as investors prefer jurisdictions where technology transfers are protected. In agriculture, geographical indications and protection of traditional knowledge offer opportunities for promoting Nigerian products such as Yauri rice, Nsukka yellow pepper, and other niche goods.

Despite these opportunities, patent commercialisation remains weak and university research often remains unused. This limits the long term impact of intellectual property on Nigeria's development goals.

6. Challenges in Leveraging Intellectual Property for Development

Despite Nigeria's vibrant creative sector, growing technology ecosystem, and strong entrepreneurial culture, the country has not yet fully harnessed intellectual property as a driver of economic transformation. Multiple structural, legal, institutional, and cultural constraints limit the effectiveness of the intellectual property system and weaken its developmental impact.

A central challenge is Nigeria's weak enforcement environment. Piracy and counterfeiting remain pervasive across films, music, books, software, pharmaceuticals, and consumer goods.²¹ While

²⁰ SMEDAN, *MSME Survey Report Nigeria*.

²¹ Nigerian Copyright Commission, *Anti Piracy Enforcement Reports*.

the Nigerian Copyright Commission, the Standards Organisation of Nigeria, and other agencies conduct enforcement operations, limited funding, inadequate equipment, and overlapping institutional mandates hinder sustained action. Courts often lack specialised knowledge of intellectual property matters, resulting in slow proceedings and inconsistent judgments.

Nigeria's intellectual property legislation is also outdated in key areas. The Trademarks Act of 1965 and the Patents and Designs Act of 1971 were drafted for a different era and do not reflect the realities of digital markets, biotechnology, software development, or artificial intelligence. The absence of substantive patent examination raises concerns about patent quality, while the lack of recognition of modern trademark categories limits protection for many innovative brands. Legislative gaps create regulatory uncertainty and make it difficult for Nigeria to compete globally for technology investment.

Low awareness of intellectual property among innovators, creators, and entrepreneurs is another significant barrier. Most small and medium enterprises do not understand the economic value of trademarks, industrial designs, or patents, and many do not know that registration is necessary for protection. As a result, unregistered brands and unprotected innovations are easily copied, reducing incentives for creativity and weakening the competitive position of SMEs. Awareness is particularly low in the informal sector, which dominates the Nigerian economy and produces vast amounts of unprotected creative and commercial content.

Insufficient research and development funding further restricts the generation of patentable inventions. Nigeria invests far below one percent of its GDP in research, which is inadequate for supporting sustained scientific advancement. Public research institutions often lack modern laboratories, updated equipment, and stable funding streams. Without meaningful investment in research, the pipeline of innovations that can be protected and commercialised remains thin, limiting the economic role of intellectual property in health, agriculture, energy, and manufacturing.

The NOTAP approval process for technology transfer agreements is intended to ensure fair value and promote local capacity building. However, in practice, the process can be cumbersome, slow, and unpredictable. Companies often experience long delays in obtaining approval for technical services agreements, software licensing, franchise contracts, and other IP-related transactions. These delays discourage foreign partners, slow business operations, and increase transaction

costs. A more flexible, transparent, and market sensitive regulatory approach is needed to promote technology diffusion while safeguarding national interests.

Nigeria also faces a shortage of professionals with expertise in intellectual property management, valuation, licensing, and commercialisation. Universities and research institutes often lack technology transfer offices capable of negotiating licensing agreements or managing patent portfolios. Private sector firms struggle to find IP strategists, and financial institutions have limited knowledge of IP-based lending. This skills gap prevents innovators from transforming creative outputs into marketable products and limits the ability of investors to properly assess the value of intangible assets.

Cultural attitudes toward innovation and creativity also influence how intellectual property is used. In some communities, knowledge is shared collectively and not viewed as something that should be exclusively controlled or commercialised. While this promotes open exchange, it can also hinder the adoption of intellectual property rights that require ownership, registration, and exclusivity. In the creative sector, especially Nollywood and music, a long history of informal distribution has normalised copying and unauthorised use, making it more difficult to shift creators and consumers toward formal licensing models.

Finally, the absence of a coordinated national intellectual property policy means Nigeria lacks a unified vision for how IP should support development. Different agencies operate in isolation, and intellectual property is not yet fully integrated into industrialisation plans, digital economy strategies, or export promotion efforts. This fragmentation reduces the efficiency of government interventions and limits the alignment between innovation, education, investment, and IP policy.

Nigeria's intellectual property system faces deep structural and cultural challenges that prevent it from achieving its full developmental potential. Weak enforcement, outdated laws, low awareness, insufficient research funding, regulatory bottlenecks, limited professional capacity, and a large informal economy all contribute to a system that protects creativity in theory but not consistently in practice. Addressing these challenges is essential if Nigeria is to build a globally competitive innovation ecosystem capable of supporting sustainable economic growth.

7. Comparative Lessons from Other Countries

South Korea presents one of the most striking examples of innovation led development in modern history.²² In the 1960s, the country was largely agrarian and resource poor. Its transformation into a global leader in electronics, biotechnology, and automotive manufacturing was anchored in sustained investment in research and human capital, supported by a deliberate intellectual property strategy.

South Korea strengthened its patent laws, implemented rigorous examination procedures, and established specialised IP courts to ensure predictable enforcement. Large conglomerates such as Samsung and LG invested heavily in R&D and built global patent portfolios, while universities developed active technology transfer offices to commercialise academic research.

Brazil also offers important lessons on balancing intellectual property rights with national development priorities. Brazil modernised its industrial property law to comply with international standards but also introduced mechanisms to support local innovation, particularly in biotechnology, agriculture, and renewable energy.²³ The Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa) is a leading example of a public research institution that uses patents, plant variety protections, and technology transfer agreements to strengthen agricultural productivity. Brazil's compulsory licensing experience in the pharmaceutical sector also reflects its approach to maintaining access to essential medicines while promoting domestic research. Nigeria can learn from Brazil's ability to apply international IP standards in a way that still reflects local realities, especially in agriculture and public health.

Rwanda provides a unique African example of how strong governance and targeted policy reforms can rapidly build innovation capability. Following major institutional rebuilding efforts, Rwanda prioritised information technology and digital services as core sectors for economic transformation.²⁴ The government introduced modern IP laws, digitised the registration process, and created capacity building programmes to train entrepreneurs and officials. Rwanda's Kigali Innovation City is designed as a knowledge hub that integrates universities, technology companies, and research centres. Although smaller in scale than Nigeria, Rwanda's deliberate

²² OECD, *Innovation Policy in South Korea*.

²³ Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology, *Innovation Strategy Report*.

²⁴ Rwanda Development Board, *National Innovation Policy*

policy coherence, reduced bureaucracy, and strong enforcement culture demonstrate that effective governance is essential for making intellectual property meaningful. The country shows that even with limited resources, clear policies and efficient institutions can attract investment and stimulate innovation.

Together, these countries offer several overarching lessons. First, intellectual property does not generate development on its own; it must be integrated into broader economic planning. Second, investment in research and human capital is essential, as intellectual property only has value when there is a steady pipeline of innovations to protect. Third, institutional coordination and governance matter; fragmented agencies and outdated procedures weaken the entire system. Fourth, countries that succeed tend to align intellectual property policy with their competitive strengths, whether in technology, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, or digital services.

For Nigeria, these lessons point to the need for a coherent national innovation strategy supported by modern IP laws, stronger institutions, enhanced capacity in universities, and clear incentives for startups and small businesses.

8. Policy Recommendations and Reform Pathways

Nigeria requires a modernised intellectual property framework that reflects contemporary technological realities and supports long term economic transformation. Intellectual property should not merely exist as a legal protection mechanism but must function as a strategic economic tool that encourages innovation, attracts investment, and strengthens the competitiveness of Nigerian industries. Achieving this objective requires a combination of legislative reform, institutional restructuring, capacity building, and policy coordination.

First, Nigeria should undertake comprehensive reform of its intellectual property legislation. Key statutes such as the Trademarks Act and the Patents and Designs Act were enacted several decades ago and do not adequately address modern developments in digital technology, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and software innovation. Legislative reform should therefore introduce recognition of non-traditional trademarks such as sound marks and three dimensional marks, improve standards for patent examination, and strengthen industrial design protection. Nigeria should also consider accession to important international treaties such as the Madrid Protocol and the Patent Cooperation Treaty, which would allow Nigerian innovators and

businesses to obtain international protection more easily. Participation in these global frameworks would increase investor confidence and improve the ability of Nigerian firms to compete in international markets.

Second, the establishment of a unified Nigerian Intellectual Property Commission would significantly improve administrative efficiency and policy coordination. At present, responsibility for intellectual property is spread across several agencies including the Trademarks, Patents and Designs Registry, the Nigerian Copyright Commission, and the National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion. This fragmented structure often results in administrative delays, inconsistent policy implementation, and duplication of regulatory functions. A unified commission would centralise registration services, coordinate enforcement activities, develop national intellectual property policy, and serve as a focal point for international cooperation. Such an institution would also allow for the development of specialised expertise in patent examination, trademark administration, and technology transfer.

Third, Nigeria should adopt a comprehensive national intellectual property and innovation strategy. Intellectual property policy should be integrated into broader economic planning rather than treated as a separate legal domain. A national strategy should clearly identify priority sectors such as digital technology, agriculture, renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, and creative industries. It should also establish mechanisms for linking universities, research institutions, and private sector firms in collaborative innovation networks. By aligning intellectual property policy with industrial policy, Nigeria can ensure that innovation becomes a central driver of economic growth and diversification.

Capacity building is another critical component of intellectual property reform. Universities and research institutions should be supported in establishing technology transfer offices that can manage patents, negotiate licensing agreements, and assist researchers in commercialising their inventions. Small and medium enterprises require education on the strategic value of intellectual property, particularly in relation to trademarks, brand management, and product design protection. Judges, customs officers, and enforcement agencies should also receive specialised training to strengthen their understanding of intellectual property law and improve the quality of enforcement. Building human capacity across the entire innovation ecosystem will ensure that intellectual property laws are not only enacted but effectively utilised.

In addition, Nigeria should promote financing mechanisms that allow intellectual property assets to be used as collateral for investment. Many startups and technology enterprises rely primarily on intangible assets such as patents, software, and proprietary algorithms. However, traditional financial institutions in Nigeria rarely recognise these assets as valuable forms of collateral. Developing frameworks for intellectual property valuation and IP backed lending would expand access to finance for innovators and enable startups to scale their operations. Government backed innovation funds and venture capital support programmes could further stimulate research commercialisation and technology entrepreneurship.

Strengthening enforcement mechanisms is equally important. The creation of specialised intellectual property courts or designated divisions within existing courts would significantly improve the speed and consistency of dispute resolution. Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as arbitration and mediation should also be promoted for intellectual property disputes, particularly in commercial transactions involving licensing and technology transfer agreements. Efficient dispute resolution mechanisms increase investor confidence and reduce the risks associated with innovation driven industries.

Nigeria should also reform its technology transfer regime to encourage collaboration between domestic firms and foreign partners. While the regulatory oversight exercised by the National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion is intended to prevent unfair contractual arrangements, the approval process can sometimes be lengthy and restrictive. Simplifying the approval process and introducing clearer guidelines would facilitate faster technology transfer while still safeguarding national interests. Encouraging joint research partnerships, licensing agreements, and collaborative innovation projects would accelerate the diffusion of technological knowledge within the Nigerian economy.

Another important reform area involves the promotion of geographical indications and the protection of traditional knowledge. Nigeria possesses numerous agricultural and cultural products with strong regional identities, such as Ofada rice, Yauri onions, Nsukka yellow pepper, and Adire textiles. Developing legal frameworks and certification systems for geographical indications would allow these products to command higher market value and enhance export competitiveness. At the same time, traditional knowledge systems in fields such as herbal medicine, crafts, and cultural expression should be documented and protected to prevent misappropriation while ensuring that local communities benefit economically from their heritage.

Finally, intellectual property policy must be fully integrated into Nigeria's broader industrial and economic strategies. Innovation should be recognised as a fundamental driver of national development, and intellectual property protection should support sectors capable of generating employment, exports, and technological advancement. Policies relating to digital transformation, manufacturing, agriculture, and the creative economy should incorporate intellectual property considerations from the outset. By embedding intellectual property into national development planning, Nigeria can build an innovation driven economy that transforms creativity and knowledge into sustainable economic growth.

9. Conclusion

Intellectual property plays a vital role in building innovative and competitive economies. Nigeria possesses a rich base of creative talent, entrepreneurial potential, and technological capability. However, the current intellectual property system requires significant reform to support the country's long term development goals. A modern, well enforced, and innovation friendly intellectual property framework will strengthen SME competitiveness, attract investment, support industrial growth, and unlock the economic potential of Nigeria's creative and technological sectors. The future of Nigeria's innovation driven economy depends on recognising intellectual property as a strategic tool for national development.