

# Interdisciplinary and Complementary Roles of Theatre and Tourism in Socio-Economic Development

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## Abstract

*Theatre and tourism are invaluable in the socio-economic development of any nation. Both complement each other in diverse ways in creating an enabling and conducive environment for both human and material growth capable of leaving the society better than it is. Theatre as an art form calls for resources in capital, materials and personnel. Its scope and character have been shaped by the economic forces of the society, and its organization has actually reflected the state of economic development of society. On the other hand, tourism's socio-economic benefits are manifold, for it does not just create hundreds and thousands of businesses, labour intensive, but also generates new wealth for the economic growth of any nation, especially the developing nations of the world. The relationship between theatre and tourism, it seems, is like a marriage without divorce. It is these complementary roles of theatre and tourism in the socio-economic development of the society that this study seeks to examine.*

## Introduction

Theatre and tourism are basic sources of entertainment in any society. Nevertheless, they also offer to society invaluable socio-economic opportunities. Time was when both were regarded as mere sources of entertainment. Evidences abound these days which show that their economic impacts far outweigh the social benefits of these two juxtaposing disciplines.

The word "theatre" evokes different ideas to many people. However, Edwin Wilson (1988:2) in his book, *Theatre Experience*, defines it as, "an experience – a shared, indivisible event that includes both those who perform and those who observe." What Wilson is saying is that both the actors and the audience are involved in such an experience. Theatre occurs wherever and whenever human society has developed and is transitory, meaning that, a theatre performance changes from moment to moment as the audience encounters a series of shifting impressions and stimuli. As a Greek word, theatre means "to see or watch." Theatre, according to Bakary Traore (1972:13), "is the expression of man's expression of his feelings, emotions and experiences; ... a résumé of life and creatures and things." Traore's view is that, "theatre embodies social reality as well as affords an escape from it. It stimulates as it entertains; but while stimulating and entertaining, it remains an integral part of society – reflecting society's feelings, and even occasionally acting as its guide. To Beckerman (1979:10), the actor, space and audience are three quintessential conditions that govern theatre; and that theatre occurs when one or more human beings isolated in time and/or space, present themselves to another or others.

Like theatre, tourism's earlier and primary focus was that of entertainment. However, time has changed such orientation. Tourism apart

from its entertainment needs, serves both social and economic needs. Tourism must now be recognized as an important activity both nationally and internationally, and is subject to very different demand conditions.

Tourism, according to Stephen L. J. Smith (1995:9), "is the set of activities of a person traveling to a place outside his or her usual environment for less than a year and whose main purpose of travel is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited." Indeed, tourism can be seen as a kind of pastime, a means of relaxation from active work by holiday makers and honey-mooners. It can also be seen as those enterprises and organizations involved in facilitating travel and activity away from one's usual environment. Wikipedia also describes tourism as, "a travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes," while The World Tourism Organization (2012:1) defines tourists as people traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.

Like other disciplines, tourism has developed into various genres since becoming a global phenomenon. Tourism can now be discussed under mass tourism, winter tourism, adjectival tourism, ecotourism, pro-poor tourism, recession tourism, medical tourism, education tourism, creative tourism, sports tourism, sustainable tourism, among others. Tourism can also be delineated into domestic, inbound, outbound, internal, national and international tourism. It is a major force in global trade. It plays a vital role in the social, cultural and economic development of most nations, and has the potential both to preserve heritage as well as to destroy. This means that tourism is like a two-edged sword. It makes as it mars. Whichever is the case, tourism is invaluable in the contemporary society. However, this study draws its impetus from the works of both theatre and tourism scholars in the form of books, journals, magazines, newspapers and lecture notes.

### **Socio-economic Nature of Theatre and Tourism**

The efficacy of theatrical events is manifold. It could be moral, political, intellectual, emotional and instinctive, traditional, economic, social and even religious. Like other media of communication, theatre possesses both communicative and didactic qualities. It is informational as it entertains. It mirrors the society, reviews, analyzes and reconstructs the political, economic, social and moral values in the society. Miriam Okagbue (1994) is of the view that, "theatre informs, teaches, advices, mediates and helps resolve human problems. Theatre is also used for edification by improving the human mind and morals. However, this study will restrict itself to the social and economic impact of theatre and tourism.

As vehicles of social interaction, theatre and tourism diagnose, interpret and explain dramatic events and experiences. Jon Russell Brown (1971:144) sees theatre as, "a social institution where people meet and interact." Social institutions of every kind, according to Brown, have rules of membership and hierarchies of responsibility and reward. Every social organization too,

has some form of organization which serves to help it realize its aims, carry out its functions, protect its standards as well as ensure its future continuance. The theatre is no exception. The theatre's social role and function arise out of its relational interaction with its constituency – the community. Therefore, if it presents work which is totally unacceptable to its audience, it is bound to have no audience.

Onuora Ossie Enekwe citing Santrook (1999:9) observes that, "theatre facilitates human adjustment, helping the child to master anxieties and conflicts; tension is relived in play, making it possible for the child to cope with life's problems; play also permits the child to let off excess physical energy and to release pent-up tensions. Jean-Louis Barrault (1972:25) posits that, "theatre is an activity that is useful to the public since it purifies and revitalizes human beings and reassures them against anxiety and against solitude." The above submission becomes more imperative at no other time than now when many people are undergoing various kinds of difficulties due to the economic meltdown, economic shockwaves and other social vices pervading the society. As such, theatre has become an escape route against anxiety created by these social and economic upheavals. This also applies to tourism which is yet another tool for entertainment and pastime. No wonder tourists make extensive travels within similar milieu so as to escape from the vagaries of life.

Theatre and tourism have also been viewed as a tool for national and international integration that culminate in unification and cooperation. To this end, Emeka Nwabueze (2005:30) believes that, "theatre is an apostle of unification, amalgamation, consolidation, homogenization and concatenation." As part of its social functions, theatre through satiric performances and direct criticisms, exercise some level of control on social behaviours. It tells stories about people's behaviors, attitudes and their social interactions in a complex society where human conflicts have become commonplace. No wonder, Aristotle defines tragedy (a theatrical genre) as, "an imitation of a good action, that is complete and of a certain length, by means of a language made pleasing.... By this, vices are criticized while virtues are extolled.

Theatre and tourism are the demonstration of any action by any one or a group of people at a particular place and moment in time. Whereas theatre is the social as well as an artistic experience directed at the audience as its social entity, tourism on the other hand, is a social, artistic and aesthetic experience by people to places of natural habitats and cultural beauty. Specifically, theatre is the art and science of social relationships that attempts to discover the myth inherent in human existence, the essence of existence and the value of life – using the artistic approach.

In a bid to reach its numerous audiences, the community theatre mode becomes imperative. J. A. Alachi citing Chris Nwamuo (2008) says that, community theatre, popular theatres or theatres for the people as they are variously called, aim primarily at raising the conscience, the consciousness of

the people and awakening in them the desire for change, for development and for community action that can bring about an egalitarian society where equal opportunities exist for all the citizenry. As a mass communication media and mass transformation, community theatre was initiated by Ross Kidd and Martin Byram in the 1970s in the village of Basarwa in the West of Botswana. The purpose was to generate community action and stimulate them to solve their problems. Thereafter, community theatre has been adopted ever since in many other countries of Africa, including Nigeria as a tool for communicating rural development projects.

Community Theatre (CT), Theatre for Development (TFD), Theatre for Integrated Development (TIDE), Community Theatre for Integrated Rural Development (CTFRD) as the case may be, have been successful because they use the existing indigenous structures – meanings, languages, symbols, systems of worship, authority channels and value systems. Above all, they are an important media for channeling education and developmental materials and knowledge to the masses, using the local medium and treating issues that directly impact on the conditions of the masses for whom the programmes are designed (Perspective on Community Theatre, 2008:42).

Oga S. Abah (1990:1-10), a foremost Nigerian advocate of Theatre for Development describes the “the practice by which theatre is put at the service of the disadvantaged rural and urban poor for the purposes of discussing and working out strategies for dealing with their socio-economic conditions... this kind of theatre speaks to the people in their own language and idiom and deals with issues of direct relevance to their lives.”

Theatre for Development (TFD) programmes exist in large numbers in Nigeria and in many forms. It is used in the ivory towers as part of the academic programmes of the various tertiary institutions. Development agencies in Nigeria such as USAID, UNICEF, UNESCO, DFID, BHF, LATH, PARTH, WATER-AIDS among others, use it for promotional purposes. James Atu Alachi (2008:1) who has carried out extensive TFD projects in the Benue areas of Nigeria, explains that, “TFD is used not just to mobilize different stakeholders, particularly community members who are the end users towards organizational goals and objectives but also a tool for actively engaging all stakeholders in activities of the agencies.”

In Nigeria and other climes, “live theatre represents the most immediate and vital form of a remarkable human invention in the story and the relation it has with everyday experience in the lives of people watching” (Yomi Owope, 2002:47). Live theatre has also been and still remains the best and most interesting form of entertainment that brings both the actors and the audience into closer relationship than any other medium of mass appeal. Outside these, live theatre has been a great source of revenue to individuals, theatre groups and to the Nigerian economy in general.

Theatre since the Greek period has been a noble means of livelihood and economic empowerment. Citing Arthur Lithgrow, Norbert Oyibo Eze (2011:46) observes that, “commercial considerations completely dominated

American theatres of the 1960s and that art market was seen as one of the fastest growing markets in the United States today, yielding about seven billion dollars yearly."

With the advent of home movies, popularly known as Nollywood (Nigeria), Bollywood (India), Hollywood (America), among others, live theatre performances are now being produced as films, movies, or motion pictures, as the case may be. The implication is that, this medium has become a powerful and aesthetic means of communicating information, instruction, culture and even entertainment. As a serious but complex business, it has brought smiles on the faces of many Nigerians as an employer of labour. Thousands of Nigerians with no source of livelihood due to the high rate of unemployment now find succor in the film industry as directors, actors, makeup artists, costume designers, light designers, marketers, screenwriters, producers, and other technical personnel with living wages.

The theatre and film industry worldwide have been a high revenue earner both for individuals and governments. The indigenous film industry in Nigeria has, since the 1990s, grown into the third largest industry in the world next to Hollywood and Bollywood, generating approximately up to \$250 million a year, according to Lambert Tyem (2010:1), thereby contributing immensely to the growth and expansion of the Nigerian economy." The Nigerian movies are at the moment, churning out about 2,000 titles yearly from various sources, including biblical stories, beliefs in witchcrafts, legends, myths, rituals, folktales to cultural heritage and belief systems, among others.

In the same vein, tourism has become a popular global leisure activity, resulting in over 940 million international tourist arrivals worldwide – representing a growth of about 6.6% in 2010 compared to 2009 (Maurice Prendergast 1997). According to *The Guardian* (2009:1), "the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that up to 500,000 people are on planes at any time." Also wealthy people have always traveled to distant parts of the world, to see great buildings, works of arts, learn new languages, experience new cultures and to taste different cuisines. Even during the age-long Roman Republic, Prendergast (1997: 21) posits that places such as Baiae were popular coastal resorts for the rich. There has been an upward trend in tourism over the years, especially in the developed world, where international travel for short breaks is common. Tourists have a wide range of budgets and tastes and a wide variety of resorts and hotels have developed both nationally and internationally to cater for them. Hotel industry in particular, says John M. Dryden (1973) "is a good boost to tourism development and also to the numbers and foreign exchange receipts from tourism." It is also a rapidly growing industry having a high income-elasticity of demand.

Whereas some people prefer simple beach vacations, others want more specialized holidays, quieter resorts, family-oriented holidays or niche market-targeted destination hotels. Moreover, development in technology

and transport infrastructure such as jumbo jets, low-cost airlines and more accessible airports have made many types of tourism more affordable, thereby increasing the number of tourists worldwide.

The economic importance of tourism these days is overwhelming. Prendergast (1997: 4) opines that, "tourism brings in large amounts of income in payment for goods and services available - contributing an estimated 5% to the worldwide gross domestic product (GDP); and creates opportunities for employment in the service industries, such as airlines, cruise ships, and taxicabs; in hospitality services such as accommodation, hotels and resorts; and entertainment venues such as amusement parks, casinos, shopping malls, music venues and, indeed, theatres".

As an employer of labour, tourism creates not just hundreds and thousands of businesses, but also stands out as a global industry with major policy implications. One major characteristics of tourism, according to Smith (1995:7), "is that it is labour-intensive." He explains that, a given level of revenue or capital investment creates many more jobs in tourism than the same level of revenue or investment would in agriculture, automobile manufacturing or petrochemicals. Tourism is also an important source of national and international cash flows. In these regards, governments at all levels encourage tourism development because it generates new wealth through export sales, which creates new jobs. Governments are also concerned about the social and environmental impacts of tourism.

As a major revenue earner to many economies, John M. Dryden citing Michael Peters (1969:1) explains that:

The economic gap between rich and poor countries have widened over the past ten years. But to create new industries and to transform rural life in Asian, African, and Latin American countries is a gigantic task. The relevance of tourism to this situation is that income from international travel can bring the foreign exchange essential for major investment.

Dryden, however, notes that despite the widespread awareness of the potential benefits of tourism, little has been done in practice to provide the means for expansion of tourism in most of the developing areas of the world. Proponents of tourism in developing countries point to the foreign exchange receipts generated through this industry, and the impact of these foreign exchange receipts on gross domestic product either directly or indirectly through the operation of the expenditure multiplier (J. M. Dryden 1973: 1).

The five potential benefits of tourism identified by the Peters (1969):72) in the developing countries include:

- 1) A contribution to the balance-of-payments as an earner of hard currency;
- 2) The dispersion of development to non-industrial regions;
- 3) The creation of employment opportunities;
- 4) The effect of general economic development through the multiplier effects; and

- 5) The social benefits arising from a widening of people's interest generally in world affairs and foreign tastes.

Another important distinguishing feature of tourism which is both social and economic is the fact that tourists from developed nations to developing nations and vice versa, go to the destination countries in order to consume their products. This is in contradistinction with other exporting activities, and indeed most exchange relations, where producers and consumers are separated and rarely confront each other physically.

In furtherance of its economic gains, Stephen L. J. Smith (1995:6) admits that, tourism is a source of income to hundreds of millions of individuals worldwide. He believes that workers and employers can benefit immensely from research that would: improve the efficacy of business structure and administrative arrangements; improve the strategies for coping with the risk and uncertainty inherent in the industry; offers a firmer basis for profitable marketing; offers improvements in the terms and conditions of employment; and promotes pride; professional development and rewarding careers in the industry. Smith's submissions show the diverse gains of tourism to the different stakeholders in the industry.

In the same vein, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (1993) in co-operation with the Wharton Economic Forecasting Association (WEFA) Group adduce that:

- ❖ Tourism provides direct and indirect employment for more than 200 million people;
- ❖ The number of tourism-related jobs would rise to 350 million by 2005;
- ❖ Tourism generates 10.3 percent of the global wages (US\$1.7 trillion);
- ❖ Tourism is responsible for 10.1 percent of direct and indirect world GDP (US\$3.4 trillion); and
- ❖ Tourism accounts for 11.0 percent of all consumers spending (A Handbook of Tourism, 1995:1).

For TxSamura (2007:2), tourism is vital for many countries, due to the income generated by the consumption of goods and services by tourists, the taxes levied on businesses in the tourism industry, and the opportunity provided by working in the industry. To these extent, some NGOs and government agencies sometimes promote a specific region as a tourist destination, and support the development of a tourism industry in that area. The contemporary phenomenon, according to TxSamura, is that mass tourism may sometimes result in overdevelopment; alternative forms of tourism such as ecotourism which seek to avoid such outcomes by pursuing tourism in a sustainable way is, therefore, recommended.

Theatre and tourism are activities that individuals enjoy. Albeit, an individual experience, it is usually shared with other people. Whether traveling alone, with one other person, or with a large group, people watch plays and movies while tourists come into contact with other people and social institutions. As a result, travelers are motivated by a wide range of

desires as tourist destinations offer them romance and escape. Stephen L. J. Smith (1995:3) believes that, "knowledge of how individuals make decisions about alternative products, what sources of information they require at various stages of their decision-making, how they evaluate that information, and how they structure and interpret their experiences can offer important benefits to businesses as well as to our general understanding of the tourism experience. Understanding of the social interaction of tourists with each other and with residents and local institutions can contribute to the reduction in potential social conflicts. It may also lead to better understanding of the general social behavior and of the structure and functioning of the different societies.

Tourism, apart from enabling people make special memories by traveling away from their usual to unusual environment; traveling to see new places, experience new cultures or just to enjoy the journey; is also geography in action. This is because geography is fundamental to the selection of a development site for any tourism business (A Handbook of Tourism, 1995:5).

Sustainable tourism, *per se*, is a new concept in tourism, leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems. World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987:29) describes sustainable development as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Sustainable tourism has regard to ecological and socio-cultural carrying capacities that involves the community of the destination in tourism development planning. It also involves integrating tourism to match current economic and growth policies so as to mitigate some of the negative economic and social impacts of mass tourism.

Nigeria and other African countries are havens for tourists. Nigeria in particular, offers wide variety of tourist attractions such as extended and roomy river and ocean beaches ideal for swimming and other water sports, unique wildlife, vast tracts of virgin nature ranging from tropical forest, magnificent waterfalls, sprouting new high-rising buildings and grown cities and captivating climatic conditions in many part of the country conducive for holiday making. Other tourism attractions include traditional ways of life preserved in local customs and traditions, handicrafts and other colourful products depicting the native arts and lifestyle, including simple but friendly disposition of the citizens. Indeed, from the rain forest in the South, broad savanna woodlands in the center to a semi-desert region in the North, Nigeria offers a remarkable and enviable range of tourist attractions. These include aesthetically located beaches such as Calabar beach, Lekki beach, Eleko beach and Tarkwa bay, Yankari Game Reserve, Durbar, Obudu Ranch Resort, Argungu Fishing Festival, Eyo Festival, Atilogwu Dance, Osu Osogbo Festival, National Museums, Ohafia War Dance, Kano Dye Pits, and Leather works among others.

Nigeria's arts and cultural heritage are embedded in the country's history and diversity, legend and conquest. Tourists visiting the country will gain insights into a glorious past as well as promising future set amid the natural beauty of the diverse geographical composition of Nigeria. Nigeria's diverse art is so great that it is generally felt that all African nations should view Nigeria as the principal trustee of the most durable fruits of black artistic genius, according to Africa Travel and Nature Library (2010).

As far back as 1897, Nigerian art had reached the outside world following a British punitive expedition to Benin in which over 2,000 Benin bronzes and ivories were shipped to England and other European countries. Other old sculptures found in Nigeria were from the Southern Zaria and Benue areas. They consisted of terracotta figures and figurines made by people who achieved a high degree of cultural and artistic creativity. Another well known phase of Nigerian cultural evolution was the Igbo Ukwu bronze casting which dates back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The casts included staff heads, breastplates, pendants, ornaments, anklets, wristlets and chains. All these arts and culture are valuable attractions to date.

In essence, Nigeria is endowed with diverse and alluring natural, artistic, aesthetic and cultural attractions that can be harnessed to turn the economic fortunes of her citizens around. Austin Jacobson (2012:2) submits that, "apart from the enormous potentials and investment opportunities in Nigerian tourism and theatrical sectors, the country's investment climate at present is one of the most favourable in Africa due to political stability, enthronement of a viable democratic system, improved international relations and respect for human rights. All these factors will no doubt, enhance investment opportunities in the country. According to the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2005:2), tourism is one of the growing sectors in the Nigerian economy that was accorded priority status in 1990." In addition, and in recognition of the immense contributions of tourism to the national economy, the country instituted policies and programmes that were aimed at making Nigeria the "Ultimate Tourism Destination in Africa."

### **Prospects for Theatre and Tourism Industries**

Theatre and tourism constitute a major driving force in the socio-economic development of many developing nations of the world. They provide veritable avenues for leisure and entertainment; they create jobs; they provide ample opportunities for social engineering; and they contribute immensely to national economies, etc.

The World Tourism Organization forecasts that national and international tourism will continue to grow at an average annual rate of 4%. With the advent of e-commerce, tourism products have become one of the most traded items on the internet. Tourism products and services have easily been made available through intermediaries although tourism providers such as hotels, airlines, etc. can still sell their services directly. Technological improvements, according to WTO, are likely to make possible air-ship hotels,

based either on solar-powered airplanes or large airships. Under-water hotels such as hydropolis are expected to open in a place like Dubai in which tourists will be welcomed by even larger cruise ships and perhaps floating cities. The developments in technology and transport infrastructure such as jumbo jets, low-cost airlines and more accessible airports have made many types of tourism more affordable.

Government at all levels should encourage the theatre and tourism industries through improved fiscal policies, including incentives offered to theatre artists, hoteliers, real estate developers, and other activities related to both theatre and tourism. Infrastructure and utilities like airports of international standard, roads, water supplies and deep water harbor facilities for cruise ship visitors should be encouraged. Staff training, promotional activities and physical planning and controls through legislative provision within the industry will help to ameliorate the problems inherent in the theatre and tourism industries.

Nigeria as one of the tourism destinations in the world can create investment opportunities in the industry through:

- Establishment of museums and preservation of monuments;
- Wildlife tourism resources;
- Development of picnic and camping sites at strategic locations;
- Building of tourist lodges;
- Building of reception centers at national/physical attractions;
- Provision of cable bus systems to take tourists through the rugged but scenic terrain of the mountains in places like Kanyang, Obudu and Mambila Plateau Construction lodge cabins for expedition tourist and rangers;
- Establishment of ultra modern hotels and resorts near waterfalls, spring, caves, and temperate climate areas such Obudu, Jos and Mambila plateau;
- Establishment of holiday resorts along the coasts;
- Development of amusement parks, entertainment facilities and shopping services;
- Development of arts and crafts which constitute symbol of the people's cultural values and love for nature.

Like the tourism industry, theatre or the film industry is a powerful and aesthetic medium of communication through which information; instruction, culture and even entertainment could be disseminated to a heterogeneous audience. It is an art form that has brought succor to many families as an employer of labour and a big leap to the economies of many nations, including Nigeria as a revenue earner. Nigerian governments at all level should, therefore, adequately encourage and support theatre or the film industry not only as a revenue earner but also as an important tool for good governance. Reason being that, through this medium government can

communicate to the governed; know their problems, needs and solution to them. They should also give financial support to the industry.

Theatre on the other hand, has become a unifying force among Nigerians and an effective vehicle for propagating culture and people's way of life. As Enahora (1989:101), aptly avers, cultural development "is an integral part of national development" (101). It has also been suggested by a renown Nollywood star, Kanayo O. Kanayo (2010:3) that, "film can be an effective means of re-branding Nigeria through political, economic, social, cultural and religious campaigns.

## **Conclusion**

This study has revealed that both theatre and tourism provide entertainments and opportunities for information dissemination. As social phenomena, they act as vehicles for social interactions by diagnosing, interpreting and explaining the dramatic events and experiences in the society. Whereas the various tourism destinations and attractions act as location and materials for theatrical productions, tourists on the other hand, are treated to different theatrical performances as a form of entertainment and relaxation.

Arts and culture are the major resources of theatre and tourism. The thought patterns, attitudes, modes of communications, celebrations, etc. exhibited by an individual or individuals within a geographical orbit, express the cultural quotient of the community. Cultural expressions are the harmonization of the diverse habitual norms and values manifested by individuals in a social setup. In this way, Austine E. Aniagala (2005:2) believes that, "the distinct cultural attributes of a people ensure their place and survival in history." Culture, to him, "serves as a springboard for the development of 'rounded' characters within a geographical environment." Through culture individuals imbibe the stipulated ways of life and practically express themselves emotionally, politically, socially and spiritually.

Theatre and tourism have also been found to be major revenue-earners for the economies of most developed and developing nations. They are as well great employers of labour, especially in this era of economic meltdown or shockwaves besieging even the once buoyant nations like Britain, Greece, Spain, Russia, Germany, France, among others.

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