

Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development in Nigeria – Towards Maximizing Museum Potentials

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Abstract

Nigeria is a nation replete with colourful cultures and traditions most of whose tangible evidence lies in the museum for public education and enjoyment. Museum houses and promotes cultural heritage, promotes tourism and the image of the nation. It is an attractive economic development institution. When the nation's parastatals in charge of museums take the economic standpoint into consideration and fight to lift museums in the country to greater heights, museum potentials for tourism and development will be maximized. This paper, therefore, examines cultural heritage and tourism development in Nigeria and the need to maximize museum potentials. Reviews show that museums are enriching public centres that can promote national economy through tourism. It is recommended that museum contribution to tourism be studied more for deeper appreciation and upgrade of the institution.

Introduction

Nigeria is endowed with enormous mineral and human resources. It is also a country that has rich cultural heritage. Basically, the country has always concentrated more on petroleum as its crucial and major means of income, harbouring the fear that without this resource, the nation's economy may be shaky, but the truth is that many natural and mineral resources abound in the country, some already discovered while many are still laying inertly, waiting to be discovered and utilized. Nevertheless, agricultural and trading sectors still play great role in the economy of the nation. And going by the statement 'giant of Africa,' with which the nation is referred to in Africa, one will realise that indeed Nigeria is great particularly in such spheres as human population, human resources, diverse cultural heritages and traditions and many more.

The three major cultural groups in the country are the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. There exist some other minor ethnic groups numbering over two hundred and which include the Ijaw, Urhobo, Tiv, Igala, Itshekiri, Fulani and so on. Each of these ethnic groups has their distinct culture and way of life all of which came together to make up a nation very rich in cultural heritage with distinct cultural patrimonies and indigenous crafts and artworks. Culture is basic for a nation's growth and development, hence many African leaders fell back on their individual national cultural heritage, standing firmly on it to build their foundation, renew their identity and organize themselves to tackle their situation after their emergence from colonial rule. These leaders realised that their culture is part of their history and therefore tell, more vividly, the story of who they are and where they come from.

The people of Nigeria did not abandon their traditions and values completely during their interactions with the colonial masters though some aspects of their behaviour and cultures such as dressing, marriage patterns, family structures and the likes were somehow affected. Before, during and after colonial rule, many communities within the nation now called Nigeria have always lived a traditional life and had always believed in their culture and tradition. Traditional Nigerian communities have belief systems deeply rooted in values. There were challenges quite alright, but it is important to emphasize that the people tried hard to resist certain foreign changes in their culture because the proposed changes by the white men were not compatible with already existing value systems and cultures. Commonly, shrines, palaces and homes were the places where valuable collections of tangible cultural objects were found in large numbers. These were used as items of religious worships, items of daily existence, for protection, warfare, cults, security and so on. Most of these cultural heritage items were preserved by the people before the coming or introduction of modern museums in the country. In the words of Afigbo and Okita (1985 :17), "apart from the fact that Nigerians themselves have produced most of the antiquities found in their museums today, people in different parts of the country had collections, for different purposes, prior to European contact or, more specifically, before the establishment of British colonial control".

Formal organization, preservation and display of valuable items of cultural heritage in a building formerly called museum came into being in Nigeria with the effort and contributions of some British expatriates in Nigeria such as K.C. Murray, E.H. Duckworth and Bernard Fagg. These men recognized the presence, abundance and value of rich cultural patrimonies in the nation. They felt the need to preserve these cultural heritages and works of art and made stringent efforts to preserve and organize them in a way that will benefit the people and the world; some even wrote papers on them thereby popularizing them and creating a platform for proper documentation and knowledge of cultural patrimonies in the country. According to Afigbo and Okita (1985:17), “in discussing the contributions of these individuals to the establishment of museums in Nigeria, the activities of these three stand out for they, perhaps, more than any others, played the main part in laying a solid foundation for the development of Nigerian museums”. The development of Esie Museum in 1945 and subsequently the Jos museum in April 1952 set the stage for formal museum establishments in Nigeria, and today, there are museums in almost every state of the Federation including national, state and university-based museums.

Globally and especially in the developed countries, there are varieties and different categories of museums for various purposes and that serve different interests such as natural history museums, science museums, art museums, history museums, children’s museums etc. Museums in Nigeria basically revolve around three or four major types of museums namely ethnographic, archeological, colonial and war museums. A visit to any one of these numerous Nigerian museums, especially the archaeological and ethnographic museums, will really make one to understand the country’s rich heritage and cultural traditions. Museums, by preserving cultural heritage of the nation play great roles in the success of the nation and improve tourism development.

Conceptual Framework

This paper revolves around four key concepts namely: culture, cultural heritage, tourism development and museum. It is hoped that by attempting the definition of these concepts, the basic issues being addressed in this paper will become more explicit.

According to International Council of Museums (ICOM: 1980), culture is the sum total of wildlife and scenic parks, sites of scientific or historical importance, national monuments, historic buildings, works of art, literature and music, oral traditions and museum collections, together with their documentation. Culture refers to the beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of a particular nation or people (Encarta: 2009). Likewise, Nwabueze (2004) said that it is a social inheritance that gives structure to our lives. This is another way of saying that our future is our past or that there is no future without a past. Lawuyi and Ukpokolo (2012:211) state that if a culture contains within itself permanent human possibilities then it is necessary to advertise it, identify with it and encourage socialization into it, otherwise they are, indeed, not the memorials we expect them to be: the embodiment of the link of culture with morality and of the present with the future. The most common definition is that it is a total way of life of a given people in a society.

Cultural heritage is the unique and irreplaceable resource of a people which are passed on from generation to generation. It is the peoples' way of life and in a broad sense, their traditional behaviour including the ideas, arts and artifacts, festivals, which are passed on from one generation to another. Omekwu (2003) observed that cultural identity are those attributes, behavioural patterns, lifestyles, social structures and norms that distinguish a people from other people. Cultural heritage is broadly divided into tangible and intangible cultural heritages. Grouped as tangible cultural heritage are works of art, crafts, artifacts, monuments, buildings etc., whereas intangible cultural heritage includes language, knowledge, folklore, beliefs etc. In the opinion of Sekler (2001), "tangible cultural heritage has the great advantage over its intangible counterpart, such that with proper care it will remain authentic over centuries. As long as historic monuments remain without falsification and misleading imitations, they will, even in a neglected state, create a sense of continuity that is an essential part of cultural identity". In summary, cultural heritage can be seen as a people's way of life, their traditional behaviour, including their ideas, indigenous crafts and artifacts which are passed down from one generation to another and which are thought worthy of being sustained and maintained. People's history, geography, language, behaviour, festivals all revolve around cultural heritage. In

this era of rapid global change, it is the culture of the people that is keeping them firm and serves as a solid foundation when other things are shaky.

Museum has been defined as an institution that collects, studies, exhibits and conserves objects for cultural and educational purposes (Okpoko, 2011:1). Museum has done so much towards the collection and preservation of cultural heritage in the country. According to Hoffman (2006:44) museums are dedicated to preserving the past for the future. The National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) is the national body of museums which controls and sees to the wellbeing of museums in Nigeria. The body is led by a Director-General (DG) who is also the chief executive and is assisted by other directors. The management of NCMM has six departments namely, administration and supplies, finance and accounts, museums, monuments, heritage and sites, research, planning and publications, educational services (Okpoko, 2006:67).

The definition of tourism will be better appreciated if we understand who a tourist really is. A tourist can be defined as someone who temporarily visits a place away from home either for rest, sightseeing, health or for the fun of it. Encarta (2009) defined a tourist as someone who travels in order to take advantage of a particular service or benefit that is not available at home. World Tourism Organization (WTO) also defined 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". Having seen who the tourist is, we can now define tourism. Frankline (2003:11), opined that tourism is not synonymous with travel, it is a modern stance to the world. According to Lickotich and Jenkins (1997:10), tourism is, however, a recent invention. The word was unknown in the English language until the recent century. Tourism is defined as a journey, a passage through time (UNESCO: 2006). It is a tour for one reason or another but with a motive to benefit the traveler or tourist. Tourism is the act of travelling for a short term from one nation to another for recreation, education or rest. Frew and White (2011:181) stated that tourism can be important to a people's sense of national identity because it serves to operationalize the stories, the history and the linkages with the land. In the opinion of Lickotich and Jenkins (1997:2), there are a number of features

associated with tourism which are quite explicit. For example, tourism implies that a person undertakes journey: the journey may be for a day or it may be a journey within a national boundary, therefore, constituting a domestic tourist trip or might be a journey which crosses an international boundary, therefore, being classified as an international trip.

Museums and Cultural Heritage in Nigeria: An Overview

Nigeria has many endowments that made it worthy of being called a tourist destination. What with the variety of tourist attractions which includes rivers and oceans, different types of beaches, unique wildlife and zoos, rich natural and tropical forests, executive hotels and guest houses, magnificent waterfalls and good weather most of the time. There are also many festivals, unique artworks and crafts which draw tourists to the nation and there are museums too. McKercher et al, (2004) observed that many cultural attractions encompass a combination of unique features of the destination that reflects its history and surrounding environment. The first museum to be developed in Nigeria was believed to be the Esie museum which came into being in 1945 with the discovery by a hunter of tombstone images of human beings. The museum is today a national museum. But then, the Antiquities Commission under K.O. Dike and Kenneth Murray and the astute archaeological activities of Bernard Fagg as the directors of antiquities contributed a lot in the development of formal Nigerian museums. In 1952, Bernard Fagg established the Jos Museum in Plateau State. This museum is special in the sense that it has a special theme for illustrating the prehistoric nature of Nigeria. Also, it tried to capture the artistic and architectural designs of native huts in Northern Nigeria, popularly called the 'MOTNA' meaning Museum of Traditional Nigerian Architecture. Jos museum has some of the best collections of Nigerian artifacts. In the opinion of Okopko (2011: 56), tributes should be paid to the founders of the National Museum, Jos for incorporating the beautiful hilly landscape and trees in the construction plan of the museum.

Also in the bid for unity and further expansion of museums in the nation, the Federal government of the nation, after the Nigeria-Biafra war which started in 1967 and ended in 1970, made efforts to unite the nation and therefore sought ways to bring the nation together and so

instituted four national unity museums which are situated in Maiduguri, Sokoto, Ibadan and Enugu thereby increasing museums in Nigeria though not all of them thrived to this day. The aim was to encourage national unity and development through cultural awareness and orientation. Today, museums are scattered all over the nation. Many of these Nigerian museums boast of the finest collections of cultural patrimonies, unique arts and crafts as well as rich archaeological relics, including the famous Benin bronze artworks, Terra-Cotta head from the old Nok culture, the famous Igbo Ukwu bronzes discovered by Thurstan Shaw, the famous archaeologist.

In Nigeria, a great number of cultural objects are preserved in the museums. Museum is an institution set out to collect rare objects of human existence. They are dedicated to helping people understand the world in which they live. They also help people understand the history of human civilizations, a nation's cultural differences and similarities, technological advancement, indigenous crafts and styles of the people from generation to generation and therefore should be supported. Normally, the functions of museums to the society are often categorized under three major headings, namely education, research and entertainment, but their job to the society surpasses these. As educational institutions, they offer unparalleled opportunities for self-directed learning and exploration by people of diverse ages, interests, backgrounds, and abilities. They are public gathering places where visitors can be entertained, inspired, and introduced to new ideas. They enrich local cultural life and make communities more appealing places to live in.

There is a wealth of cultural heritage in Nigeria following the multifarious cultural and ethnic groups in the country. History, geography, ethnic configurations, languages etc, all revolve around cultural heritage of the people of Nigeria. Museum has done so much to offer in the collection and preservation of cultural heritage in Nigeria.

Maximizing Museum Potentials for Tourism Development in Nigeria:

Okpoko (2011:11) stated that the museum is an important vehicle through which people become aware of their cultural identity, their

relationship with their environment, their past and the need to infuse certain basic values of the past into the various elements of contemporary practices where such past values are still relevant to the present day needs and aspirations. Also, the museum objects exhibited bring about a feeling of ethnic pride (Conn: 2011). Museum as a tourist centre has the opportunity to influence and inspire both the people within a nation and tourists from outside the country positively. Basically, tourism, through the museum which can also be referred to as cultural tourism, has the capacity to advertise the nation's cultural heritage to the outside world. It also encourages interpersonal relationship as tourists and the locals in the museum are likely to share views, get acquainted and become friends or business partners. Witcom (2003:1) observed that the last ten years or so have seen a heated debate between those who argue that museums need to change and those who defend its traditional practices.

Nigeria is fortunate enough to have many tourist attractions which includes parks, beaches, hotels and guest houses, lakes, monuments, etc. Largely too, the nation has good number of learned men and women and so it is credible to say that most enlightened Nigerians are aware that museums can be counted upon as one of the tourist ventures of the nation. What is being said here is that there is need to create awareness about museum potentials and subsequently maximize them. This should start by restructuring and resuscitating the Nigerians museums, particularly those that are not in good state. Many museums in Nigeria, especially those in rural communities are of low standard and lack basic amenities and good access roads. Some museums are also in shambles and have such challenges as inadequate power supply, poor funding, theft and insecurity. Security of collections in the museums should be a major priority if museum potentials are to be maximized and harnessed for tourism development. Many valuable artefacts have been carted away times without number. Classic examples include the Igbo Ukwu museum, National Museum, Benin and Nok Culture that have lost valuable artefacts to thieves.

These is an urgent need to beef-up security in the museums and install necessary gadgets such as air conditioners, stands and showcases for the mounting of artifacts and tidy the museum environments to make them attractive and interesting to visitors. The

employment of staff that are qualified to do museum jobs with zeal and professionalism is also necessary. In fact, the employment of staff who will restructure the museums and call the attention of presiding bodies over museums in Nigeria when things go wrong is what we are talking about. In fact, all hands must be on deck, particularly at this period that the nation is looking for other sources of income. Museums in Nigeria hold great promises for tourism development and for national development.

In maximizing and revitalizing museums in Nigeria for tourism, the staff and management of the museums should take steps to revive their museums and make them presentable and inviting. For example, there is need to ensure that the flowers are well kept and grasses trimmed always to create a clean and tidy environment. All damaged furnitures should be refurbished immediately and without delay. It is vital that they bear in mind that the hallmark of every good museum is its serenity and cleanliness. There is need to clean the objects, showcases and the floor regularly. There is also need to provide clean refuse bins for refuse at designated places where visitors and tourists can see them. Some museums in Nigeria have dirty walls or wall paintings that are old. Such should be repainted. No visitor will be willing to visit a rusty museum or one that is unattractive. It is a wrong notion to believe that it is only the collections inside the museums that matter to the visitors.

Concerning display and exhibition of artifacts, museum management must realize that this is a serious business. The manner and how these are exhibited including the labels which must be clear and readable equally matter a lot. It is imperative that the objects are systematically and coherently displayed and in a way that the visitor will follow its story line or theme. They should find a way of making earlier displays less boring either by their being changed, reshuffled or tidied up to become more attractive to the people. All stuffed objects such as animals, masquerades or human figures must not be torn in any form or wear miserable looks or have damp or stuffy smells. Again, the museums should be properly lit. This is where Electricity Distribution Companies of Nigeria come in. In an effort to maximize and standardize Nigerian museums for tourism development, these companies must ensure regular power supply to museums in the country. After all, their statutory function is to

develop and maintain an efficient and economical system of electricity supply throughout the federation. It is high time they started living up to expectation at least for the important and revenue generating sectors.

There should be museum craft shops that are adequately stocked with meaningful replicas of Nigerian cultural objects, indigenous crafts, artworks and postcards for sale to tourists who always demand for souvenir. It is important also to emphasize that such shops must be manned by polite and competent shop keepers that will satisfy the taste of visitors, including foreign tourists. Museum kitchens should also be first class ones with good, clean and polite cooks. Very important too, is the security of visitors and tourists. Tourists visiting the museum would like to be guaranteed of their safety, including those of their property. Therefore, the security guards employed in Nigerian museums must be well trained, agile and mannered. They should be bold enough to handle security issues in and around the premises. It must be noted that many tourists are well educated and often have sophisticated tastes, resulting in the demand for better services and politeness from museum staff and guides. Today, tourism has become a popular global leisure activity and many nations are restructuring, repositioning and advertising their tourism attractions to attract more tourists for their economic development. Tourism can either be domestic or international and it is also a major source of income for many countries. Since most cultural museums in Nigeria are haven for cultural heritages, it becomes imperative that the potentials embedded in the use of museums for tourism be maximized so as to create public awareness and bring economic benefits to the nation.

Furthermore, museums offer many benefits to their visitors, their communities, and society as a whole. As educational institutions, they offer unparalleled opportunities for self-directed learning and exploration by people of diverse ages, interests, backgrounds and abilities. They are public gathering places where visitors can be entertained, inspired, and introduced to new ideas. Museums enrich local cultural life and make communities more appealing places to live and to visit. Cultural objects in our museum today came from Nigerian homes, shrines and communities. Tourism provides a means of encountering cultures and traditions of people of all sorts.

Nigerian's varied cultures displayed in the museums are a means of promoting tourism in the country when duly realized and utilized. Through tourism the museum equally provides jobs to the residents of the country that are being visited. Normally, tourists tend to have enough cash that they intend to spend in the country they are visiting.

Benefits of Museums to the Nation

Museums in most parts of the world today have indeed become valuable institutions that support individuals and societies in defining their distinctive identities. They have tremendous potentials to intervene ethically, intellectually and creatively to enrich people's lives (Anthropology Today, vol. 25 no. 6). Despite the successes that museums have already recorded in their major role of collecting, preserving and exhibition of tangible and rare cultural heritages, they have a lot more to offer in terms of national development through tourism. Visiting a museum is refreshing and it creates an avenue for socialization. No matter the purpose of visit, museum is a form of relaxation point as most people emerge from museum happy and satisfied with what they encounter. Negative beliefs and misunderstanding of the institution is dispelled when museum is visited. This is because there are some in the society who do not understand the role of museums in the country and therefore criticize their efforts.

Museums provide an effective way of learning by providing conducive and informal learning opportunities. Museum visit also inspires and awakens the spirit of creativity and ideas for new innovations. In museums, people get creative and acquire new attitudes towards art, and values to improve themselves and the nation. A visit to a museum can expose tourists and museum visitors to in-depth information on a subject, and the nature of the museum in which they are. Again, for a nation such as Nigeria, museums can build her economic prosperity and support the economy or augment other sectors of the economy. Through tourism, museums have the ability to influence positively the capacity to reflect both continuity and change while preserving cultural and natural heritage of the nation. Singh (2008:175) states that tourism has a variety of economic impacts. Tourists contribute to sales, profits, jobs, tax revenues and

income in an area. Thus, there is need for the government to re-examine the positions and achievements of most Nigerian museums starting from their inception. Evaluating museum benefits, its potentials and contributions will no doubt benefit the nation. Museums goals have expanded to include the actions that will benefit the people in many other unique ways. In pursuit of these goals, many museums have expanded their physical facilities and programmes and refocused their missions to include the public interest in their plans. For example, many of them have gone ahead to build and manage beautiful museum kitchens, craft shops and libraries in their museum environment. Examples of museums with such facilities include National Museum, Onikan, Lagos, Museum of National Unity, Enugu and Jos National Museum and some others across the nation. It is important that the government and museum practitioners start making effort to reorganize and maximize museum potential in every way possible. Museums have been found to be dedicated to helping people understand the world in which they live. Given the above discussion, we have seen that museums in Nigeria are necessary for national and tourism development because they encourage continuity and change as well as host and exhibit artifacts of national unity thereby repeatedly developing national pride and exhibiting, in an attractive manner, the nation's rich cultures, traditions and customs. Kavanagh (2005) observed that the most successful museums have been those that have encouraged and provided social interaction in the society.

Conclusions

Embodied in growth of any nation that is richly endowed in tourism, is the capacity to export the captivating heritage resources and at the same time promote their values to the economy. Museum holds a lot of potentials for tourism development and national growth. Its activities vary, but include gallery talks, special exhibition auditorium programmes, courses, gallery games and creative art classes and so many more. Many developing countries are fast realizing the impact of tourism in their economy and therefore have increased their effort to develop all their nations' tourism potentials. Tourism development, through the museum, is a sure tool towards promoting the heritage and pride of Nigeria, enhancing her economic

growth, alleviating poverty, providing job opportunities and contributing to other numerous national development goals. That is why it is essential that Nigerian government must realize the place of museum in tourism and the importance of the institution in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage and therefore do all they can to restore it to enviable standard. When museums are encouraged, they will begin to yield greater revenue and these revenues will augment the ones derived from other tourist attractions in the country and make the nation richer and healthier.

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