Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.2 No.1 March, 2019; p.g. 8 – 14 ; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)

EXPLORING CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A STIMULUS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract
This paper examined how cultural heritage can be a stimulus or catalyst for sustainable development in Nigeria. Economic diversification through culture and tourism should be seen as alternative source of revenue generation rather than the overdependence on crude oil as the only source of revenue generation in Nigeria. It is important to note that Guatemala, Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil and some other countries in Europe have used culture as alternative source of revenue. It is time for the Nigerian government and its people to explore the drive and vision to harness its rich cultural heritage as a source of income generation and employment opportunity. If the Nigerian government explores her rich cultural heritage, tourism and carnival potentials creatively it will bring back foreigners to the country to enhance investment and widen the revenue base of the nation. The study adopted the descriptive design. It drew upon primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include oral information and testimonies. Newspapers and magazines reports were also used in conjunction with official records in government publications. Secondary sources include relevant books. The researcher made use of direct observation method; all the pieces of information so gathered were subjected to critical historical evaluation.

Keywords: *Economic Diversification, Stimulus, Cultural Heritage, Sustainable Development, Nigeria.*

Introduction

Culture is the total way of life of a people that is transferred from one generation to the other and that differentiates one people from the other. Culture brings out the cultivation, refinement, sophistication, elegance, background, education, enlightenment, learning, taste, discernment, beauty, civilization, customs and lifestyle of a people. Culture can be both materials and non-material. Culture is one of the most important factors of economic growth, contributing immensely to the growth of many countries' economies around the globe. Today in Nigeria, the Federal Government is diversifying the source of revenue generation of the country beyond crude oil overdependence. Diversification of the Nigerian economy means that the Nigeria's economy will cease to depend on crude oil for 95 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). With economic diversification through culture, agriculture and manufacturing, the Nigerian economy will be on the path to become a stronger global economic power. If Nigeria continues to diversify her economic path, the struggle to create a middle class and win the future through innovation would have been a lot easier. Any serious drive about diversification of the Nigeria's economy must include the revival of the culture and tourism sector locally. Today the Federal Government seem to clearly understand this and is poised to maximize the cultural heritage potential in the country by harnessing the revenue potential in culture.

Culture ensures creativity among a people, e.g., arts and craft works that promote human development, science, cultural succession and civilization, as well as fashion designing. Culture promotes science, arts and technology. Culture carries with it a framework of meaning and interpretation that enables people and groups to integrate themselves and their activities into a meaningful and better creative society. There is a great relationship between culture and economic development. The cultural heritage of a people if effectively explored should be the fulcrum and support for development. Culture comprises four components, that is, the material, institutional, philosophical and creative aspects that propel creation as vectors for development. The material has to do with tools, clothing, food, medicine, utensils, housing etc. The institutional is about political, social, legal and economic structures created to help achieve material objective. The philosophical component of culture in concerned with ideas, beliefs, and values while the creative component is principally about literature (oral and written), visual and performing arts. It is

important to note that culture is the matrix, the mold in which an entire society is cast. (Tomoloju, 2018:24). For example, the NOK culture people created iron tools and weapons, the ancient Ife artists created terra-cotta and bronze heads of great repute. The Benin kingdom ancient artist produced royal art for the court of the Oba of Benin. The Igbo-Ukwu culture produced metallic artworks that flourished as early as the 9th century (Ezinwa, 2015:43)

These centres of early civilization in Nigerian history produced great works of arts and development. It is important to note that today in Nigeria the federal government diversification drive toward exploring our rich cultural heritage across the six geo-political zones is forging a new economic route for the people through harnessing culture and tourism development. Nigeria has a rich cultural heritage in dressing, greetings, eating, music, dancing, rituals, worshipping and relating with their God. It is important for Nigerians to promote their cultural heritage in various possible ways, because this is the only unique identity we have as a nation, race and people. Every ethnic group in Nigeria has the responsibility and right to promote their cultural heritage immensely. This is the reason all over the world cultural festivals continue to be in existence and it will continue to give people pleasure to support always their cultural heritage all over the world.

Today in Nigeria, festivals like Ogun New Yam festival and masquerading are about the promotion of African traditional culture, "For any river that forgets its source will dry". Our cultural heritage, history, identity and tradition are our being and until we come to terms with our being, technology will elude us. Everywhere you find yourself you should learn to promote your culture and heritage. Nigerians in the Diaspora should also promote our culture through their dressing and language. Over the years Nigeria's cultural heritage, like the Yoruba fuji dance, Igbo atilogwu dance in Anambra State, Ikorodo, Ojile, Okwe, Igede in Nsukka cultural area, egwu Ogene in Udi, Enugu, Ezeagu zone, odabara in Nkanu area and many festival dances across Nigeria's cultural troupes have always thrilled and entertained august and esteemed audience with performances.

Nigerians should learn to conserve and preserve their national monuments, like the National Arts Theater and the Tafawa Balewa Square. They should not be sold out, selling them off means that we are wiping out our history and heritage. These are facilities we cannot be equated to money. The National Arts Theater was specifically built to host the second Black African Arts Festival named Festival Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in January/February, 1977, where all black people across the globe gathered to celebrate the uniqueness of the black race. In Lagos, the National Arts Theater is seen sitting in sheer majesty and splendor, as you cruised along the road leading into the edifice and numerous trees beautifying the arena. A few of the trees have grown into natural umbrella making their sheds good homes to workers and guests escaping the oppressive midday heat. Towards its main entrance, the theater stands like an old lady aging with grace. Everything about it brings home striking memories of its personality way back in 1977 when it became ready for the famous FESTAC 77. In other clime like the United States, when CNN is show-casing the United States, what you first see is the Statue of Liberty; that is their national icon. For Nigeria our icon is the National Theater (Omegoh, 2017:18-19). The National Theater house two 700 capacity cinema halls, the VIP lounge, the 5,000 capacity conference/banquet halls, exhibition hall 1 and 2. All of them had clean water running and all the facilities were in good shape. The National Theater has the best parking lots and toilet facilities in the country. The General Manager, Mr. Uko, a professional Cultural Manager, has turned the place around within his first year in office.

Exploring Cultural Heritage as a Catalyst to Sustainable Development in Nigeria

In line with the economic diversification agenda of both the federal and state governments, Nigeria at this point in time needs to diversify her revenue generating sources to real sectors as tourism and culture to boost the internal generating revenue resource rather than depending on crude oil money from the Niger Delta region which is infested with violent militancy activities. The government needs to explore our rich cultural heritage and the untapped tourism potential to boost the internal generated revenue. In Igboland, the southeast geo-political zone of Nigeria, the Igbere people of Bende Local Government Area of Abia State seem to clearly understand this and are poised to maximize their cultural heritage. A prominent son of the area and former Governor of Abia State, Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu made harnessing the revenue potential in culture, the thrust of his message during the 2019 Igbere cultural festival held at Neya camp carnival village, Igbere on January 2nd, 2019 . According to Kalu (2019) "Culture should be seen as alternative source of revenue generation". The Igbere carnival was aimed to replicate exactly what other countries in the world are doing, to show case their culture to the world.

As Kalu (2019) aptly pointed out by hosting the Igbere carnival, the Orji Uzor Kalu Foundation (OUKF) has heeded the clarion call of President Buhari that Nigerians must find ways to bring foreigners back to the country to enhance investment and widen the revenue base of the nation. The Igbere cultural carnival was a sort of tourism to attract revenue earners in the country just as it is obtained in South Africa. The federal government needs to support cultural festivals and carnivals by giving it requisite logistics and institutional support to boost tourism and increase the nation's revenue base. The government and the people should build five-stars hotels in the area to boost the Igbere carnival. This will make Igbere to be a unique centre of carnival in Igboland and Nigeria at large, as culture should be used as a major source of revenue generation. Furthermore, institutionalizing masquerade carnival in Igboland could be major revenue earner for the region; there are great potential possibilities inherent in cultural festivals for tourism and investments.

Cultural festival fiesta and entertainment industry bring people across the globe under one roof, to appreciate and celebrate the cultural diversity of Nigeria. During the Igbere festival fiesta, over 20 traditional dance troupes including the globally acclaimed "Nkwa Umuagbogho" Maiden dance troupe from Afikpo, Ebonyi State, which was first to perform, followed by the "Oji Anya bia lere" of Amasiri, also from Ebonyi State was present. Other dance troupes include "Umuhu Ezechi" war dance and several others from Igbere clan were on hand to entertain people. There were also delegation of dance troupe from Amasiri and Akaeze in Ebonyi State, as well as Mpu in Aninri Local Government Area of Enugu. Culture can boost Nigeria's tourism potentials (Okey, 2019:25). Tourism is the practice of travelling to and visiting places for recreation. Tourism is also the mobility of people from place to place for the purpose of relaxation. Tourism boosts hotels, hospitality, business and development of the country.

The federal government's agenda for economic development through culture and tourism should recognize the fact that tourism relies on resources from other professions for its main stay. Tourism taps into cultural heritage and creative industry of the people of Nigeria. Cultural heritage and tourism provides education in an informal way. It also facilitates socialization among hosts and guests even to the extent of acting as bridge-builder across cultures. In this connection, exploring cultural heritage and tourism sometimes leads to business partnership, thereby yielding economic dividends. (Tomoloju, 2019:24).

Igboland is endowed with tourism potentials which include the undulating hills at Udi/Enugu, Culture, caves, clement weather, new yam festivals and its variety of famous masquerades such as, Adaka, Njaba, Igbalyabo-ukwu, Nwaahashi, Agu-iyi and the Atilogwu dance troupe. They serve the purpose of entertainment, fun and harassment, music, dance and money-making. Other cultural expressions among the Igbo include kolanut (oji) culture, Isiagu traditional attire and Igbo title culture, such as ofala, Ogbuefi, Ozo title taking festivals are all notable festivals as tools for cultural expression that are touristic attractions and as well as the Igbo-ukwu culture and wonderful arts works that express the Igbo civilization and cultural succession (Ezinwa, 2017). In Northern Nigerian, the Yankari game reserve, the Babilla and Jos Plateau provide travelers a lot of recreation, pleasure and amusement. In Yoruba land, the Argungu fishing festival and different Durba display among others are popular tourist attractions. The Ikogosi wonder warm water spring, Eri Ijesha amazing and astonishing water fall, as well as the Osun Osogbo awesome festival and a lot of other marvelous sites and festivals are famous in the south west geo-political zone.

It is also important to note that Ondo State hosts one of the oldest historical evidence of human habitations in West Africa, that is, the Iwo Eleru cave in Isarun, a village between Ilara Mokun and Igbara-Oke, along Akure-Ilesa road. Professor Thurstan Shaw of the University of Ibadan excavated human fossils from this site in 1965. The radio-carbon dating showed that man lived in the cave 11,289 years ago, that is about 9200 BC. This archaeological finding is a source of pride to Ondo State and a major cultural and touristic asset to the study of the foundational elements of human civilization. The Iwo Elera early men produced tools and utensils before the Neo lithic Age about 6,000 years ago (Tomoloju, 2019:24).

Likewise, in Yorubaland, the Owo Bronze sculpture holds a strategic place in ancient art history in Nigeria because it seems to mark a transitional phase between Ife and Benin. The Obitun Bridal Dancers of Ondo and their counterparts, the Orosun Bridal Dancers of Owo are beautiful experiences in the performing art of dance. The cultural heritage and tourism potential of Osun Osogbo in Yorubaland; is a global African traditional faith, its local strife and expanding vista is of great repute. According to Jibril and Ayedun (2019) if you are a first-timer to the festival you might be surprised at the turnout of white people at the grove on Osun day. Europeans mostly came as curious scholars and filmmakers. Those who came with religion intent were mostly Germans and Japanese devotees. The vast majority of Diaspora devotees also come from Latin America, Colombians, Mexicans, Venezuelans and Brazilians. In religion, Brazilians and the Yoruba have a shared interest. Listen to Clara Nunes' 1970's ode to orixas or one of Caetano Veloso's numbers or

Clementina de Jesus' song of praise. All are replete with words that invoke Yoruba traditional religion imagery and symbols. Axe (ase), Xango (Sango), Ogun (ogun), Oxala (Oshanla) and Oxum (Oshun). It is also important to note that the Afro-Brazilian tie was strengthened further in 2018 with the state of Bahia's recognition of Yoruba as an official language and African History as part of its school curriculum. This development is open sesame for Ogun traditional religion, which in the last decade has attracted followership in Europe and Latin America, to make further inroads in to South America (Jubril and Oyedun, 2019:24).

In the same vein, Olusun Adigun (2019), the Baba Osun of Osogbo, who frequently travel to the Americas to promote and propagate Yoruba traditional religion consider the Osun Osogbo festival as a cultural development of good omen. The festival creates more awareness and makes people benefit more in the religion as they will know the Yoruba language which is the language of the religion. The yeye Osun Adesiyan is always in the process and practice of divining, while a priestess observes the signs. This tradition practice attracts temple and devotees entering the temple inside the grove. The Osun Osogbo also has the awe-inspiring sculptures inside the grove that attract the interest of tourists. The Diasporan devotees also visit the wonderful Osun River to worship its fertility goddess. The Principal priest of Osun Osogbo always promote Osun cultural heritage to the world. He always educates and teaches people the practice of the African Traditional Religion. He is also a practicing Balalawo and Babalorisa. He has many god children in Latin American countries of Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela and Argentina. He usually conducts indoctrination in their houses while some travel down to Nigeria. Unfortunately, many born again Christians in Nigeria regard this spirituality as pagan worship idol and shrine, while some ignorant Christians refer them as heathen – paganism, while they spiritually worship a foreign God of Christianity or Islam. However, the Christian God is the true God and he is the maker of all things and cannot be a foreigner or stranger in any part of the universe. It is important to note that the Osun Osogbo Cultural heritage and tourism potential if properly explored is a catalyst to sustainable development of the south west region and Nigeria at large.

In 2004, Gani Adams founded Olokun Festival Foundation (OFF) with which he annually promotes 18 traditional festivals across Yoruba land. He is firmly convinced that culture can be used as a vehicle for national integration and a platform for the realization of the elusive peace and love in our society. As a strong believer in the attributes of the Yoruba cultural heritage, his Olokun Festival Foundation remains the only Non-governmental organization (NGO) that is exclusively dedicated to the promotion and preservation of Yoruba culture and tradition. The Olokun Festival Foundation actively sponsors and takes part in the following festivals across Yoruba land, Eledumare Festival in ljora, Lagos, Ajagunmale Festival in Lekki, Lagos, Osun Osogbo, olohun Festival in Badagry, Lagos, Oya festival in Kwara State, Oke Ibadan festival in Oyo State, Oodua Festival in Epe, Lagos, Olumo Festival in Abeokuta, Ogun/ifa festival in Lagos, Aje Festival in Agege, Lagos, Obatala festival in Oyo State, Oranmiyan festival in Ondo State, Oro Festival in Iseyin, Oyo State, Ogun Festival in Ikorodu, Lagos State and Elegba Festival in Shesa, Lagos, among others. (Tayo Ogunbiyi, 2019:17). Indigenous cultural festivals are showcased and preserved so that the younger and coming generations of Nigerians can take pride in their language, culture and tradition. This way, they can desist from perceiving foreign culture as superior to theirs.

Conclusion

We Africans should not trade away our cultural inheritance but should preserve it from one generation to the other. We should be forging a new economic route for sustenance and survival through our rich culture and tourism. For examples, Iwo Elero cave, Cave in Ihuezi Obinofia, Ezeagu and Cave in Obukpa Town, Nsukka Local Gonernment Area in Enugu State should be revamped, reactivated, repackaged and if necessary renegotiated its traditional creative manifestation in line with the characteristics dynamic of culture to realize its economic objective, to be a money spinner, the ancestors are waiting to see the people harvest so much of its traditional art. According to Runseive (2019), the Director General of National Council of Arts and Culture, in line with the federal and state government diversification policy beyond crude oil dependence, the year 2018 passed into history book as a year the six states of Lagos, Rivers, Cross River, Kaduna, Plateau and Edo engaged in and promoted robust culture and tourism activities on a scale that helped to create a window for organized local and international visits across Nigeria. It is important to note that the positive development in cultural events and activities from states would help to sustain an all year holiday culture in Nigeria and cultural festivals as tourism products will help local and international tour operators in marketing Nigeria to the world. If the government and people of Nigeria promote their cultural heritage it will put the country in the rightful place in the global tourism community. It is also important to note that the 50 billion naira spending by holiday makers in Lagos is a huge eye-opener to what

can trickle down to operators of businesses and the service industry. What is needed to effectively explore the cultural heritage and tourism sector in Nigeria is proper organization and management of the sector to facilitate the creation of jobs for Nigerians.

Recommendations

This paper has come forth with the following recommendations to boost sustainable development in Nigeria through cultural heritage exploration. They are:

- The National Council for Arts and Cultures (NCAC) should increase efforts in deepening culture and tourism events in Nigeria more than ever before. For example, the 26 foreign nations that visited and participated in the 2018 Calabar Carnival was a tour de force that has taken the cultural carnival to a higher pedestal. Likewise, the cultural intervention in National festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) Rivers 2018 where Governor Nyesom Wike propelled the culture festival to an epic height with a new dynamism that showcased Nigeria's cultures in a new light was a welcome development. In the same vein, efforts to reposition culture and tourism in Kaduna and Plateau States by Governors Nasir El Rufai and Simon Lalong respectively were also acknowledged. Likewise, efforts of Edo State which came to town in 2018 with the Edofest that gave strategic attention to the repatriation of Benin artifacts in foreign museums that marked out Edofest as a holiday event to watch in Nigeria.
- The Director General of the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) should embark on a tour regularly of the 36 states of the federation to explore the rich cultural heritage of the diverse ethnic groups and their tourism potentials. Culture is said to be of the most important factor of economic growth, contributing immensely to the growth of many countries around the globe. Every state of the federation should clearly understand this and be poised to maximize their cultural heritage.
- Culture can boost Nigeria's tourism potential and serve as a source of revenue earners in the country, just as it is obtained in South Africa. Nigeria's cultural heritage and tourism potential need to be re-arranged, re-ordered and repositioned, revived, modified and repackaged for marketing. Nigeria's cultural heritage and tourism potentials need to be reviewed, the think tank has to think better off to sell Nigeria's tourist potentials abroad as a source of revenue.
- The federal and state governments should support carnivals and cultural festivals by giving them requisite financial and institutional support to boost cultural heritage awareness to increase the nation's revenue base.
- The government and private sectors should provide an enabling environment for tourism to flourish in Nigeria by building five-star hotels, roads, airports, railways, and hospitality facilities in areas of tourism potentials in the country; that can host local and foreign tourists. The government should urge wealthy Nigerians, companies and NGOs to invest in building good hotels because they will reap good harvests as carnivals are hosted across the six-geo political zones of Nigeria. Both public and private sectors must use culture as a major source of revenue generation in Nigeria.
- The governors of the 36 states of the federation should begin to think out of the box by exploring the opportunities offered by the rich cultural heritage and tourism potentials of their states, for example, the five south east states governors are challenged to think out of the box by exploring the opportunities offered by the region's rich masquerades culture to boost their economy. Institutionalizing masquerade carnival could be a major revenue earner for the states. Governors should see the possibilities inherent in cultural festivals for tourism and investment in their state. Governors should organize cultural fiesta and invite stakeholders in tourism, hospitality and entertainment industry as well as international community under one roof; to appreciate and celebrate the cultural diversity of Nigeria. The Governors should strive to stop the violations of security and peace by some masquerades in the zone.
- Initiators and organizers of cultural fiestas should not relent but to keep the flag of our rich cultural heritage flying at all times in Nigeria. The marketing of Nigeria arts and culture is a window for globalizing Nigeria's rich cultural heritage. Thus using the platform of exposition and exhibition to network the entire world to the arts and craft of Nigeria is aimed at giving Nigerians a window to communicate with investors and other international bodies in art and craft business. Exploring culture and tourism will save Nigerian youths from biting poverty scourge.
- Nigeria needs to take a cue from developed and developing nations, such as, China, Japan, Germany, Portugal and USA and a few others that use their culture as a veritable tool for developing morality and

social justice in the society to attain enviable heights. They respect their language and other cultural values so much so that they can do anything to preserve them (Tayo Agunbiyi, 2019:17).

- It is important for Nigeria and other African countries to raise the level of awareness of their cultural heritage in their land. This means that we have to be proud of our root, history, culture, identity and showcase the various arts, deities and celebrate them so that they will be happy enough to breathe positive in our ancestral land. For example, the chief promoter of the Olokun Festival Foundation, (OFF) Otunba Gani Adams (2019) noted that celebrating Ogun festival is always a unique experience, because it was usually celebrated during festive seasons. "Ogun is no doubt, a popular Yoruba heritage; its popularity transcends Yorubaland because of its peculiarity and over the centuries has become a global phenomenon. Ogun deity is a divine being with divine characteristics, it is a warrior and the god of iron and metal based technology celebrated across the world. The relevance of Ogun is noticed in Ire, in Ekiti State of Nigeria. It has achieved great exploits and superior power as first of the primordial deities which is well documented in Yoruba history and mythology", so with other cultural heritage across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria.

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