

Culture, Tourism and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The Brundtland Report several years ago was emphatic that cultural activities constitute an integral part of human existence. And as man intensifies effort towards development defined as enhancement of his standard of living, culture cannot be relegated to the background in view of its role in fostering sustainable development. However, culture-driven development has never been seriously considered in several parts of Africa including Nigeria. And within the context of man's activities on the environment, much care is needed to strike a balance between meeting the needs of this generation without necessarily jeopardizing the opportunities of the future generation which sustainable development entails. Thus, the paper highlights the imperative of integrating culture into efforts to promote sustainable development. The centrality of culture in the overall effort at ensuring sustainable development in Nigeria is emphasized. Furthermore, it laments the neglect of culture on the part of government in terms of funding, policy mechanism and emphasize the fact that conscious effort geared towards the promotion of culture remains the focal point of sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper also highlights sundry hindrances and roadblocks to cultural development in Nigeria and proffer suggestions aimed at improving the prevailing dilemma. Historical descriptive approach was adopted as method of data collection in research on the paper. The research findings of the paper were collaborative of the fact that culture has direct bearing on sustainable development.

Keywords: Culture, Sustainable Development, Policy Mechanism, Standard of living

Introduction

Nigerian cultures are diverse in nature and like most other cultures in the world have been influenced by external factors within the context of globalization. In recent times, cultural regeneration has become a central theme in Nigeria among scholars, enlightened citizens and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with the understanding that to harness the cultural resources of Nigeria is the best bet to usher the country to the path of sustainable development.

Therefore, the call to lay great emphasis for exploration into diverse cultural dimensions in Nigeria has become loud and resounding. In this paper a greater focus will be laid on cultural tourism which has not been really exploited fully. Cultural tourism if fully exploited will promote sustainable development and place Nigeria strategically in a position where exportation of culture to the global environment becomes a reality.



Conceptual Clarification

Culture, tourism and sustainable development as concepts were clarified to enhance the understanding of the issues raised in this paper.

i. Culture: The word culture is used to describe the way of life of a people. It embodies the language of the people, their political and social organization, their belief and religion and their literature and art. It also well includes all the material things which the people produce and use and their means of obtaining food and raw materials. The materials in question are inclusive of houses, weapons, tools, utensils, clothing, crafts and ornaments, (Eluwa et al, 1988:1). Culture is taught, learned and shared as the knowledge acquired is passed on from generation to generation. This process accounts for the different cultures identifiable within Nigeria and around the globe. For purpose of emphasis, it would be necessary to reiterate that each of these cultures is defined by the values, traditions, social habits and behaviours, language, belief systems, concepts of the universe, dress, music and arts (*What is culture? - World Transformation Movement*. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.worldtransformation.com/what-is-culture/_br). Collaboration to this reasoning, Maulana Kyenga postulates that:

Our culture provides us with an ethos we must honor in both thought and practice.

By ethos, we mean a people's self understanding as well as its self preservation in the world through its thought and practice in the other sex areas of culture. It is above all a cultural challenge for culture is here defined as the totality of thought and practice by which a people creates itself, celebrates, sustains and develops itself and introduces itself to history and humanity (Florence 2011:1)

ii. Tourism: Tourism is a collection of activities, services and industries that confer a travel experience of which transportation, accommodations, eating and drinking establishments, retail shops, entertainment businesses and hospitality services provided for individuals or groups traveling away from home are inclusive. Mathieson and Wall (1982:1) defined tourism as "the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations and the facilities created to cater for their needs. Macintosh and Goldner (1986:5) on the other hand defined tourism as "the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host governments and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors.

Dimensions of Tourism

All tourism activities are related to one or more of the dimensions of tourism highlighted as follows:

Attraction: This dimension constitutes the primary motivational element for traveling. Attractions usually focus on natural resources, culture, ethnicity or entertainment (*What is Tourism Lesson - Northern Arizona University*. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.prm.nau.edu/PRM300/what-is-tourism-lesson.htm_br). These identified areas of attraction are further analysed as follows:

Natural Resources: These are a combination of physical features, the climate, and the natural aesthetic condition of the environment. In the south-south geographical enclave of Nigeria, such tourist sites as Obudu Cattle Ranch Resort, the National Park at Akamkpa, Calabar Zoo Garden, and Marina Resort, Calabar, provides the requisite attraction within the context of natural resources.

Culture: this is a way of life of the people observed through their religion, history, government and traditions. Notable examples of tourist sites are the monoliths at Ikom, Ekpe Masquerade, Leboku New Yam Festival and Benin Ivory Mask used as FESTAC77 symbol, Ife Bronze Head, Igbo Ukwu Bronze Alter Stand among others.

Ethnicity: The attraction here involve visit to family and friends (Through courtesy calls)

Entertainment: the major activities here are special events and festivals like calabar carnival, musical performances and cultural displays.

Essential Requirements for Tourism

Time-as man has more time for leisure so does the opportunity for travel. However, work days and school calendars are lively to post challenges in terms of how and when people can travel. People can take off time like one week, two weeks or even a month or two and above to travel.

Money – Most times, travel requires discretion in the use of income. Discretionary purpose is one of the functions of money. It is money left over after basic items in a personal budget such as food rent and taxes have been satisfied. So, discretion is required to set aside money for tourism purposes.

Mobility – The basic requirement here is the access to transportation in terms of car, bus, plane, train or ship and the hours tourists required to get to their destination.

Motivation: Most travels are predetermined by motivation. Inclusive in motivation is seeking of novelty, education, meeting new people, perhaps arising from interaction on pace-book, adventure or stress reduction.

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) asserts that currently tourism constitute the world largest industry with annual revenues of over three trillion dollars. Tourism has the propensity to promote employment and also boost internally generated revenues. States like Lagos and Cross River that have earned the nomenclature of tourists destination in Nigeria have a lot of collaborative success stories to tell.

iii. Sustainable Development: The most widely recognized definitions of sustainable development is that contained in the Brudtland Report released in 1987 by the United Nations. According to the Report, “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development). In tandem with the Report, the above definition embodies two major concepts:

- i. The concept of “needs particularly, the essential needs of the World’s poor, which maximum priority should be given; and



- ii. The concept of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organizations on the ability of the environment to meet present and future needs.

The United Nations 2005 World Summit outcome document identified pillars of sustainable development tagged “interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars” of sustainable development. These pillars are economic development, social development and environmental protection (2005 World Summit Outcome Document). Based on the triple identified pillars, people have argued through such international forums as the United Nations Permanent forum on indigenous issues and the convention on Biological Diversity, that there exist four pillars of sustainable development with culture being the fourth pillar. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001) further explicates the concept by stating that: Cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. It becomes one of the roots of development understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence. In this vision, cultural diversity is the fourth policy area of sustainable development.

Pillars of Sustainable Development:

- i. **Economic Development:** This a fundamental factor in the consideration of sustainable development. Economic development is defined as the practices and meanings associated with the production, use and management of resources, where the concept of “resources” is used in the broad sense of it to refer to materials, money, services, workers, or other assets that are transformed to produce benefit and in the process may be consumed or made available. Benefits of resource utilization may include increased wealth, meeting needs or wants, proper functioning of a system, or enhanced well being (United Cities and Local Governments).
- ii. **Social Development** – Within the context of social development, ecology is used as an analytical tool. However, this pillar has been a subject of debate because it has a social dimension. Some researchers have argued that the environment is a combination of nature and culture. Others argue that ecology is a broader concept that at the intersection of the social and the environment is ecology. This view allows culture to stand on its own as a pillar of sustainable development (United Cities and Local Governments).
- iii. **Cultural Development** – Culture is a fourth pillar of sustainable development. It is a product of the Agenda 21 for culture and the United Cities and Local Government Executive Bureau which lead the preparation of the policy statement – “culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development” passed on 17 November 2010, in the framework of the World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders – 3rd World Congress of United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), held in Mexico City. The cited document points to the link between culture and sustainable development through a dual approach of developing a solid cultural policy and advocating a cultural dimension in all public policies (United Cities and Local Governments).
- iv. **Political Development** – The Political development is defined as the pillar of practices and meanings associated with fundamental issues of social power as they relate to the organization, authorization, legitimation and regulation of a common social life. This definition is in tandem with the view that political change is a prerequisite for responding to economic, ecological and cultural challenges.

Linkages Between Culture, Tourism and Sustainable Development

Although there is still much to be done by nation – states on integrating culture fully with the international development policies, Rio + 20 has been an important step in spearheading the role of culture. The ball now is in the court of the nation states to build on the recorded progress of the Rio + 20 to ensure that the ability of culture to meaningfully contribute to sustainable development is fully harnessed by all. The outcome document of the UN’s Rio + 20 conference mentions culture in a number of paragraphs. The most significant reference to culture is in support of the importance of cultural diversity:

We acknowledge the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognize that all culture and civilizations can contribute to sustainable development. But there is also recognition of the relationship between people, their ecosystems and their cultural heritage, the importance of investing in cultural tourism (UN’S Rio + 20 Conference)

The document also demonstrates the understanding of the international community about a valid approach to development which recognizes that “people are at the centre of sustainable development” with emphasis on human development. Thus, the need for training and retraining in conservation techniques among others can not be over emphasized.

In another development, effort of a country like Nigeria should be geared towards practicing sustainable tourism. The focus of sustainable tourism is to make as low an impact on the environment and local culture as possible, while helping to generate future employment for local people. The aim of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development brings a positive experience for local people, tourism companies and the tourists themselves (*Sustainable tourism - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.* (n.d.). Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_tourism_br). Sustainable tourists can reduce the impact of tourism in the following ways:

- i. Informing themselves of the culture, politics and economy of the communities visited.
- ii. Anticipating and respecting local cultures, expectations and assumptions.
- iii. Consciously supporting the integrity of local cultures by favouring businesses which conserve cultural heritage and traditional values.
- iv. Consciously supporting local economics by purchasing local goods among other things. The pillars of sustainable tourism are environmental integrity, social justice and economic development. These are capable of creating a suitable premise for sustainable development.

Critique of Sustainable Development

Consequences of the Concept – John Baden views the notion of sustainable development as dangerous because the consequences have unquantifiable effects. Thus, he postulates:

In economy like in ecology, the inter-dependence rule applies. Isolated actions are impossible. A policy which is not carefully enough thought will carry along various perverse and adverse effects for the ecology as such as for the economy. My suggestions to save our environment and to promote a model of sustainable development risk indeed leading to reverse effects (Baden, 1992:17).



To Baden (1992), the notion of sustainable development is so vague that politicians can act in disguise of it to project their interest. Thus, Jean – Marc Jancovici writes about sustainable development expressing his opinion of the term by stating that:

I know that this term is obligatory, but I find it also absurd, or rather so vague that it says nothing. Luc Ferry adds that, sustainable development has become obscured by conflicting world views: who would like to be a proponent of an untenable development (Luc Ferry 2007:75).

Basis-Sylvie Brunel, a French geographer questions the basis of the concept of sustainable development. To her, the core ideas of sustainable development are a hidden form of protectionism by Western countries impeding the development of the Third World Countries. Thus, she asserts “I have the feeling that sustainable development is perfectly helping out capitalism.”

De – growth – The apostles of the de-growth argues that the term of sustainable development is a contradiction. According to them, on a planet where 20% of the population consumes 80% of the natural resources, a sustainable development cannot be possible for this 20%. Stressing further they maintain that:

According to the origin of the concept of sustainable development, a development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs, the right term for the development countries should be a sustainable de-growth (Bruno, 2008:10).

Measurability – A report for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2007 stressed the problem of measurability within the context of sustainable development and laments that:

While much discussion and effort has gone into sustainability indicators, none of the resulting systems clearly tells us whether our society is sustainable. At best, they can tell us that we are heading in the wrong direction or that our current activities are not sustainable. More often, they simply draw our attention to the existence of problems, doing little to tell us the origin of those problems and nothing to tell us how to solve them.

Concluding Remarks

For several decades now, theorists of steady state economy and ecological economy have been asserting that reduction in population growth or even negative population growth is needed for the human commodity not to destroy its planetary support system. A set of well defined and harmonized indicators is as well required to make sustainable development tangible. Those indicators are expected to be identified and adjusted through empirical observations.

Sonia Bueno, a Cuban-born researcher made a valid suggestion which should be adhered to. He suggested an alternative approach that is based upon the integral, long-term cost-benefit relationship as a measure and monitoring tool for the sustainability of every project, activity or enterprise. This concept aims to be a practical guideline towards sustainable development following the principle of conservation and increment of value rather than restricting the consumption of resources. The improvement of environment quality depends on the market economy and the existence of legitimate and protected property rights. They promote the effective practice of personal responsibility and the development of mechanisms to protect the

environment. Well designed and managed tourism can create decent jobs and generate trade opportunities necessary for a realistic sustainable development.

Investment in sustainable tourism, including eco-tourism and cultural tourism, which may include creating small and medium sized enterprises will impact positively on the sustainable development of Nigeria. Facilitating access to finance, through micro-credit initiatives for the poor, indigenous peoples and Local communities in areas with high eco-tourism potential is also a worthy prerequisite for sustainable development. Every planning aimed at achieving sustainable development in Nigeria should recognize the Local cultural values, equal rights and cultural logic of the respective communities in policy planning and decision-making.

Arising from the assessment of critics, sustainable development is a noble dream. It's attainment requires discipline and a deep sense of patriotism on the part of the political class. This is a critical point that should not be relegated to the back ground because in a society like Nigeria where corruption is endemic and pervasive conscious effort is needed to pursue and attain the goal of sustainable development. Necessary legislations at both state and national level would be required as pre-condition to attaining sustainable development is attained in Nigeria in addition to the resolve by individuals to sacrifice personally to see that the goal of sustainable development is attained.

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