



## HARNESSING CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND PROSPECTS

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### Abstract

Nigeria is vast in tourism potentials, historic towns and highly diversified cultural heritage embodying people's traditions, religion and belief systems, festivals and ceremonies. The capacity of these symbolic representations of people's values, identity, and heritage to earn Nigeria substantial revenue is not in doubt. However, the inability to transform them to tourism assets has been a major concern to stakeholders. This paper examines Nigeria's vast cultural heritage and the prospect of harnessing them towards tourism sector development.

The paper synthesizes both primary and secondary information on cultural heritage in Nigeria. The discourse shows that tourism development in Nigeria is encumbered with many systemic problems. The 'loss' and the rebuilding efforts of the cultural heritage were discussed. Major recommendations suggest concerted efforts from the government, private sector operators and host communities. Very key are need for investment in infrastructures and the political will to democratically resolve the perennial problem of insecurity.

**Keywords:** *Culture, Cultural Heritage, Tourism Development, Nigeria.*

### 1.0 Introduction

A major feature of the globalizing world has been increasing competition in many facets of life, including the movement of people for leisure purpose. While other regions are better organized and derived benefits from the increasingly competitive global economy, Africa's place in the global market is getting increasingly ambivalent. On the one hand, Africa's increasing marginalization is reflected in its declining share of world trade, overseas development assistance (ODA), Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and the loss of its previous comparative advantage in the supply of raw materials. On the other hand, Africa's dependence on the global market and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) is growing. This uncertain position in the global economy has also produced adverse consequences such that while Africa's economies stagnate or decline under the weight of market liberalization, the economies of other regions grow. The need to look inward and interrogate African countries development process is therefore germane at this time, especially as it concerns the need to diversify the economy.

One area where the Nigerian economy is not doing well is tourism, the importance of which in the twenty-first century cannot be overemphasized. Of late, tourism has become a vital part and fourth largest industry in the global economy<sup>1</sup> delivering not only economic benefits to individuals, organizations and governments but also has the capacity to deliver peace and prosperity, especially in the developing countries (Honey and Gilpin, 2009:1; UNWTO, 2008). Of the diverse tourism possibilities and rich cultural heritage in Nigeria, not much of these have been mainstreamed and harnessed into the global tourism industry. The well-referenced definition of culture in anthropological and sociological studies was given by Tylor (1871) as the 'complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'. For Oke (1984: 20), culture is 'the distinctive way of life of a group of people, their complete design for living'. Culture, thus, encompasses all man-made parts of the environment and a whole set of implicit, widely shared beliefs, traditions, norms, values and expectations that characterize a particular group of people. It serves several functional purposes in the life of a group, guides social interaction and social relations, the material artifacts and constitutes the basis on which tourism industry is built. It manifests in arts, dance, language, literature, folklore, mores, music, governance, as well as the character of the environment acquired and transmitted through generations. As societies make attempt at cultural preservations, past cultures have survived in contemporary forms and could certainly be observed and used to reconstruct the past.

Geographically, Nigeria is a physically vast tropical African country with 932,768 sq.km landmass, total coastline of 853km, and human population of over 160 million as at year 2006 census. Nigeria is one of the most socially and culturally diverse country in Africa with over 250 major and minor ethnic groups, notably Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Ibo, Kanuri, Tiv, Edo, Nupe, Ibibio, Ijaw, among others. By implication, Nigeria has 'hundreds of cultures with individual uniqueness and peculiarities'.<sup>2</sup> The vast majority of the Nigerian population is employed in the primary sector, mainly agriculture while government hitherto dominates other sectors. Major economic resources are petroleum, coal, tin, columbite, palm oil, peanuts, cotton, rubber, wood, hides and skins, textiles, cement, food products, and others. These are largely traded in their raw forms, and as at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the economy remains underdeveloped and

<sup>1</sup> Tourism generates roughly \$1 trillion in global receipts in 2008 and ranked 4<sup>th</sup> largest industry in the world after fuels, chemicals, and automotive products (USIP, 2009:2; UNWTO, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> See Abuja Carnival website: <http://www.abujacarnivaloffice.com>

dependent on petroleum as the main source of foreign revenue. The economy, thus, is in dire need of diversification and transformation of which the role of the tourism sector as an alternative in the development process cannot be overemphasized. Currently, there is a wide gap between Nigeria's vast tourism potential and actual performance.<sup>3</sup> Nigeria's underdevelopment is vivid in low performance in travel and tourism infrastructure such as hotel services, air and road transportation system, security services, and other basics. What then is tourism?

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Statistical Commission described tourism as the activities of people traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environments for more than one consecutive day for leisure, business, and other purposes. More precisely, tourism refers to any activity that voluntarily and temporarily takes people away from their usual place of residence in order to satisfy the need for pleasure, excitement, experience and relaxation (Falade, 2000). The benefits of these activities are multifarious, bringing benefits to the communities that produce the tourism goods; enabling communities that are poor in material wealth but rich in culture, history, and heritage to convert their unique characteristics for income-generating advantage; and more importantly, tends to encourage the development of multiple-use infrastructure that benefits the host community. The tendency to engage in tourism is however not evenly distributed across various geographic regions of the world and there are remarkable differences in the propensity to travel among countries. As at 1950, just fifteen destinations, mainly European, accounted for 98 percent of all international arrivals; but by 2007, the figure had fallen to 57 percent. Interestingly, the developing world is a major growth area with tourism being the leading export earner for one-third of the world's poorest countries and second most important source of foreign exchange after oil for forty of these countries (Mastny, 2001:15, 37; UNWTO, 2009; Honey and Gilpin, 2009:2). On the contrary, tourism in Nigeria is a small part of the service economy recording 962,000 tourists arrival in 2004, the majority of which came from the neighbouring African countries (Stock, 2008). Honey and Gilpin (2009:3) also reported Nigeria's low tourism performance, which accounted for a paltry contribution of 0.02 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2006. The major constraints of the tourism sector in Nigeria include: (i) inadequate facilities at established tourist centres; (ii) low level of global awareness of tourist attractions in Nigeria; (iii) undeveloped tourist infrastructure; (iv) lack of security; (v) low level of investment; and (vi) poor attitude and disposition towards recreation and vacation by the Nigerians (IMF, 2005:73). Even within Nigeria and to the poor majority of Nigerians, touring is a luxury.

This article is therefore designed to focus on and analyze Nigeria's tourism potentials with emphasis on cultural heritage. The concept of *heritage* connotes legacy from the past, what people live with today, and what they intend passing on to the future generations. Cultural heritage are the evidences of how a group of people have been able to sustain their existence in space and manifested through basic aspects of life such as handicrafts, language, traditions, traditional games, gastronomy, art, music and traditional music instruments, museum, monuments, visual reminder of people's history, UNESCO World Heritage Sites (if any), economic activities, architecture, religious and national festivals, educational system, dress, leisure activities, among others. The Nigerian, and by extension, Africa's cultural heritage are observable in major arts and crafts work by ancient and contemporary artists, films that demonstrate dynamism and continuity of cultural traditions, and people's day-to-day practices.

A major element therefore is culture which is inseparable from the society and provides the basis for social life, whether in the developed or developing countries. In a multiethnic country like Nigeria, each ethnic group has distinct long-dated history and cultural heritage, which are often consciously preserved for societal continuity, and of recent, to promote tourism. Up till the end of colonialism, virtually all the foreigners that visited the Nigerian territory did not have leisure as their primary reason and the commitment to package cultural heritage for tourism purpose was virtually non-existent until recently. For centuries, most societies were mainly subsistence and self-reliant, having very minimal tourism infrastructures and limited knowledge of the world outside their immediate border. Customs and leisure time activities were usually observed communally while intra- and inter-group recreational activities in the form of moonlight plays, story-telling, traditional dance, wrestling competitions, *ayo* game and other periodic communal festivals were mainly intra-group activities. Even though Nigeria's contact with Europe dates from the fifteenth century, very little was known about Nigeria's artistic heritage until 1897 when a British Punitive Expedition did not only sack the ancient city of Benin but also removed as 'war' booty several thousand art works, mostly in bronze, from the Oba's palace (OnlineNigeria.com, 2009). The enormity of the loss of these traditional arts is best illustrated with reference to the Benin arts as quoted:

*the last place to go if you want to see Benin art is Benin itself, very little of it is left in the city... if you want to see Benin art, you will have to travel from Leningrad to California...to the splendid mansion of a Swiss millionaire near Berne, to Copenhagen and Paris and New York... Nobody has ever estimated how much art was removed from Benin at various times; one estimate puts the number of bronze plaques and other ornaments removed from the Oba's palace in 1897 at 2,500.*" (Legum, 1960 quoted from OnlineNigeria.com, 2009).

This research paper, therefore, did a descriptive analysis of the state of cultural heritage and tourism in Nigeria. The paper analyzed factors accounting for the missed opportunities in Nigeria's development process, with particular reference to tourism. Relevant materials on the topic were consulted and complemented primary data obtained from personal encounter with lost tourism assets that originated from the various Nigerian societies. It reiterates the fact that converting cultural heritage into tourism assets serves the dual purpose of re-enacting group solidarity as well as yielding socio-economic benefits to the various stakeholders and the society. The next section elaborates more on the circumstances leading to the loss of Nigeria's cultural heritage to the outside world. Despite the loss of the vast

<sup>3</sup>The story of Nigeria's tourism industry is one of unfulfilled potential (Honey and Gilpin, 2009:6).

traditional arts of the Nigerian people, the paper acknowledged that some appreciable efforts are ongoing at the state and national levels towards harnessing the sector for development purposes.

## 2.0 The Lost Cultural Heritage

Some physical representations of Nigeria's cultural heritage include palaces, architecturally sophisticated and unique city walls and gates, shrines, smelting furnaces, arts and crafts, pottery making, traditional foods and drinks. In the pre-colonial Nigeria, religious ceremonies and ritual practices played very significant role in inspiring those creative works usually classified as 'arts' while those objects made to serve functional purposes are classified as 'crafts'. These arts and crafts flourished because of the vital roles they played in both the secular and religious life of the people at the time. Some were inspired and intricately connected with important ceremonial occasions such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. It was, however, a major setback for the societies within the territory that subsequently formed the modern Nigeria the loss of substantial aspects of their cultural heritage to the foreign powers, particularly in the looting that characterized the colonial period. Different writers have attested to flourishing ancient cultural heritage and the subsequent experience of cultural deprivation in the West African region:

*The region known as West Africa enjoyed a long history of some of the greatest empires and kingdoms in Black race before some European civilizations came into being. This region is celebrated for names like the old Ghana empire, the Kanem Bornu empire, the Mali and Songhai empires, the great Benin kingdom and such cultures that still dwarf some of the best known elsewhere in the world – Igbo Ukwu, Ife bronze head, Nok culture, Ashanti kingdom and the myths of the golden stool... This rich culture was soon abandoned with the advent of alien cultures and peoples, thus, West Africa became the epicentre of the debilitating trans-Sahara slave trade... Colonialism that followed thereafter did not do much good to West Africa as it only perpetrated western cultures ... this trend is still reflected in some of the undue attachment of these independent states to European powers (Abang, 2010:5).*

Similarly, during my personal visit to the British Museum in May 2008 and the tour of the section named *The Sainsbury African Galleries*, this inscription was found so conspicuous:

*These galleries provide an insight into aspects of the cultural life of Africa, past and present. They include artefacts drawn from the entire continent and from many historical periods (Inscription at The British Museum, London, May 2008).*

The evidence of the loss by force of vital aspects of African cultural heritage to other regions of the world in the past was obvious at the British Museum. For instance, within *The Sainsbury African Galleries* was the vivid description of *The Discovery of Benin Art by the West* as follows:

*The West discovered Benin art following the sack of Benin City by the British in 1897. In the 1890s Benin resisted British control over southern Nigeria. In March 1897, retaliating for the killing of British representatives, a punitive expedition conquered the capital. Thousands of treasures were taken as booty, including around 1000 brass plaques from the palace. The Foreign Office auctioned the official booty to cover the cost of the expedition. Large numbers of ivories, brass and wood works were retained and sold by the officers. Benin treasures caused an enormous sensation, fuelling an appreciation for African art which profoundly influenced 20<sup>th</sup> century Western art. About 16 museums, mostly in Britain and Germany, purchased the works, notably the British Museum and the Berlin Museum. In the 1970s, interest in Benin grew. Now around 85 museums in 18 countries have Benin collections, the largest being in Britain, Germany, the US and Nigeria (copied from the inscription at the British Museum during my personal visit, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2008).*

The implication of this is that substantial number of Nigeria's art and craft works of the past that would have provided vivid picture and reconstruction of the rich cultural heritage of the Nigerian people currently adorn world's major museums where they have been attested to rank among other world's masterpiece. Such items include masks, bronzes, ivories, wooden statues, terracotta, among others.

Another contributory factor to the loss of Africa's cultural heritage was the attempt in the 15<sup>th</sup> century by the European voyagers who "tried to fit the 'new' lands into an existing view of the world" (British Museum, 2008). This plan was irrespective of the voyager's observation that such kingdoms as the Benin Kingdom, Yoruba Kingdom, among others were at that particular time very powerful. Benin, for instance, had been a powerful state in West Africa since the 13<sup>th</sup> century with early accounts of the size and splendor of Benin City being highly favourable. In the recent decades, Nigeria has lost some vital cultural heritage such as the groundnut pyramid in the north while coal mine in Enugu (Eastern Nigeria), cocoa in the southwestern Nigeria are not being harnessed for tourism purpose. This is as a result of heavy dependence of the Nigerian state on the windfall from petroleum. Despite the loss, a tour of the Nigerian societies will reveal the resilience of the people to rebuild those crafts and architecture that are distinct of each society as discussed in the next section.

## 3.0 The Process of Rebuilding Nigeria's Cultural Heritage

There have been efforts at the local and global levels to resuscitate and preserve cultural heritage. Worthy of mention at the global level is the effort of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to designate, on the basis of six cultural and four natural criteria, sites of 'outstanding universal value' around the world as World Heritage Centre. Similarly, governments and private investors in the developed and developing countries have also been involved in financing and promoting the packaging of cultural heritage to create some unique identities for the societies and as attractions to prospective tourists. So far, some African countries in North

Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, and Gambia in the West African region have made tremendous progress in their tourism sector, far ahead of Nigeria.

Nonetheless, Nigeria's prospect for tourism subsists on its diversity in people, culture, nature, and untapped investment opportunities. Natural diversity which includes rivers and ocean beaches, wildlife, vast tracts of natural vegetation, waterfalls, and varied climatic conditions are some major attractions while traveling through the Nigerian landscape. Major cultural attractions include traditional ways of life often preserved in local customs, fascinating history and lifestyles, handicrafts and other creative products of the people. Some of these adorn the museums, art galleries, cultural, religious and national festivals, historical monuments, buildings, arts and crafts. The natural assets include mountains such as Olumo Rock in Abeokuta, Idanre Hills in Ondo; rivers, waterfalls and warm springs as found at Ikogosi in Ekiti State, Wikki Warm Spring at Yankari National Park; beaches, national parks, games/forest reserves, botanical and zoological gardens, beautiful landscape and high altitude sceneries of Jos, Mambila, Obudu, wildlife and national parks such as the famous Yankari Games Reserve.

The conscious efforts to promote tourism industry can be dated to be 1962. These efforts were, however, punctuated by decades of dictatorial military governments, bad governance, and lack of tourism infrastructures. The period 1991 marked a new beginning and some actions initiated by the national government to promote Nigeria's cultural heritage include formulation of the *National Tourism Policy* (NTP) in 1990, creation of the *Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation* (NTDC) in 1992, establishment of the *National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism* (NIHOTOUR) in Kano, the adoption of *Tourism Master Plan* and creation of the *National Tourism Council* with the Nigerian President as the chairman. The strength of NTDC is found in its emotive slogan "*Tourism is life*". The civilian government of President Olusegun Obasanjo further created the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism in June 1999 for the overall promotion of Nigeria's immense and rich cultural heritage. The vision of the Ministry is to position culture and tourism as leverage for economic growth. This is the motivating factor behind the idea of *Abuja Carnival*, which started in 2005 as a week-long annual event designed to bring the Nigerian people together to showcase their cultural heritage. The event features street carnival, Durbar, traditional cuisine, street show for masquerade, Boat Regatta, musical fiesta, exhibitions, among others.



**Fig. 1: Abuja Carnival Logo**

Source: Abuja Carnival Website: [www.abujacarnivaloffice.com](http://www.abujacarnivaloffice.com) Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Similarly, the activities of the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism is strictly a platform towards promoting Nigeria's cultural heritage and tourism at the domestic and international levels. Essentially, due to 'the inability of past administrations to fully identify and promote our [that is, Nigeria] cultural heritage', the vision of the Ministry is 'to position culture and tourism as a leverage for economic growth and development' (NACD, 2011).<sup>4</sup> Some other key government agencies crucial to the identification, development and marketing of the Nigerian cultural heritage include National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), National Gallery of Art (NGA), National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), and National Troupe/National Theatre of Nigeria (NT/NTN).

The mandates of these parastatals are clearly defined. The NCMM is responsible for: (i) administration of National Museums antiquities and monuments; (ii) construction, maintenance and management of National Museums; (iii) the preservation of antiquities and monuments and their declaration as national ones; and (iv) granting approvals for establishment of private museums. NCAC was established to promote and foster the appreciation, revival and development of Nigerian arts, crafts and culture; registering artists and artiste group for effective business relationship; coordination of inter-state cultural exchange activities; organization of exhibitions in visual, performing and literary arts; promoting the development of traditional dance, drama, opera, photography, folklore, oral tradition, literature, poetry, painting and general arts, woodworks, embroidery, weaving and similar crafts; establishment of Cultural Centres, theatre arts galleries and craft centres; and preservation of all materials on culture that contribute to the image of Nigeria.

With regards to funding, tourism industry is capital intensive and the development of cultural assets is often led by the government. In the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria, for instance, Cross River State Government with Donald Duke as Governor in 1999 – 2007 was the major financial of the *Obudu Cattle Ranch* and other tourist infrastructure in the state. His successor, Governor Liyel Imoke, continued the legacy and worthy of mention is the highly publicized locally and internationally annual carnival in Calabar, which holds in December. In the South-West geo-political zone, Osun State and Lagos State Governments have embraced the Osun Oshogbo and Eyo Festivals respectively that are major heritage of the two states. Just in May 2013, the Government of the State of Osun also launched computer tablets named '*Opon Imo*' (that is, Tablet of Knowledge), which contain basic reading materials on all the subjects as well as materials on Yoruba culture for the senior Secondary School students. Many other state

<sup>4</sup>The Nigerian Arts and Culture Directory (NACD)

<http://www.nacd.gov.ng/ministry%20of%20culture%20and%20tourism.htm> Accessed Date: 16<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

governments and private individuals have also shown tremendous commitment towards ecological transformation, upgrading of the environment and sustainable tourism, especially in major cities. For instance, Lagos State government and private sector investors have since 2007 made concerted efforts to transform the city into a megacity. These efforts are being guided by strong commitment to the concept of sustainable development which stipulates a process that allows development to take place without degrading or depleting the resources which made the development possible. Nigeria's *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* (PRSP) as contained in the *National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy* published by the International Monetary Fund also identified tourism as one of the major sectors for the much desired social transformation in Nigeria (IMF, 2005).

As part of the framework for cultural reawakening, Nigeria's National Cultural Policy was formulated with focus on the following:

- i. Analysis and understanding of the Nigerian cultural life, cultural values and cultural needs and expectations of people;
- ii. Affirmation of the authentic cultural values and cultural heritage;
- iii. Building up of a national cultural identity and parallel affirmation of cultural identities of different ethnic groups;
- iv. Development of cultural infrastructure and introduction of new technologies in cultural activities; and,
- v. Establishment of links between culture and education, as well as between education and different cultural industries, particularly mass media.

The ultimate goal of the policy as enacted is to create enabling environment for the reawakening of the Nigerian cultural heritage and their possible packaging for tourism purposes. It is important to say that organized tourism in Nigeria dates back to September 1962 when the Nigerian Tourist Association was formed by a group of private practitioners to project the tourism potentials of Nigeria and encourage both domestic and international tourism activities. This enabled Nigeria to be admitted as full member of the *International Union of Official Travel Organisation* (IUOTO) in 1963, which later metamorphosed into *World Tourism Organization* (WTO) in 1964. The Nigerian government subsequently established the *National Council for Arts and Culture* (NCAC) through Decree No. 3 of 1975, promulgated Decree 54 of 1976 which established the Nigerian Tourism Board. The decree was amended, in line with the Nigerian Tourism Policy that came up later, to facilitate the establishment of the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) Decree 81 of 1992. In pursuit of promoting tourism, Nigeria hosted a global event in 1977 tagged Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC).



Source: Wikipedia "Lagos", accessed date: 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011.

**Fig. 2: National Theatre, Lagos, Nigeria**

NTDC is the apex statutory body of the Federal Republic of Nigeria under the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism charged with the overall responsibility of promoting, marketing and coordinating tourism activities in Nigeria. The corporation's specific objectives include creating enabling environment for tourism activities to flourish; making tourism a major revenue earner; standardization and sanitization of the industry through registration, inspection, classification and grading of the hospitality and tourism enterprises to meet international standard and ensure customer satisfaction; publicizing and promoting Nigeria's endowment through print and electronic media; ensuring the provision of reliable and up-to-date tourism statistical data; liaising with other government agencies such as the Immigration Service and others to produce Annual Tourism Statistical Data and Tourism Satellite Account (TSA); planning, coordinating and assisting in the development of tourist sites throughout the country; ensuring the establishment of Tourist Development Fund (TDF) to provide financial assistance to practitioners and developers; among others. To ensure grassroots tourism development, NTDC operates a decentralized system of administration with zonal offices in Bauchi<sup>5</sup>, Calabar, Kano, Lagos, Enugu, Asaba, Yola, Sokoto, Lokoja, and Jos. Each is headed by a Zonal Coordinator

<sup>5</sup> All the 36 states that make up the Federal Republic of Nigeria have different motto. For Bauchi State, the motto – *The Pearl of Tourism* – particularly underscores the importance of tourism to the people of the state.



who reports directly to the office of the Director-General. Table 1 provides the summary of some tourism assets, both natural and cultural, that are widely spread across different parts of Nigeria.

**Table 1: Selected Cultural Heritage and Tourism Assets in Nigeria**

Location/State	Tourism Attractions
Abuja	i. Several National Monuments and Assets scattered within and at the outskirts of the city e.g. National Gallery of Arts ii. Nicon-Noga Hilton Hotel; Millennium Park
Abia	i. National War Museum displaying relics of the Nigerian Civil War and local inventions. ii. Akwette: Blue River Tourist Village iii. The Long Juju Shrine of Arochukwu
Akwa Ibom	i. Ibeno (Famous for yatching and swimming) ii. Oron Museum (Collection of fine African carvings) iii. Opobo Boatyard (Natural sand beaches at Ikot Abasi)
Anambra	i. Crafts Work ii. Ijele Masquerade from Aguleri iii. Yam Festival (Annual event); Ofala Festival iv. Odinani Museum at Nri v. River Niger and Niger Bridge vi. Rojenny Tourist Village
Bauchi	i. Wikki Lame-Burra Games Reserve ii. Tomb of First Prime Minister (Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa) iii. Yankari Games Reserve
Benue	i. Confluence of the Rivers Niger and Benue ii. Kwaghir Festival: a theatrical display of masquerades, puppet theatre, some forms of acrobatics, dancing, music of the Tiv people iii. Beaches and Fishing Festivals
Borno	i. Kyarimi Park (Sightseeing for animal and bird lovers) ii. Shehu of Borno's Palace iii. Fishing Festival at Gahsua iv. Lake Chad; Ngeji Warm Springs; Sambisa Game Reserve v. Leather tanning and ornamental leather work
Cross River	i. Obudu Cattle Ranch (featuring near temperate climate, waterfall, birds) ii. Agbokin Falls; Kwa Falls; Boshi Game Reserve iii. Mary Slessor Cottage iv. National Museum
Delta	i. Sandy beaches in Asaba ii. Olu's Palace iii. Itsekiri Juju Festival
Edo	i. Bronze, brass and ivory works of art ii. Royal Palace of Benin iii. Benin Museum; Emotan Statue
Enugu	Iva Valley Coal Mines; National Museum
Imo	i. Oguta Lake Holiday Resort (sand beaches) ii. Mbari Cultural Centres: the home of Mbari sculptural houses iii. Afikpo (Famous for pottery and mask making) iv. Akwete Textile Centre in Akwete
Jigawa	Birnin Kudu Rock Paintings
Kaduna	i. Nok culture ii. Palace of the Emir of Zaria
Kano	i. Emir's Palace; Ancient city walls and gates ii. Gidan Makaman Museum iii. Kofar Mata Dyeing pits
Katsina	i. Emir's Palace ii. Wall surrounding Katsina
Kebbi	i. Traditional arts and crafts, beads and glassware ii. Argungu Fishing and Cultural Festival
Kogi	i. Old buildings used by the Royal Niger Company ii. Confluence of Rivers Niger and Benue, Lokoja iii. Ekuechi Festival of the Epira people
Kwara	i. Esie Museum of stone figures ii. Kainji Dam; Jebba Dam; Owu Waterfall iii. Mungo Park Monument
Lagos	i. Seaside attraction and resorts; Tarkwa Bay Beach ii. Slave Port at Badagry iii. National Museum iv. National Theatre, Iganmu (see Fig. 2) v. Eyo Masquerade
Niger	i. Gurara Falls; Shiroro Hydroelectric dam

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. Mungo Park's Cenotaph</li> <li>iii. Handicraft of Bida town</li> <li>iv. Kainji Lake and National Games Park</li> </ul>
Ogun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Oba's Palaces</li> <li>ii. Birikisu Sungbo Shrine in Ijebu-Ode</li> <li>iii. Olumo Rock</li> <li>iv. Igunnuko Masquerades</li> </ul>
Ondo and Ekiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. National Museum, Owo</li> <li>ii. Ikogosi Warm Springs</li> <li>iii. Idanre Hills; Igbokoda Waterfront</li> </ul>
Osun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Ile-Ife as the origin of the Yoruba people</li> <li>ii. Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Osun Festival, Osogbo</li> <li>iii. Palaces</li> <li>iv. Ife Museum, and Opa Oranmiyan at Ile-Ife</li> <li>v. Erin-Ijesa Waterfalls</li> </ul>
Plateau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. National Museum, Jos</li> <li>ii. Jos Wildlife Safari Park</li> </ul>
Rivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Nigeria's first petroleum refinery at Elesha Elema</li> <li>ii. Water Glass Boatyard; Onne Port; Isaka Holiday Cruise Island</li> <li>iii. Oil well at Oloibiri</li> <li>iv. Monument of King Jaja of Opobo</li> <li>v. Slave transit hall at Akassa</li> <li>vi. Ogidi Shrine at Nembe</li> </ul>
Sokoto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Cloth dyeing (Fulani attires)</li> <li>ii. Museum</li> <li>iii. Sultan's Palace</li> <li>iv. Tomb of Usman Dan Fodio</li> </ul>

Source: Compiled by the author from several sources such as Online Nigeria Portal (23<sup>rd</sup> February 2010; Boomie (2010) *Motherland Nigeria Tourist Attractions*.

Of the above, the most important cultural heritage attracting tourists from within and outside Nigeria include the slave trade relics in Badagry; museums and monuments reflecting specific historical and cultural experiences of the Nigerian people spread across the country (for example, National Museum of Colonial History and National War Museum in Abia State); the unique architecture of the emirate socio-political life in the northern Nigeria, Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove in Osogbo, Long Juju of Arochukwu, Eyo Masquerade and Festival in Lagos, indigenous textile/cloth making industry, boating and fishing-related sports such as the Argungu Fishing and Cultural Festival in Kebbi State (see Fig. 3), Durbar festival in northern Nigeria, among others. These assets are being sustained solely or with the combined efforts of the three-tiers of government (Federal, State and Local), private organizations, communities and individuals. The Federal Government however remains the major promoter, financier and manager of mega cultural events such as the annual Abuja Carnival. Government's dominance in the economy accounts for the limited participation of the private sector. Similarly, most of the festivals have their origins in the history of the people concerned. For instance, Argungu Fishing Festival, an annual four-day festival in Kebbi State, north-western Nigeria, began in 1934 as a mark of the end of the centuries-old hostility between Sokoto Caliphate and Kebbi Kingdom. The final day of the festival usually witness a competition in which thousands of men and women line up along the river, and at the sound of gunshot, all of them jump into the river with the target of discovering who catches within an hour the largest fish using traditional fishing tools and by hand.<sup>6</sup> The festival's sight as shown in Figure 3 provides the medium to showcase prowess.



**Figure 3: Argungu Festival in Kebbi State, Nigeria**

Source: *Argungu Festival*, Microsoft Encarta Premium 2009

<sup>6</sup>The winning fish in 2005 weighed 75kg and required four men to hoist it onto the scale.

Besides the open showcase of these cultural heritages, some notable museums are cited strategically in different locations of the country for people to visit. Some are accessible in major cities and towns while others are cited in the university-based Institute of African Studies such as those at the University of Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. *Ile-Ife* is widely acclaimed as the ‘spiritual’ capital of the Yoruba people and worth seeing for her historical and cultural significance.<sup>7</sup> From as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the city’s artisans crafted fine, natural cast-bronze and terracotta heads that are world-renowned for their beauty (Microsoft Encarta Premium 2009). In addition, *Ife* hosts the palace of the King, *Ooni of Ife*, who is traditionally renowned as the political and spiritual head of the Yoruba people. Even though slavery was unpopular and infamous transatlantic trading, the Badagry Slave Port in Lagos has also been given much attention of late. The tour of the locality offers vivid information on the abolished slave trade era, slave relic museum, the old slave route, the slave jetty where millions were offloaded and shipped in the journey to the *Unknown Destination*. Despite these assets, a major bane of tourism development in Nigeria is the state of infrastructure and security, which have gained prominent attention of the international media, as discussed in the subsequent section.

#### 4.0 Social Infrastructure and Tourism in Nigeria

A major hindrance to tourism development in Nigeria is the lack of necessary modern infrastructural facilities. Nigeria ranked 119 out of 131 countries and 2.2 on the scale of 1 to 7 on infrastructure on the *Global Competitive Index 2007-2008* (The Nation, 2009:6). For Nigeria and others not doing well on this parameter, Honey and Gilpin (2009:1) recommended in their executive summary ‘investment in infrastructure and human capacity, the development of comprehensive national strategies, the adoption of robust regulatory frameworks, mechanisms to maximize in-country foreign currency earnings, and efforts to reduce crime and corruption.’ Besides lack of efficient and easy to understand transportation system, most Nigerian towns and cities are not planned, no proper labeling of streets and houses, and no reliable guide map illustrating what to see in a given destination and precise location. People mostly depend on oral descriptions, which most often imprecise to locate places of interest. Similarly, many other social problems have been traced to high level of poverty among the vast majority of the Nigerian populace.

Similar to the infrastructural deficiencies is the lack of organized tour operators necessary to marketing tour destinations. The optimism here is that the sustenance of the current democratic governance will boost the nation’s image among the comity of nations and enhance investment opportunities particularly in the tourism sector. The extent of attracting investors, both local and foreign, into the abundant tourism potentials will depend on the extent good governance is institutionalized. The enormity of the Nigeria’s tourism infrastructural deficiency is vivid in the quote below:

For tourism potentials in Nigeria to be utilized sustainably, the necessary infrastructures and enabling environment and information on tourism which will attract tourists must be available. Enabling environment in this case refers to all the parameters required to make a complete tour, such as good roads, functional telecommunications, good accommodation and adequate security. Information on the existence of attractions sites and these infrastructures must be available to tourists and the general public. This means that raw data on tourist sites and infrastructures has to be gathered, processed, structured, then stored and organized in such a way it is easily retrievable from storage (Ologun, Taiwo and Adeofun, n.d.).

The sector has suffered from inadequate funding in the past years. The implications of the low level of funding include low development of tourist facilities and sites, low demand, apathy and poor perception of tourism in Nigeria.

#### 5.0 Security, Mass Media and Tourism in Nigeria

Security considerations feature prominently in tourism decisions, whether local or international. Whereas security information can be obtained from several sources, the mass media play a major role in bringing such report to public knowledge in the contemporary world. Since negative occurrences usually make the news more than “good news”, it is not surprising that most unstable societies often do not enjoy high tourism patronage because of the volume of negative information being relayed on them through the local and international mass media. Not only do the media report the news, they create the news by deciding what to report. As the information concerning various societies are transmitted through the news items to which the public are exposed, this influences the way the public view the story as well as the people involved in the events. Thus, the mass media through subtle means create unconscious images of the people and events, which ultimately influences the way they relate with the realities surrounding the concepts (Asakitikpi, 2009).

The mass media are complex organizations involved in developing messages which are usually transmitted to thousands of people at the same time locally and/or internationally. The ability to communicate to a wide variety of people at different geographical locations at the same time grants the mass media the advantage of speed and source of information that are not location-bound. Thus far, the content of the news, particularly the international media, and its indiscriminate dissemination constitute one dimension to the problem of poor image of tourism in most African countries, Nigeria in particular.

The more favourable a country is ranked on security the more progress such would make in tourism, and vice versa. Even though Nigerians have been generally described as friendly to visitors, incessant threat to security of lives and properties remains a major concern and often gauged by potential tourists. More than any other regions of the world, the sub-Sahara African region has witnessed political instabilities of different dimensions, thus contributing to the region ranking least in security provisioning. Particularly in Nigeria, promotion of cultural heritage through tourism has been

<sup>7</sup> Legend has it that Ile-Ife was founded by Oduduwa, the creator of mankind (Microsoft Encarta 2009).



greatly hampered by the problem of insecurity, especially the frightening dimension of kidnapping in the oil-rich Niger-Delta region, and of late, the *Boko Haram* insurgency. The emergence of militancy in the Nigeria's oil-rich Niger-Delta region and cases of kidnapping targeted at the outset at the petroleum industry employees, particularly the expatriates in the 1990s and 2000s affected significantly the fledgling tourism industry in Nigeria. However, just as the security situation in the destination countries is important, so also literatures have shown that tourists do upset social stability in the host community. For instance, in the submission made by Honey and Gilpin (2009:1) in their study of India, Kenya, and Nigeria: (i) that relative peace and some degree of economic development are preconditions for a successful tourism industry; (ii) although it has the capacity to help promote peace and prosperity, tourism can also cause a great deal of harm unless it carefully developed; (iii) to deliver optimal benefits, tourism must be respectful of the environment and mindful of cultural and social traditions; and (iv) tourism must be supported by a coherent national strategy and robust laws.

With this hind-sight, one can argue that tourism-related influx of people of other cultures into a particular environment can also generate some anti-social behaviour unknown in the host communities. For instance, the growth of prostitution, crime and gambling has been mentioned frequently as negative effects of tourism development (Wall and Mathieson, 2006:242). This is true of some leading cities in Nigeria such as Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Benin and Warri that are cosmopolitan and experienced significant number of domestic and foreign visitors, thus paving the way for prostitution and other forms of crimes. Other negative consequences are the dark effects of foreign culture and spread of communicable diseases across borders.

On the final note, as real as these security problems are in the African region, the fact remains that they are often exaggerated in the media where "bad news" are given the prime of place and often gained substantial global interest (Asakitikpi, 2009). Comparing the content of the international media and what obtains in reality, it is arguable that there are vast unseen sections of the Nigerian societies that need to be projected. Strictly speaking, an improvement in the security situation of a nation will significantly boost her tourism industry as tourists are usually selective of their destinations.

## 6.0 Highlights of Nigeria's Tourism Policy

The investment situation in Nigeria immediately after political independence from colonial rule on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1960 was largely state dominated particularly through successive Development Plans. This situation changed dramatically from mid-1980s as a result of the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) as well as the market driven economic policies that followed SAP. Some incentives were packaged by the government in the 1990 National Tourism Policy to enhance private sector participation. The main thrust of government's tourism policy is to generate foreign exchange, encourage even development, promote tourism based rural enterprises, generate employment and accelerate rural-urban integration and cultural exchange. The major strategies towards achieving these include:

- i. *Infrastructural Development*: this requires that government will provide basic infrastructural facilities such as good roads, water, electricity, communications and hotels to centres of attraction in order to accelerate their development for the purpose of exploiting fully their touristic value. The realization of this goal depends on liaising and networking among appropriate government agencies responsible for tourism promotion and development through infrastructural provisioning.
- ii. *Concession of Land*: this requires government at various levels to provide land without any hindrance for tourism development at concessional rates and conditions favourable to investment and the realization of investment thereon. The approach to achieving this include abolition of annual ground rent within the period of construction and development of tourism, demarcation of potential Tourism Zones and their products from other usage, among others.
- iii. *Fiscal and Other Incentives*: to boost the level of private sector investment in tourism, it is treated by government as a preferred sector, like agriculture. Government also introduced such incentives as, tax holidays, tax rebate and soft loans, with long period of grace to potential investors in the tourism sector.

## 7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

As analyzed, Nigeria's tourism assets is widespread encompassing natural features such as government and privately owned parks, waterfalls, the beautiful outcrop of rocks in different shapes, plateau, forest resources and wildlife, beaches, among others. On the other hand, cultural tourism is the domain where the ingenuity, creativity and originality of the people are on display. The current wide gap between these assets and the potential contributions of tourism to Nigeria's national income make inevitable the need for stronger commitment that will enable the sector assume its much-anticipated developmental role.

Existing literatures have outlined constraints to tourism in Africa and Nigeria in particular (Ashley and Roe, 2002; UNDP, 2003:79; Falade, 2000:3; IMF, 2005:73). Most African countries, with particular reference to Nigeria, have failed to develop the industry due to poor economic conditions, political instability, poor infrastructure and security challenges. Since 1990s, Nigeria has renewed her concerted efforts towards developing, managing and marketing her tourism assets. The aim, first and foremost, is to diversify the economy and escape the negative consequences of mono-economy that depends on petroleum as the major foreign exchange earner. This paper has outlined Nigeria's great tourism potentials, which lies in her diverse natural resources and the people. The wide dichotomy between the traditional and modern lifestyles also provides a contrast that tourists use to appreciate. This argument is summarized in the statement made by a male Polish friend who was on visit to Nigeria in 2005 and returning to Ibadan after touring round Nigeria:

*Anyone that really wants to appreciate the Nigerian cultures should go to the rural areas, the villages where people have not been contaminated with foreign civilization or the hustle and bustle of the city life. People are generally friendly and open to the outsiders (a Male Polish Tourist in Nigeria, 2005).*

Many of such positive feedback abound, giving hope that the future of tourism in Nigeria is not bleak after all. A number of recommendations are germane here. The first is the need for good governance and the political will to ensure conducive environment to articulate the various cultural heritage in an inalienable manner for development purpose. The entrenchment of good governance will pave the way for such vital deliverables and key infrastructures such as electricity, efficient modern transport system, functional medical facilities, among others. In other words, it is imperative for government at all levels to set the pace and commitment towards the development of the country's economy through the provision of basic infrastructural facilities that will help encourage investment and reduce the cost of doing business.

In addition, since there is hardly any modern society that is completely crime-free, and considering the huge negative reporting of Africa in the international media, the saying that 'people who travel should leave their prejudices at home' would be quite helpful for anyone that wishes to tour Africa and Nigeria in particular. It is also necessary that Nigerian tourism stakeholders should mount concerted efforts to channel positive information about the country to the outside world. As part of the global community, Nigeria should regularly take advantage of major global events to promote, showcase and sell her tourism assets. For instance, the participation of the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) at the Annual Travel Trade Exhibition 2010 held at the ExCel Centre, London yielded some gains as found in the signing of a deal between NTDC and the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA). The partnership with ABTA as anticipated would enhance Nigeria's image in the United Kingdom, Ireland and European markets. Similarly, Nigeria is being promoted on the Chinese website in the country's language. The concept of the *Nigerian Tourism Village* built in Johannesburg, South Africa by the NTDC during the 2010 FIFA World Cup can also be replicated and supported by the private sector organizations.

Major stakeholders such as the hoteliers, travel agents, tour operators, car hire service providers, government officials, and the general public also have roles to play by aiming to be at par in service delivery with what is obtainable in other tourist destinations around the world. Government has the responsibility to identify and demarcate potential tourism zones and their products from other usage. There is the need to sensitize destination communities to maintain friendly interactions with the local and foreign visitors to their communities. Above all, democracy all around the world has been a major factor that drives tourism, and Africa cannot be an exception. The extent of tourism development in Nigeria will depend on the sustainability of the democratization process and the entrenchment of democratic tenets such as transparency, accountability and respect for the rule of law. Diligent attention must be paid to the security and welfare of both the citizens and the visitors.

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