

Full Length Research

Visual Arts and Tourism in the Wheel of Sustainable Development

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Visual arts may be considered a significant and sustainable route to knowledge and technological advancement and should be projected to promote tourism which could galvanize sustainable development with astute precision. Art is life, it promotes culture, entertainment, education, tourism, therapeutically, it heals, and aesthetically appealing, these among others are some specific benefits visual arts could offer to man and the society if properly harmonized, integrated and projected in the wheel of sustainable development. However, different studies may have been carried out by different scholars and researchers on tourism and the visual arts as a discipline, but no significant or comprehensive studies have channeled in the above direction hence the study. Primary and secondary sources of data collation, including participant observation method of research were used to achieve the objective of the study. Some of the findings include that visual arts and tourism are veritable tools for sustainable development. Visual arts and tourism are neglected in the development agenda of Nigeria. The study observes that there is over dependency on trivial issues like corruption, looting, extra judicial killings, rape, agitations, primitive acquisition of wealth against values, norms, human capacity building, technological breakthrough, education and others that may enhance sustainable development. These were followed by conclusion and possible recommendations.

Keywords: Visual Arts, Tourism, development

INTRODUCTION

Art and tourism are significant phenomenon in the history and development of developed economies. Consequently, developing economies, particularly, African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, Kenya and others may not develop effectively without embracing significantly Arts and tourism including organized and standardized culture. Africa, indeed Nigeria will grow exceedingly fruitful if they could harmonize and integrate visual arts and tourism in their development agenda. In support of this view,

Austen-Peters (2019) in an interview with Aljazeera asserts that "if Africa can position itself as a global centre for creative arts, individual creativeness and entire economies will prosper". Again, Austen-Peters (2017) in her contribution to "How Art can be a force for development in Africa", opines that if Africa commits to bringing the creative sector to life, African art can breathe new life into the continent.

In view of the above, it is clear that Africa has a long history of creative expressions as

exemplified in visual arts of (Bronze casting and Blacksmithing) Igboukwu, Ile-Oluji in Ondo State, Benin and others. Apart from these, Africa is rich and highly endowed with rich culture and artistic heritage including theatre arts and literature as exemplified by Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Pete Edochie, others include, Ben Enweonwu, Ben Ekanem, Uche Okeke, Chike Aniakor, Yusuf Grillo, Kolade Oshinowo, Okpu Eze, Joe Musa and others of great talent and creativity as well as visual arts culture which have brought fame and honour to the individuals, indeed Nigeria.

However, one may observe that before the advent of colonial administration, Nigeria, particularly Igbo, have already established and organized system of existence which hitherto projected and catapulted them into international scene. Apart from ndigbo, other ethnic groups from other geopolitical zones equally have their own culture and other ways of visual expressions which brought them to lime light as noted by Egonwa (2017), examples are Benin, Ife, Kwara, Nok, as well as Ibibio, particularly, in their Ekpe masquerading and nsibidi visual art expressions.

The study observes that visual arts in any civilized society could be a force for development not only in Africa but in the entire world. For examples, China, Japan, America, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Russia and others may not have been where they are today economically and technologically without creativity and imagination which are embedded in visual arts. The developing economies, indeed Africa could have been better placed in all ramifications if the needful had been holistically done to reflect the economic and technological needs of Africa, indeed, the world following numerous and abundance of resources available, yet African politicians, Nigeria in particular lack the potential and capacity to develop beyond where they are today. This is attributable to greed, lack of foresight and focus, misplacement of priority, chasing of trivial issues and lack of development agenda and others.

The study is of the view that creativity and artistic culture and expertise should be injected in to Nigeria development agenda, instead of dwelling greatly on oil and looting, thereby, neglecting salient areas of the economy to suffer. However, primitive acquisition of wealth has impacted negatively on the overall development of most developing economies, particularly Nigeria. One would have expected that diversification and creatively integrating visual arts culture into

Nigeria's development programmes and social curricular could massively inspire sustainable development against the backdrop of over dependency on oil.

However, the emergence of colonial administrators in Nigeria, significantly altered and destroyed the cultural and creative process of indigenous people of Nigeria. Oloidi (2018:11) further remarks that instead of the colonial administrators to see the culturally unique potent and conceptually fertile nature of Nigerian traditional art, they concluded, they are fetish and idolatry. During the Benin punitive expedition of 1897, the precious art works of indigenous people of Nigeria, which are of priceless status were looted by same people who discarded and described these art works as fetish objects.

These account for relative low acceptance of visual arts in the society, despite numerous benefits visual arts stand to offer to the society and beyond. However, it must be noted that most of these precious art works are scattered all over European countries including United Kingdom, Belgium, Portugal, and others begging for repatriation. However, the study is of the opinion that the present Nigerian politicians should have been able to build an artistic and creative dynasty for the country to boost tourism and other areas of the economy rather than over dependency on oil and looting. In furtherance to this, the study shares the view that if Nigeria had been artistic and creatively viable, the nation may not have find herself in the present economic, technological as well as human capacity woes including agitations for independent states from different groups, as it is at the moment.

VISUAL ARTS

The study sees visual arts as a process or product of new knowledge which appeals first to the sense of sight. This could be by way of Sculpture, Painting, Graphics, Textile design, Ceramic production, Photography including Architecture and Animation. On the other hand, Ayakoroma (2011:4) considers visual arts as the use of one's imagination to create things of aesthetic significance or beauty. According to him, visual arts is a process whereby the creator draws from real life to recreate the impressions he or she has had about certain situations. On the other hand Egonwa (2011:1) sees visual arts as the stimulation of an experience in forms and images with materials that can be seen.

Examples



Figure 1: Artist: Nnaji Henry D., Medium: Ink on paper
Year: 2018



Figure. 2: There is hope Artist: Adiele Stanley,
Medium: Oil on board Year: 2020

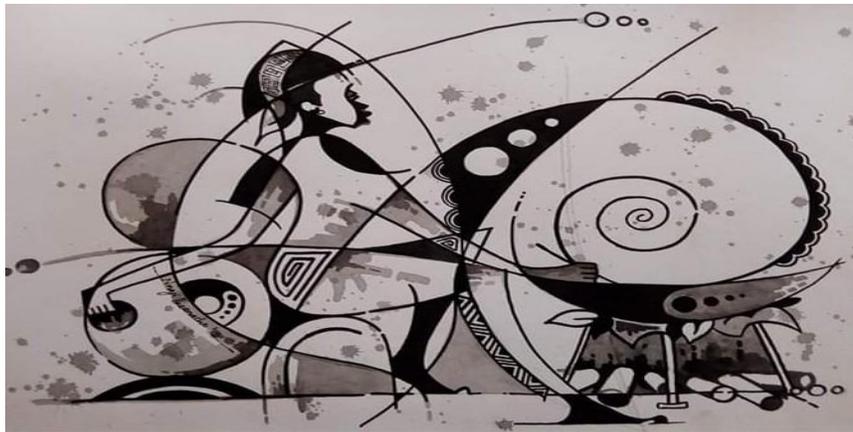


Figure 3: Hustle Artist: Nnaji Henry D., Medium: Ink on paper Year: 2018

However, there are as many definitions of visual arts as there are different artists and people. Every definition tilts towards one direction - that is expression of feelings, ideas, concepts and others that must appeal first to the sense of sight and at the same time, aesthetically appealing.

The importance of visual arts to the society may not be overemphasized as Ikwuegbu (2010:140) in his contributions to *Journal of Nigerian Languages and culture*, observes that development of human beings through creativity-based curriculum provided by arts will help in actualizing human development as the core of any national development effort, rather than focusing on science and technology alone or economic

growth which is not the same thing as sustainable national development. Again, for development to be achieved, there has to be a creatively desired activity or activities, which could inspire growth and effective development at all levels.

One may suggest that development may not necessarily be economic growth, but the conditions in which people in a society have enough food and jobs as well as income inequality is significantly reduced. Therefore, in view of the present economic realities, one may agree that visual arts provide opportunities for job creations, thereby, providing employment and foods to individuals and groups committed to it, and also alleviating poverty.

Examples includes figures 4-6



Figure 4: Culture Artist: Nnaji Henry D., Medium: Ink on paper
Year: 2017



Figure 5: Horse head
Courtesy: facebook.com, 2020



Figure 6: Untitled
Courtesy: facebook.com, 2020

The study is of the view that diversification and creativity should be injected into the development process to tackle effectively major areas of the economy as this may boost self sufficiency, poverty alleviation, entrepreneurial development, human capacity and technological advancement.

Visual arts provides suitable platform for all the above and creates opportunities for self and human development, creation of aesthetic

awareness, therapeutic functions, promotion of indigenous cultures, adorning the major city and communities of the society, religious functions, education of the individuals could be massively achieved through graphic illustration, animation and three dimensionality: including beautification of environment through aesthetic awareness.

All these put together provide a harmonious and beautiful environment which in the long run promote tourism. Tourism is inspired by

effective hospitality and suitable environment. However, tourism could massively boost the economy if well organized, integrated and injected into social and economic development agenda of any nation. Visual arts with all the outstanding benefits to the society could promote tourism which in the long run promote the economy, thereby alleviating poverty and promote healthy living in the society.

Therefore, government should encourage visual arts to promote tourism in the country. Amusement parks, adorned with Paintings and Sculptures including Art museums established every state capitals to cater for the needs of the people as well as foreigners. The importance of visual arts and tourism may not be overemphasized in a society like Nigeria beclouded with poverty and income inequality with corruption at every nook and cranny of the country.

Conclusively, Gowing (1995:508) records that the bronzes of Igbo-Ukwu in the present day Anambra state of Nigeria were discovered in 1938 when a cistern was dug in Isaiah Anozie's compound. The site proved to be a repository for elaborately decorated objects - mace-heads,

vessels and other items of ceremonial wear. This site, if well organized could be a significant centre of attraction for not only tourists, but artists and non-artists, researchers, educators, scholars, government and non-governmental organizations or agencies all over the world in search of new knowledge.

Museums and amusement parks could be built therein, for posterity, thereby, attracting tourists and may also attract investments and development, thereby, improving the economy. However, radio carbon tests agree in dating of these Igbo-Ukwu bronze objects to the end of the 1st millennium which makes these the earliest bronze using culture in Nigeria. This therefore implies that Igbo-Ukwu should have been situated as a huge centre of creative and artistic attraction today in Nigeria if the needful were to be done. Again, the Igbo-Ukwu bronzes according to Gowing (1995:508) are extremely detailed castings with elaborate surface decorations, but they differ from other African traditions of casting, such as those of Benin, Nok and Ife bronzes in Nigeria

Examples;



Figure 7: Igbo-Ukwu bronze pot on a stand rope together
Courtesy; Egonwa, 2017

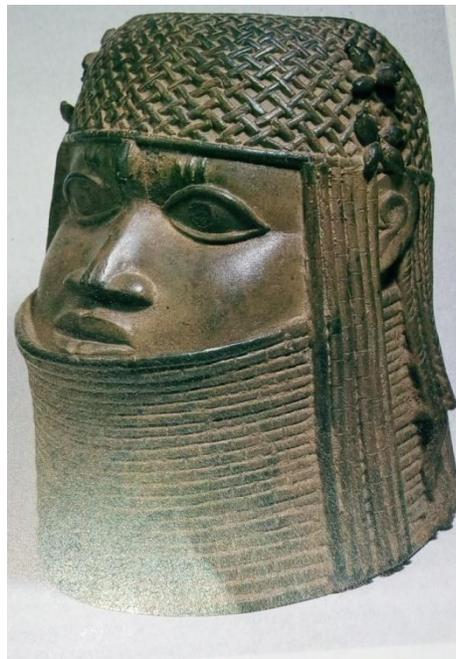


Figure 8: Benin Art – Oba head
Courtesy; Gowing, 1995

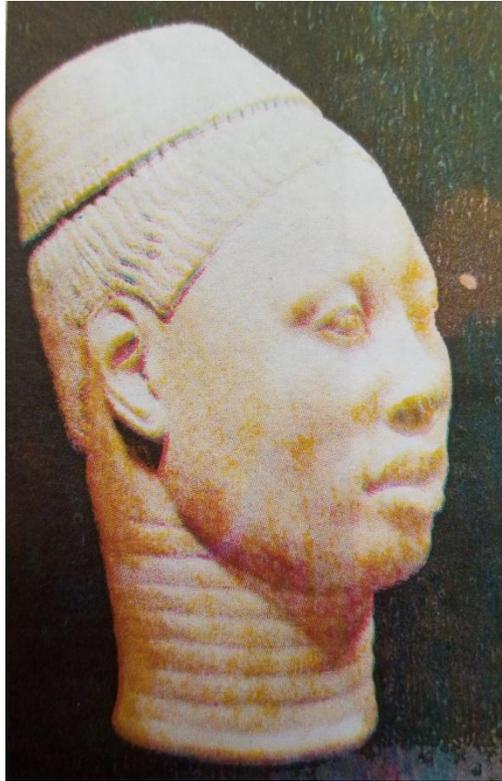


Figure 9: Ife art; Human terracotta head
Courtesy; Banjoko, 2009

It must be noted that Nigeria has a huge history of visual arts culture which has brought fame and honour to Nigeria artistically and culturally. These are exemplified in Benin arts, Ife art, Nok arts and Igbo-ukwu bronzes and others. Nigeria should have been a huge centre of attraction for artistic creations and tourism if the needful had been done. Visual arts and tourism could massively pave way for sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Visual arts as it appears at the moment is neglected and may not offer to the fullest, the expected benefits and experiences to the society. This undoubtedly poses a huge set back to sustainable development.

Nigerian school system should encourage the study of visual arts from nursery, primary through tertiary institutions. Instead of lip service, visual arts should be holistically embedded in the school curricular to reflect the essence, values, culture, and aesthetic appeal and awareness that may galvanize individuals and sustainable

development in Nigeria.

National theatre art complex, in Igbamu Lagos, may not be enough to cater for the needs of the teeming population of Nigeria, therefore, the study suggest that more of such National theatres should be built across the states and made accessible to all as this may promote knowledge, visual arts, research, entertainment as well as technology including employment.

Centres for visual arts, construction, fabrication technology could be established across the states to accommodate those people who may not go beyond JSS 3 certificate to be usefully engaged and contribute to the society innovations that may advance technology and sustainable development.

Visual arts may be considered a sustainable route to technological advancement and should be projected to promote tourism which could inspire sustainable development with astute precision.

Museum of contemporary arts and national history including visual arts galleries should be established across the country for education, entertainment, documentation, research and tourism. These however, will to a greater degree

boost the economy and pave way for sustainable national development.

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