

Cultural Resources Management as a Tool for Poverty Reduction in Africa

Abu S. Edet and Muhammad. K. Aliyu

Abstract

Economy and cultural imperatives are recognized as the most powerful forces shaping human development. Africa have diverse and rich heritage consisting of natural and cultural resources of universal importance. This paper discusses the practical challenges of empowering people to harness the economic potentials of their cultural resources for their material benefits. It suggest that Africa's economic transformation can be promoted through effective management and marketing of her cultural resources, and that African governments, stakeholders and private sector must work in partnership to yield the desired results.

Keywords: Natural and Cultural resources, economic potentials, effective management, marketing benefits.

Introduction

This work presents cultural resources as a means to poverty eradication and social development. It raises the issues of cultural

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resources heritage sustainability investment and development, and the new strategies for promotion and investments. As of 2017, the total population of Africa is estimated at 1.2 billion, representing approximately 15% of the world's population (World meters, 2017). Africa enjoys a diverse and rich cultural resources consisting of natural and cultural resources of worlds importance to human origins, and non-physical heritage of great traditions including yearly festival shows organized in different countries. According to the Cultural Economist, David Throsby, "in an increasingly globalized world, economic and cultural imperatives can be seen as two of the most powerful forces shaping human behavior" (Throsby, 2001). Throsby infers to the increasing recognition of the important role of culture in economic development. As a result, the authors wish to emphasize on how preserving and promoting heritage and cultural products is fundamental to the reduction of extreme poverty and usher in peace and harmony in African countries that are economically poor but endowed with rich and diverse cultural resources. Local communities in these countries can harness cultural resources to stimulate sustainable economic growth and, thus, help meet some of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the continent.

Africa's current efforts to eradicate extreme poverty are similar to those of other developing countries in different parts of the world. The authors believe that there should be direct correlations between local participation in preserving and promoting cultural heritage and success in poverty reduction measures and the long-term sustainability of other poverty eradication interventions. Although policy documents in many countries in Africa recognize the importance of community participation in implementing such measures, more must be done to address the practical challenges of empowering people to harness the economic potentials of their cultural resources for the material benefit.

Cultural Resources and Poverty Reduction

To address the question of whether the promotion of cultural resources can contribute to poverty eradication in Africa and other countries, a clear understanding of the terminology is imperative.

As used by the authors, the term “cultural resources” includes both the tangible or physical remains of cultural practices, and intangible that is oral practices and performances of a people. In Africa cultural resources managers are now paying more attention to the intangible cultural resources including dramatic arts, languages, traditional music, dance, folklore and the spiritual and philosophical system underlying those creations, because of the need to develop cultural tourism. In Africa the process of sustainable management of their cultural resources, the concept of cultural preservation is new in the sense that it fails to clearly distinguish between natural and cultural resources and the intangible and tangible aspects. Today's concept of cultural resources also incorporates contemporary culture as much as that of the past.

Nigeria's national cultural policy, for example, defines cultural heritage as consisting of artistic and cultural expressions. Artistic expression includes the various art forms and artifacts while cultural expressions include indigenous knowledge and skills, local languages, values, norms and traditions. The forms of Africa's cultural resources include oral traditions, languages, historic sites, natural sites, sacred sites, museum collections, handcrafts, rituals and festive events, rites and beliefs, music (vocal and instrumental), tradition knowledge and practices, literature, poetry, folklore, performing arts, traditional medicine, food and cooking and traditional sports and games. Africa's poverty eradication plan must recognize cultural resources as intrinsically valuable and an important dimension of identity to all Africans. Cultural recourses should be recognized as a form of capital which when well harnessed can help to move people, especially the rural community, out of poverty.

The Nigerian Federal Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National orientation (FMTCNO) is the highest policy advisory authority for the development of the cultural sector of Nigeria. Under this ministry is the Federal Department of Culture. The role of this department is the official creation and adoption of new cultural policies. The department is located in the (FMTCNO), where they are responsible to the minister for formal approval of the strategies for implementing the polices. Sometimes the minister wishes to seek the final approval

for new policies from the Federal Executive Council and sometimes to initiate and executive bill in order to pass such a policy or part thereof into law at the National Assembly.

When, for example, the Federal Government of Nigeria decided to shift emphasis in its ministerial structure from Federal Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation to Federal Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation, it looked as if there was despair in the administrative structure and the workings of the ministry. Today, we can see the policies governing the infrastructure of the ministry have changed, giving room to innovations and developments in all the parastatals under the ministry. The enhancement of tourism in Nigeria has become their priority. The frequent lack of orientation towards cultural resources and tourism has deprived the promotion of heritage and tourism in Nigeria. Fig.1 show cultural resources for economic transformation, partnership, policy and challenges for developing the cultural sector to enhance poverty reduction.

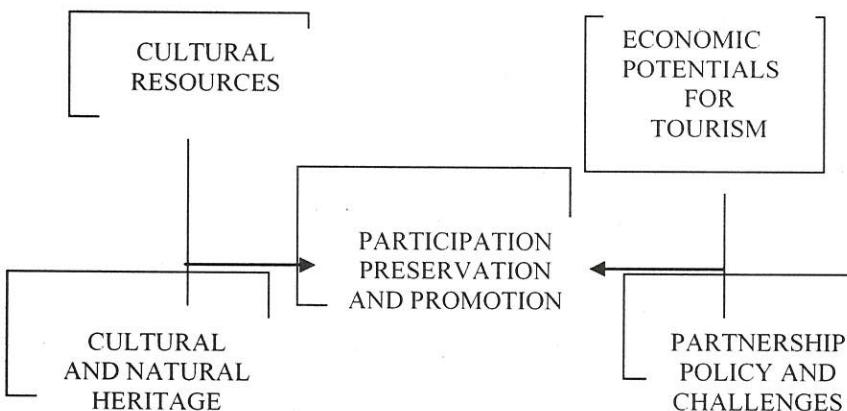


Fig.1: Cultural Resources for Economic Transformation

Cultural heritage policy is therefore the guidelines and decision to assist the cultural industry in meeting its objectives and goals. This is the result of actions of the government's various agencies and organizations. Culture is an instrument in the development of tourism in any given society. Curious tourists are always looking

out to see the people's way of life – modes of dressing, norms and social values, ethical and sexual behaviours, songs and dances, traditional religion, art and crafts. Short production of some prestigious films on the aforementioned cultural traits can develop tourism.

Mass Media and the Promotion of Cultural Tourism

Through the mass media, powerful cultural documentation will enhance publicity campaigns for more visits by tourists. The radio and television could be used as a gigantic instrument for the promotion of culture and development of tourism. The radio as mass media becomes the means to advertise activities in culture and tourism. The electronic media in general is an important communication system of which, if properly managed can crate regular and large number of listeners and viewers. There are large numbers of foreign radio listeners from Africa listening to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) radio or Voice of America (VOA) radio.

These agencies carry global news round the world. Lyrical or epic music popular among African listeners is used for the advertisement of one product or another. These features are often dynamic radio programmes that make tourists know more about African countries not only on the daily news. The programmes focus on tourist sites and attractions, festivals, carnivals. These media uses French, English and African Languages such as Hausa and Swahili to present news and attracts tourists listening to such stations to arrange visits such countries. Apart from the news they also communicate the weather of all region of the world to tourism investors, financiers, scientist and travelers. They also announce currency exchange rates which is important in the inflow of foreign exchange.

In the current process of rebranding tourism in Africa, the mass media occupies a strategic position between our cultural resources and tourism development. Indeed, mass media is the means of enlightenment and awareness in a given society. The media informs the tourist and promoters and creates the impact on what the tourist is going to see in different countries. Such information includes the

craftsman and crafts; the artists and his art as well as the exquisite environment, good manners of social conditions and hospitality. The mistake of the past was to set tourism without giving it adequate mass media coverage. All the aspects of tourism were frequently isolated from each other. Early tourism development did not aim at broadening the social dimension of the business of tourism. The sense of developing mass communication in tourism did not catch up earlier; rather it was isolation and alienation of the awareness of tourism, resulted in the poor development of tourism in Africa.

Promoting Cultural Resources in Africa

African cultural centres are not like the museum set up, but a local theater with organized cultural music and dance programmed for visiting tourists in mind. Local artist's shops producing local works of both tourist and traditional tools used by the local people for farming and kitchen utensils (Edet, 2002). These are sited next to the theatre for immediate view by visitors as they pay their way into the theatre. Attractive programmes are scheduled weekly depending on the festive seasons. For example, in Livingstone, Zambia such local theatres operate at Christmas season from December through early New Year January celebrations. Such cultural centres are common where visitors are the targeted audience. They serve to promote the intangible heritage of the community such as traditional music and dance shows. At the same time it promotes the tangible aspects of the community's material culture such as dance costumes, musical instruments which are also produced in the artists shops located inside the cultural centres. They are sold as gift items aimed at (or displayed for) visitors to buy.

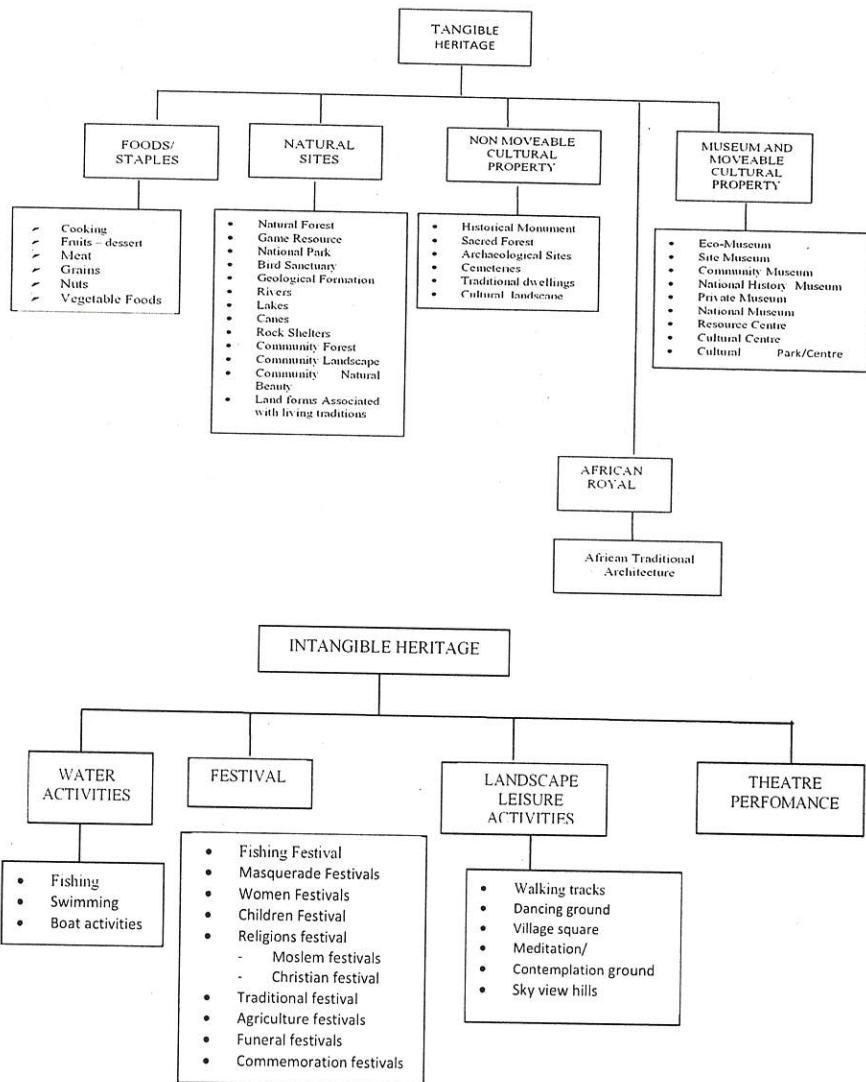


Fig. 2 (a) and (b): Shows the tangible and intangible resources in heritage sustainability management

The Museum as an Institution for Education and Leisure

Museum collections give us a wide graphic understanding of the artefacts whether it is archaeological or ethnographic (contemporary collections). The objects help us to grasp concepts, size and content

of a specific museum. These creative and varied collections content view open the mind of visitors no matter how many times they visit a museum. The museum preserved various objects of antiquities and the collections are just about everything mankind had used and uses in life. In archaeology, it is mostly ancient materials used in the past that constitute the artifacts; meanwhile in ethnography, it is the contemporary works of art used by modern and present people that are displayed. A combination of local, traditional and modern materials is commonly used in modern art production. African Governments must therefore develop innovative policy geared towards the use of cultural resources preserved in such museum as a means to alleviate poverty. The museums must also in historiographical study of Africa's collections (Izuakor, 1998).

Nigeria's natural heritage is so diverse that the issues of investing in their promotion for economic benefit has also become another fallow in the sustainability vocabulary with very little understanding and awareness of its role in enhancing societal benefits. There are numerous undeveloped natural resources sites in Africa that are potentially useful, such as forest reserved, biodiversity and geologic landscapes of natural beauty. They are vast for sustainable development initiatives and environmental sustainability strategies. A chart of the tangible cultural resources (figs. 2and 3) provides a list of some of the natural places as examples. Wild life promotes economic life line for local communities and visiting tourists. The communities involved are major stakeholders. They are involved in the activities of wildlife promotion through development of enterprises such as souvenir shops, cyber shops, coffee shops, restaurant, etc.

There are regular theatre performances in countries like Nigeria and many West African countries in December up to the New Year celebrations in January. Such cultural centres are common where visitors are the target audience. Such centres also serve to promote the intangible resources of the community such as traditional music and dance shows. The theatre art entrepreneur carries with it a triple bottom line approach to the cultural business promotion. There is the production and sales of art works as gift items; the artistic music and dance performance to entertain not only the local people

but also visiting tourists and the sales of gift times, traditional foods, natural and local drinks.

Community Participation

Turning to community participation, the term implies that local people are directly involved in projects intended to improve their lives. Participation is especially important when it comes to cultural resource projects because culture is a human activity first and foremost, and without people, cultural resource is meaningless. Community participation helps keep the line of communication between the government and the community open, which, in turn prevent conflict, thus bringing in peace and harmony among the people. This is the area where community leaders such as clan heads and district heads are most useful. They serve, for example, as link between the people and government. Cultural practitioners are the majority of members of local communities; and due to the lack of vital information on the economic usefulness of culture, coupled with today's religious misunderstandings, they are uncertain whether cultural resources has the potential to reduce poverty. Some of them are skeptical, while others just admit they do not know. If the community is involved in the cultural heritage project planning process, it can help with decision regarding the location of services, beneficiaries, and community leadership. Participation also ensures control over the allocation and mobilization of community resources and the sustainability and ownership of the projects.

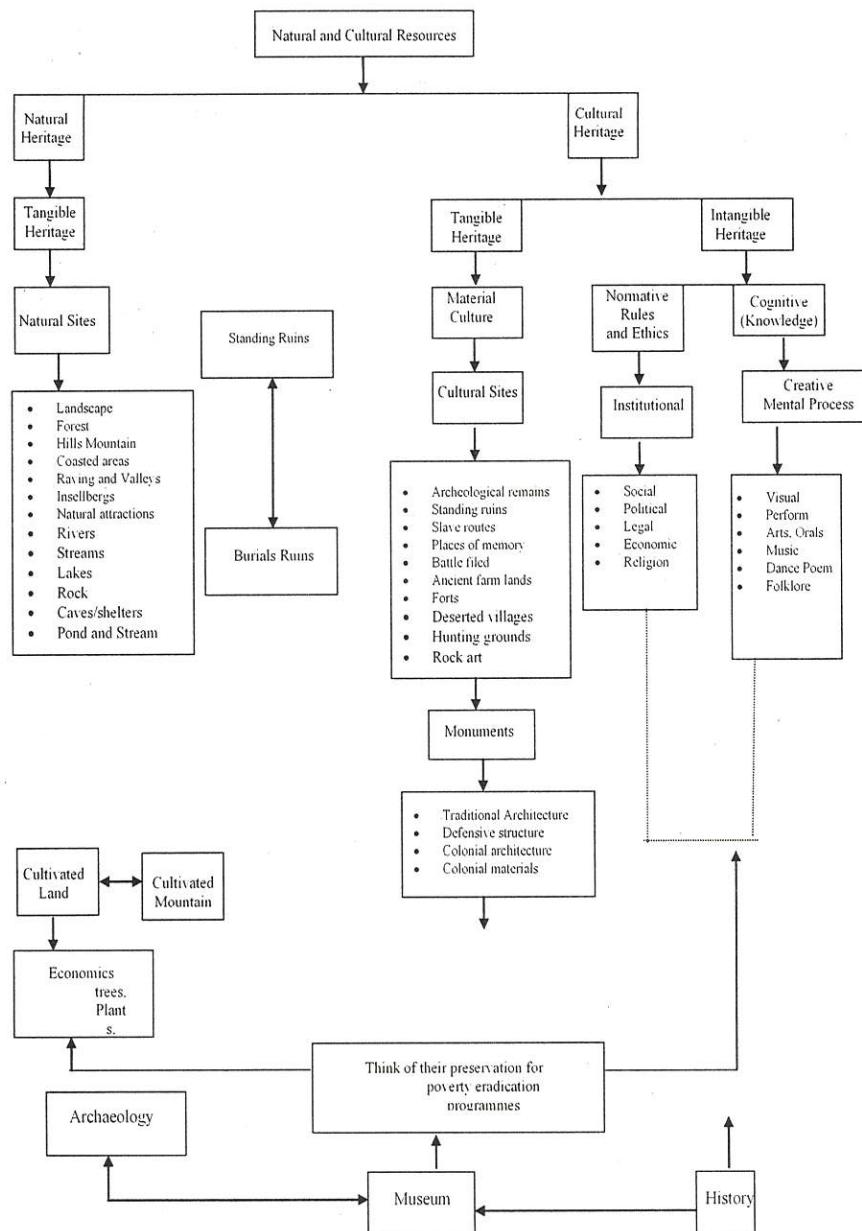


Fig. 3: Shows a Cultural Resources Preservation and Management for Poverty Reduction

According to UNESCO, in recent years, cultural industries have become a significant source of social and economic development and are now recognized as a powerful driving force of world trade, offering great potential for developing economies rich in cultural resources. Recent figures clearly illustrate the economic and job creation potential of cultural industries. In 2001 and 2002, the creative and copyright industries alone accounted for 3.3 percent, 5 percent, and 5.24 percent of the gross domestic products of Australia, the United Kingdom, and United States, respectively ((UNESCO, 2001). Africa can develop its economic and job creation viewing the achievements of other developed nations aforementioned. Furthermore, cultural resource can indirectly contribute to poverty eradication by cultivating environment in which other poverty reduction intervention can succeed. Cultural resources development influences how people make choices and respond to various development initiatives in their localities. If development initiatives ignore cultural consideration, they can easily fall short of achieving the desired impact on the lives of target communities.

The Role of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) In Cultural Resources Sustainable Development

For sustainability practice, the projections made above must be seriously considered in order to drive the development agenda forward. There is need for a more imaginative, more flexible approach on how to promote and invest in Africa's heritage industry, be it movable or non-movable. The sustainable development approach to planning cultural resource business is very important and inevitable because most development for tourism depends on attractions and activities related to the cultural and natural environments, historic sites and monument, and cultural features of areas. Tourists like to visit places that are attractive, but not polluted or congested. If cultural resources are degraded or destroyed, then tourism cannot thrive in such areas. Bhatia (2006) has emphasized that "tourist seek destinations that have a high level of environmental quality" and that sustainable development approach implies that the natural and cultural resources for tourism

are concerned for continuous use in the future, while still bringing benefits to the present society (Bhatia, 2006).

In line with that, the micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) have great role to play in heritage tourism development. The MSMEs are very important in delivering various services to the sector. They create employment and maintain a balance between the different work force. They are the developers of the key elements in insuring the success of cultural resource management operations in the cultural sector. Ojohwu (2013) asserts that no emerging economy can grow without a robust Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) network which serves as a powerful catalyst for growth and development; especially in the social and economic sense. It is believed that they have the best potential for growth and that new ideas can easily be introduced and tested at all levels. They help to reduce poverty and empower people through provision of jobs where they are needed in most urban communities and rural areas Ojohwu, 2013). MSMEs therefore provide support for the growth of Cultural tourism.

The Strategies for Promotion and Investments

Stake holdings in the management of cultural resources and planning of business for corporate sustainability and responsibility involve corporate services such as event management, brand management, fund management, media management and financial services. There is also the need for innovations, investments and ethical concerns which are equally considered are social benefits. Training and skill acquisition for sustainable development, food and drinks services, transportation and accommodation services, tourism management and consultancy, think-tank services become inevitable for adequate running of any of the businesses.

Africa, as the case may be, has diverse cultural and natural resources that can support a thriving tourism industry. Similarly, there is a growing interest among practitioners to harness the huge opportunities offered by tourism. Unfortunately, however, Africa is yet to utilize the vast tourism resources in the continent to achieve the desired results. The diversity her ethnic nationalities, the sheer size of her population and the variations in her physical environment

provide a fertile ground for a viable tourism industry. It is therefore suggested here that indigenous approaches to policy development towards the use of cultural resources as a tool for poverty eradication must be revived to include MSMEs and the financial inclusion for the business enterprises to gain access to financial services of the local banks in Nigeria. This will go a long way to enhance the pervasive inequalities that exist between large established businesses and the small and medium scale ones.

In line with the Festival of African Arts and Cultures FESTAC (1977) recommendations on the inevitability of the use of tangible and intangible African heritage as sources of research and writing of history, urgent efforts must be made by African historians to develop strategies for diversifying historical research and writing of the abundant information embedded in African cultural properties. At the international level, African diversification fund should therefore be set up to provide technical assistance and funding for diversification of programmes involving history and archaeology alongside other allied disciplines to enhance heritage development.

The lack of diversification is a result primarily of the academic structural inadequacies of most African universities and historical schools and of a lack of resources for investment in new innovative practice for example, the scientific study analysis and dating of cultural properties. The process of understanding the cultural objects through laboratory investigations particularly dating and authentication of objects becomes added advantage in historical writing that promotes heritage education. Cultural resources provide a forum for interaction among academics and interested persons and can serve as a multi-disciplinary platform for the formation of an academic association. The number of tertiary institutions that offer courses on cultural resources and tourism in Africa is also on the increase thereby giving future hope for cultural tourism.

Conclusion

Africa is at a development crossroads. It must explore all possibilities for stimulating economic growth and eradication extreme poverty to enhance peace and harmony. Concentrating development effort

only a few economic sectors like agriculture that is extremely competitive on the international market may not only be the main solution. Cultural heritage and the related cultural industries if supported can offer other equal attractive opportunities for creating jobs, increasing incomes and export earnings, and improving lives. Arhuidese (1993) regards policy as a guide to action meant to mobilize and motivate the people by disseminating and propagating ideas which promote national pride, solidarity and consciousness (Arhuidese, 1993). Public policies and programmes must ensure that heritage business entities promote social welfare, create employment opportunities, well-being and freedom for the people. The answer lies in integrating cultural resources into Africa poverty eradication strategies through the effective participation of those who own the heritage - the people. Cultural tourism is therefore peoples oriented and public centered in Africa.

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