
Art and Tourism: An Inevitable Partnership For Environmental And Social Prosperity

Chris Echeta

Abstract

As the world becomes a global village, mature disciplines seem to encourage that by locating common grounds from where they can establish a shrunken interdisciplinary relationships with a central focal point—resource utilization and management. This global emphasis on such common interests pulls down, to a large extent , all the interjections of subject independence and subjugates them as symbiotic resources to maximize benefits. Expressing the possibilities of such symbiosis is what this paper has done by examining the prosperity potentials of art and tourism on the environment. When these resources are tapped through good management, they yield further benefits which multiply geometrically for the benefit of the social environment thereby prospering the landscape and the “humanscape”. This paper explores the above partnership possibilities and how to sustain and uphold this global vision of interconnectivity. Art and tourism partnership has also been shown here to restrict itself more to the physical and geo-spatial boundaries over which to exercise itself in a bid to upgrade the aesthetic status of environments bequeathing to them content and meaning.

Introduction

The topic of this paper and its handling could not have come at a better time than now when humanity is battling to recover its environment, reduce poverty through the creation of opportunities for social re-engineering. The body contains melting pots of cooperation between art and tourism as environmental resources. It begins with two levels of environment on which tourism can situate and, incidentally, these levels are innately permeated by art and creativity which manifest in designs, where designs are evidence of art. It also makes allusions to the mobility of art in various areas of human performance, tourism not left out.

Tourism is seen as a social benefit of a rare mix of art and the environment nourishing humanity and its appetite towards recreation, health, better international understanding and friendship, industry as well as business in terms profit and loss. A few

tourist interests are discussed in the body of this paper to augment the people's current awareness level and to highlight/trail the artistic and creative potentials embedded in the silent symbiosis between humanity and tourism through art. In conclusion, the paper draws attention to security implications as an inevitable ingredient for environmental wholesomeness. For the writer, the preservation of life and property, which is the major security objective, provides the structure against which tourism must lean to guarantee this environmental wholesomeness. "Wholesomeness" in this case, involves knowledge of the environment, provision for its occupants and the sustainability of its economic potentials.

Major Levels of Environment

For the purpose of this presentation, two levels of environments are considered.

1. Physical environment

This is the environment in which all physical senses can be perceived. On this platform lie the foundations and concepts this paper has treated. It is, however, necessary to note that this level, though physical, can impact on the psychology and mental disposition of humans.

2. Mental environment

This environment is the one that is eternally insulated from the physical senses. It is the native land of all thoughts and creative incubations. It represents the database of every design and creative formation in shape and form. Visual and Literary works are also incubated in this environment. Story lines of authors, scripts and scripts of playwrights or creative efforts of the best designers will amount to nothing if they remain in this mind and imaginative environment. It is from there that such energies are "down loaded" and appreciated or utilized in various dimensions as resources in various areas of life.

The UNESCO definition of the environment can be summarized this way:

All the stock of physical and social resources available at a given time and in a given location for the satisfaction of human needs and aspirations.

This definition summary, while noting that the environment is a resource whose beneficiary is man, agrees with itself in the omission of the mental dimension of the environment.

Art

There is no single word or a string of words that can adequately define or explain the word “art”. Its understanding can better be explained through function. Art, as a resource, exercises unprecedented mobility on all aspects of human endeavour. It traverses the terrain of technology nourishing the ligaments of electronics, exploring the space in aerodynamic capsules and automobile designs.

Physically, art rears its head in humans quite early. It prompts the simplistic sand activity in infants while targeting more sophisticated designs much later. It invades the world of toys converting them into agents of cognitive development in children. By so doing, it strains to enlarge and sharpen children’s innate creative topography on which future design capabilities will be situated.

In learning, well-illustrated textbooks in all disciplines are easier to read and learn from. Areas responsible for this are drawing, graphics and painting. In architecture, various types of models—human, house, tree, heart and car models are sculptures in-the-round.

Medical illustration is an area of specialization and makes a critical input in medical education. This is evidently clear in places like in orthopaedic hospitals where artificial limbs, skeletons and many other replacement structures are invariably put to use. All these are works of art in sculpture. Needless to mention the art input in automobile industry where beauty of form meets function as an impetus for choice. According to, Henry Miller in Uzoagba (2001) in his “Wisdom of the Heart” that “....Art is only a means to life, to life more abundant. It is not itself the life more abundant. It merely points the way....”

Tourism

Tourism, which is humanity-based has to do with the gratification of the human appetite for relief outside the stressful imperatives of professional duty post. Tourism is a benefit accruing from a relationship engineered between human design and creativity on the one hand and nature-prescribed environment.

Umoh (1999), says that “tourism cultivates a culture of relaxation, leisure and pleasure, the sum total of that leading to good physical and mental fitness, balanced nervous system and long life.” This opinion supports the humanity-based stance of tourism as a resource. It also follows that tourism looks after the overall well-being of both the environment and its occupants. This is a part of the socio-environmental prosperity. Tourist

attractions, as the name goes, must be attractive and beautiful. Without art, tourism will naturally lose its saltiness and become tasteless.

Art and art-based designs remain the common denominator in all forms of tourist efforts. For such efforts to be worth it, they must be strong enough in attractiveness to touch off a chain of human movement regionally and globally. They also have to satisfy the inquisitiveness of sight-seers and seekers of recreation.

According to Anijah-Obi (2001), tourism is big business in some countries and places. In an attempt to prove this point, she informs that in Rome, the government spent more than \$500million renovating hundreds of crumbling historic structures—the Sistine Chapel, the Coliseum and the Trevi Fountain. In 1992, according to her, Valencia, Spain's largest city attracted 73,400 tourists. The same author, quotes Time, (October 30, 2000): “

An estimated 657 million people crossed their home borders to go on international tourist trips in 1999, generating \$450 billion in earnings, an increase of 3.2% over 1998 and highest revenue lever ever....”

The beauty of the art-influenced environment and the attractiveness of its activities are judged not only in its numerical human turnover but also in its ability to create it. Tourism can only be sustainable in an environment whose value-added retention and maintenance is guaranteed through art-initiated activities. From the above, the enormous economic and social benefits accruing from the environment through art-led tourist performance represents only but a tip of the multi-faceted resources inherent in art and tourism.

Tourist Designs

Tourism swallows “volumes and profuse quantities” of creativity where creativity is art-based and this is what confers attractive legitimacy to an environment. One clear deduction from the foregoing is that the absence of art will cripple tourism completely since art entails design, colour, form, function and function-based activities. Putting it succinctly, all tourist benefits and resources are hinged on the creative performance of art and its capacity to augment and establish beauty environmentally.

Tourist designs may be classified into three broad areas:

- (a) Designs by Nature
- (b) Designs by Man

(c) Natural Designs tailored by Man

(a) Designs by Nature

Nature sometimes appears to impose environmental designs on humanity. In a strict sense, it does not actually do that, it allows natural phenomena run their course. It is this course that man inherits and interprets as designs along tourist view point. The assessments of these natural “designs” are made using “beauty” or “artistic” or still on a broader note, “attractive” s yardsticks. This scale of values, even though subjective, remain within the limits of art foundations. Such phenomena as waterfalls, hot springs, mountain ranges, caves, rock formation, gulleys, erosion sites, and ice caps are some of the natural-occurring points to note under designs by nature.

In fragile environments nature imposes great uncertainty on the productivity of any particular sections of a resources system....
(McKean, 1995).

The above establishes nature as a stingy major shareholder in the whole business of environmental stipulations viewed from tourist perspective.

(b) Designs by Man

Nature is a major shareholder in the tourist industry. Man has established conscious, cautious and steady progress in the same field. His craftsmanship, (art), as a resource, has sustained history, religion, culture and monuments all of which have tourist contents. Art has provided avenues for the production and reproduction, of originals and replicas of historical symbols and mementoes. Assurance of longevity has also been given for original relics through refurbishing and restorative efforts. The re-enactment of many far-flung historical and cultural beliefs has also provided platforms for artistic and creative resource involvement in contemporary tourist industry.

The Regatta

The Regatta as a cultural tourism is one of the festivals of sorts found with some riverrine people of Nigeria. Pategi, a part of the ancient Nupe Kingdom in Northern Nigerian is a settlement of the Nupe Dynasty founded by Tsoede in the middle of the 15th Century

,(Ekwensi, 1965). It was this tourist resource that actually purchased popularity for this remote Northern Nigeria hinterland. The Eastern South South riverine dwellers of Nigeria— Rivers and Cross River States are also great performers of the regatta. It is a festival founded on art and tourism. Flourishing in an aqua-environment, it parades one of the greatest events profusely endowed with colours and activity. According to Ekwensi (1965), the regatta boats and canoes are resplendent with decorations of sorts-cloths, flags, banners and buntings.

At the heels of these painterly decorations are Textile (as can be inferred from cloths costumes and buntings), Graphics (from the drawings and inscriptions which is advertising), and Sculpture (from the boat and paddle carvings). With the participants as “mobile clay” (soil or earth) products which is ceramics, (Holy Bible Gen2:7). The festival bestrides the two broad areas of Fine and Applied Arts. It is also confidently moves into the Theatre Arts in the area of actors, costumes and the audience. Not minding other intervening activities, like cultural displays/dances, the regatta performance is a rowing sports festival.

Elsewhere, a rowing competition existed, for example, in ancient Egypt and Rome was actually incorporated into the Olympic Games in 1908. Henley Regatta is an annual event which takes place on the River Thames near Oxford and attracts participants and tourists from all over the world. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002)

Other Tourist Products as Resources

Across the entire Nigerian nation, other tourist products crafted by men have been in constant production. Without going into technical details of the art involved, these products have been classified under pottery/ceramics, fibre products, brass, bronze and iron works. Other fields include leather and ivory, woodworks, calabash decorations and so on. Because these crafts are known to be running in families, they have the capacity to provide jobs to up-and-coming youth therefore minimizing social restiveness vented through delinquency and gangsterism.

The Ijele Masquerade

In African social structure, masks remain quite familiar. They present in a variety of forms and types and are a part of a culture which is worn by performers at festivals and ceremonies. Across West Africa, there are tribal masks which are used in masquerading. Examples are the masquerades of the Yoruba, Igbo and Edo cultures. Emeka (2008) lists

some masquerades in Nigeria. Among them are *Ikeji Arondizuogu* and Odinga masquerade. One other on his list is *Ogbamgbada* which he described as a dancing masquerade from the same Arondizuogu in Imo State of Nigeria.

Mask-making has been the preserve of local artists and craftsmen who sustain their skill through apprenticeship programmes under master-carvers. Not only do these artists carve, they are also believed to own the monopoly of spiritual insight which enables them 'see' mask designs and the designs which each masquerade type must wear. The depth of the mystery surrounding many of these masquerades has been reconfigured to fit into tourism and entertainment under the mass theatre phenomenon. These performances and other village square activities in the African environment have become reference highlights in the tourism industry. The *Ijele* masquerade, unarguably one of the largest masquerades in Africa has become, not only a much-sought-after object of tourism, but also a curious area of research. Of Igbo origin, it has more than two hundred Sculptures and sculpture-related works of art nesting at prescribed locations on top of the masquerade. It consists of a one-man cultural tourism drawing its strength from its size, colours, arrangements, costume, music and dance. It draws crowds from both national and international audiences.

Ikechukwu, (2009), in describing the *Ijele* has this to say:

Let us state, for the record, that there are big and small masquerades; and then there is the *Ijele*. The reason for this is that the *Ijele* is an event all by itself. People clear the path when it is coming. Other masquerades disappear from the village square as it approaches. Yet is not violent. It is not in competition with other masquerades. In point of fact, is not even a masquerade. It is simply the *Ijele*: The symbolic representation of royalty and honour for Ndi Anambra. It stands as the embodiment of calm dignity and unequalled majesty in its very ambience. The very step of *Ijele* is celebrated as a privilege by those by those who see it at the village square. It accepts the cheer of the crowd as of right It does not thank anyone for getting out of its way. Its arrival always precedes it. Those who know it is coming, who see it approaching happily join to clear the way. This is not pride, or self-inflation. It is just the nature of *Ijele* to live thus

The above captures the character people see in the *Ijele*.

Pyramids

In the international, the Egyptian pyramids which are design/art projects tower above most man-made tourist attractions. With their creative credentials and their incredible spatial occupation, they impose such a physical presence that man cannot but reckon with them. The complexity of their inner burial chambers and galleries coupled with the prescriptions of the design attest to the volumes of the creative investments lavished on them. Time and art have also appointed them irresistible tourist attractions apart from the characteristics mentioned above. The three pyramids at Gizeh, for example, were constructed about 2700 B.C. Crafted on one pyramid were about 2,300,000 stones each weighing two and half tone, (Gardener, 1975). The entire equation of design and function still volunteers more facts as those time-tested 'miracles' are still being studied. It is possible that the above considerations may be a child's play when compared with the investments in terms of human life made towards raising just one pyramid.

Apart from standing in as sources of economic benefits through art and tourism partnership, they also served religious functions as the final resting place for the remains of Egyptian Pharaohs.

c) Natural Designs Tailored by Man

Waterfalls, hot springs, gully erosions, caves, mountain ranges, lakes often tender themselves as naturally-occurring phenomena. They also have occupied prominent positions in the whole business of tourism. Be that as it may, none of these will optimize its tourist potentials if man does not invest his creative aptitude on the facility.

Obudu Ranch Resort

The hills around the Obudu Ranch Resort in Cross River State has always been there but man intervened to establish snakey network of roads which is in itself a tourist attraction. In addition, the cable car phenomenon, which is a flight access to the top of the Ranch has created its own version of tourist accent which many sight-seers insist on experiencing. This Ranch has wildlife sanctuaries as eco-tourist highlights. It also has a waterfall installed by nature. Man has managed to tread, by design, on the thin line of balance between his intuition and the delicate eco-system sustainability to tailor the waterfall into a water park whose art signatures are enormous. By design and creative resourcefulness also, man has responded immensely to the recreational and relaxation need of tourists, which, in fact, is what is responsible for the success of tourism in that corner of the globe. Hotels and other

types of resorts which are man-made designs and resources have cushioned the social restiveness which would have been a threat to tourist activities there. Tourism as an environmental resource has also augmented the economic and earning status of that environment including human beneficiaries.

The tripartite union of art, tourism and environment has provided:

1. Better attitude towards the environment in terms of sustainable practices.
2. Wealth-creation through job opportunities offered by tourist activities out of which taxes can be deducted for the State.
3. Skills to sustain the environment and therefore secure their jobs.
4. People keep learning business timing and planning. The evaluation and the monitoring of tourist activities as they relate to high and low business seasons are also keyed into the psyche of beneficiaries.
5. Prospects of good business encourage peace pursuits and discourage anti-social behaviours which may overturn the apple cart of business life.

Conclusion

From this paper, it has become clear that art is the engine that pulls the entire coaches of the tourist train and together with tourism, they bequeath untold benefits to mankind. As environment resource, art and tourism give value to humanity in areas such as relaxation and recreation with their attendant health benefits. Economic gains have walked into private and national treasuries in strides. Skill acquisition has generated wealth by creating employment dousing social restiveness. Art and tourism partnership has also drawn attention to geo-environment question triggering off researches into its sustainability and maintenance for the benefit of humanity.

Wildlife tourism has provided meat to the eater and skin to the craftsmen for human accessories and comfort—leather for shoes, bags, home and car furniture, bones for the chemical industries and guinea pigs for trial shots of new and experimental medicines. The guinea pig idea is to insulate humanity from trial deaths.

It has been established here that a great inter-disciplinary dependency can exist, bringing to the fore areas of unsuspecting beneficial relationships. Through effective planning and policy management, art and tourism can exert all their resource potentials on the environment and its leading occupants—humanity.

However, the porosity of one of tourism and environmental preservatives otherwise known as security establishes a regrettable but persistent resource leakage on the tourist industry. Local tourists are inescapably exposed to this insecurity network but their foreign counterparts can only pay glowing tributes to Nigerian tourist industry from their safe distances while pledging and demonstrating their practical participation elsewhere.

Also in Nigeria, tourism, due to the lack of sincere commitment, unsustainable resource management and poor vision, remains a sick toddler. The unfortunate and abysmally low level of art literacy among highly-placed policy-makers is also implicated in implementation failure.

Art, to say the least, is the bedrock of tourism and an inexhaustible resource, doubling as a raw material and a product. Until it is consciously integrated into the training and re-training of would-be environmentalists and policy-makers, tourist resource benefits will remain disabled.

References

- Anija-Obi, F.N. (2002). *Fundamentals of Environmental Education and Management*. Nigeria: University of Calabar Press.
- Ewensi, C. (1965). "Pategi Regatta" *Nigeria Magazine*. Nigeria: Cambridge University Press, No 85.
- Faulkner, R. Ziegfeld, E. Hill, C. (1963). *Art Today*. New York: Hold Reinhart and Winston.
- Gardener, H. (1975). *Art Through the Ages*. (6th ed). New York: Harcourt Bruce Jovanovich Inc.
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v>. Dec.4, 2008, 07:35am.
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v>. Dec.04, 2008, 07:41am.
- Ikechukwu, O.I.C. (2009) "Anambra, Where is Your Ijele?" *This Day* . April 3.
- Mackean, M. A. (1995). "Advantages of Common Regimes" *Managing Forests as Common Property*. Italy: FAO(UN). No. 136.
- Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia (2002). *CD ROM Microsoft Corporation*.
- Tourism in Nigeria (2001). *Nigeria, (Beauty in Diversity)*. Abuja: Nigeria Development Corporation.
- Tripathy, S.,Panda, S. (1990). *Fundamentals of Environmental Studies*. Delhi: Vrinda Publications.
- Uzoagba, I. (2001). *Understanding Art in General Education*. (3rd ed). Enugu: Africana Fep Publishers LTD.