



CULTURAL TOURISM AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Cultural tourism has surfaced as an essential component of national development scheme particularly in nations with diverse cultural heritage and rich traditions. It offers opportunities for economic growth, job creation and the preservation of indigenous cultures, while promoting social unity and national identity. Nevertheless, development of cultural tourism is faced and often hindered by several challenges, not undermining its benefits towards national development property and effectively employed or utilized cultural tourism despite its problems and challenges can present immense prospects for national development by engaging local communities, adopting a sustainable development practices, formulating policies that are inclusive, nations can be transform cultural resources into powerful tools for socio- economic progress. This paper tries to explore the problems or challenges associated with cultural tourism, its types, and prospects towards national development. strategies that can remodel cultural tourism as a mechanism for sustainable national development. The systematic utilization of internet sources, books, journals and lecture notes, were consulted. The paper concludes, that cultural tourism can act as a strategy, with inclusion of policies for national development.

Keywords: Culture, Development, National Problem, Tourism

Introduction

The phenomenon of cultural tourism, despite not having attained any cultural promotion as a whole, existed long before tourism was even structured into a particular sector of the economy (Luis, 2011). Cultural tourism has gained popularity in recent years, drawing visitors around the globe to experience and appreciate diverse cultures, (Lecture Note, 2025) The relationship between culture and tourism has a long history (Zhang, 2020) however, previous studies of tourism have mainly focused on the tourism resource attributes of cultures, and the impact of cultural on culture.

Cultural tourism is arguably one of the most important segments of tourism and is increasingly a major channel for cultural consumption in general. As time become more pressured, so traditional forms of cultural recreation under taken at time tend to spread into holiday time, the one remaining substantial block of leisure time for many people (Richards, 2018). Cultural tourism is particularly significant as a leisure activity not just because of this



displacement, but also because it provides a laboratory in which to study key aspects of leisure consumption and production.

Today, cultural tourism seems to be hare omnipotent. It is the holy grand of quality tourism that cares for the culture it consumes while culturing the consumer. Cultural tourism as therefore been embraced globally by local, national and transitional bodies UNESCO promotes cultural tourism as a means of preserving word heritage (Richards 2007).

Definition of Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs (Richards & Bonuik, 1995) The concept of cultural tourism, despite not having special recognition from the tourism industry itself, or the field of cultural promotion as a whole, existed before tourism was ever structured into a particular sector of the economy. According to (Luis, 2011), there are many understandings and definitions, both in academic circle and among stake holders. In the view of (Hughes & Allen, 2005), it is not always clear what is meant by the term cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is applied to a wide range of activities; it covers heritage and also attendance at performance of music, dance and theatre.

According to (Jasmina & Kessniga, 2015, p. 6)

Cultural Tourism is a form of tourism whose object is among other purpose, the discovery of monuments and sites. It exerts on these, and has very positive effects, and it contributes to its own ends- to their maintenance and protection. This form of tourism justifies, in fact the efforts that have been made to maintain and protect community because of the socio-cultural and economic benefits they have for all concerned populations.

ATLAS (cited by Richards, 1995, p. 33), posits that cultural tourism is “The movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence with the intention to gather new information and experience to satisfy their cultural needs”. Any movement of people outside their usual place of residence in order to satisfy their cultural needs, which may include passive visits to cultural sites, vents and attraction (moveable and immovable, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, traditions and arts) well as active experience and participation in cultural events and creative processes. More so, cultural tourism, is defined by (Tourism Industry Professional, 2025) as travel directed toward experiencing the arts, heritage and special character of a place.

Cultural tourism is an important subject of history and sociology of leisure, and it belongs to the areas adjacent to cultural geography, and to studies analysing cultural identities and the relationship between societies at different levels of development. In essence, cultural tourism expresses the way in which a tourist contemplates a series of contrasts between a town and community, between one’s own country and other countries, between the stereotypes of everyday life and the exotic fundamental show between work and leisure (Petroman, I., et al., 2013).

The United Nations World Tourism Organization UNWTO (2020, p. 33), defines cultural tourism as: The movement of people to cultural attractions away from their normal residence, with the intention of gathering new information and experiences that satisfy their cultural needs. It encompasses various activities undertaken by tourists to explore and experience different cultures, customs and traditions.

Cultural tourism offers a pathway to economic diversification, identity preservation and the promotion of national cohesion especially for developing nations in particular. The movements



of people motivated by an interest in heritage arts traditions and cultural expressing is gaining a way high level of global relevance beyond local levels. This is the back ground on Iwhich cultural tourism lies.

n Nigeria, cultural tourism has become an essential platform for showcasing the nation's diversity and strongly national identity with the 250 ethnic groups and a multiplicity of traditions. Nigeria possesses a rich cultural lands cape that has significant potential for tourism development as affirmed by (Adebayo & Iweka, 2014). Culturee has a direct impact on tourism, and tourism increasingly affects culture which has become an important motive for tourist travel. In modern society, exceptional significance has been given to Leisure activities, and cultural expenditure. Cultural tourism is a significant and growing aspect of the global tourism industry.

Types of Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism allows travellers to immerse themselves in the history, heritage and traditions of different places around the world. Let us look at some of the cultural tourism types:

Religious and Spiritual Tourism: This is a form where tourists visit religious sites, such as temple, churches, and mosque, or engage in spiritual practices like mediation and Yoga. This type of cultural tourism can provide insights into systems and rituals, foster understanding and tolerance among people of different faiths.

Historical/Heritage Tourism: This type of cultural tourism exposes travellers about the history of the places they visit. It focuses on exploring sites related to a regions past, such as ancient archaeological sites, Monument and Museums, which can instil a sense of appreciation and wonder for past civilization.

Artistic/Arts Tourism: This type of cultural tourism allows Tourist to visit galleries, theatres, and concerts to experience local art, music, dance and drama. This is of tourism of culture, enabling tourist to understand different communities expressive and aesthetic tendencies, opening their minds to new perspective and forms of creativity.

Culinary and Agritourism: Tourism of this nature has its emphasis on local content, especially local food and drink traditions, as well as agricultural practices that underpin them. This type of tourism can include partaking in cooking classes or workshops, attending food festivals, visiting farms, breweries or vineyards. Culinary experiences help tourist understand the richness of a region's flavours and the relationship between local community's land and resources.

Challenges Associated with Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism means visiting places, festivals, and traditions that represent the history, arts, and way of life of a people. It is one of the fastest-growing parts of tourism today because visitors are interested in learning about other cultures. However, cultural tourism faces many problems in recent times (The United Nations World Tourism Organization UNWTO (2020). In Nigeria, the Osun-Osogbo Festival, the Calabar Carnival, and the Argungu Fishing festival show both the opportunities and the challenges of cultural tourism. These challenges include issues of authenticity, poor management, insecurity, climate change and lack of infrastructure.

Commercialization of Culture:

Many cultural practices are changed to satisfy tourists. Traditions, dances, and festivals may lose their true meaning when they are performed mainly for entertainment. For example, in Nigeria, some cultural festivals are now designed more as shows for visitors than as rituals for the community (Diminyi et al., 2022). This makes the culture lose some of its originality.



Commodification of Cultures: one of the potential drawback of cultural tourism is the potential for commodification of cultures. As communities open their doors to tourists, they risk losing the authenticity and uniqueness of their cultural identity. Traditional practices and artefacts may be failones to appeal to the tourist market, diluting their cultural Significance.

Overcrowding and Site Damage:

When too many people visit a cultural site or festival, it puts pressure on the environment and sacred spaces. The Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has suffered from overuse and encroachment, (UNESCO, 2020). Too many visitors during the Osun Festival often damage the forest environment and disturb its religious value.

Poor Management and Governance:

Many cultural festivals in Nigeria lack proper planning and transparency. For example, while the Calabar Carnival has become internationally known, researchers note that revenue is not well managed and local communities do not always benefit (Obijuru, 2023). Without good management, festivals cannot contribute fully to development.

Calabar Carnival: Known as “Africa’s biggest street party,” it brings in visitors and boosts the city’s image. But poor management and limited community involvement reduce its long-term benefits (Obijuru, 2023).

Security Problems:

Insecurity is a serious threat to cultural tourism. Violence, terrorism, and communal clashes discourage both local and foreign tourists. In northern Nigeria, insecurity has disrupted cultural activities, including the Argungu Festival in some years, leading to loss of income for those who depend on visitors (Egbo, 2025).

Environmental and Climate Change Issues:

Cultural tourism is also affected by changes in the environment. The Argungu Fishing Festival depends on good water levels in the river. Recently, climate change and changes in water flow have caused challenges, making it difficult to hold the festival in the traditional way (Premium Times, 2023).

Argungu Fishing Festival is a famous fishing and cultural event in Kebbi State. Climate change and insecurity have disrupted the festival at times, showing how environmental and security challenges affect cultural

Infrastructure Deficits:

Many cultural tourism sites in Nigeria lack good roads, electricity, hotels, and sanitation. Visitors face difficulties reaching sites and festivals. This reduces their experience and can discourage return visits (Egbo, 2025). For example, some communities that host major festivals do not have enough hotels to accommodate tourists.

Unequal Benefits for Communities:

Although festivals and cultural sites attract money, the benefits are not always fairly shared. Local artisans, craft sellers, and food vendors often get little profit compared to big businesses. As a result, cultural tourism does not always reduce poverty in host communities (Diminyi et al., 2022). Cultural Tourism has faced a challenge of unequal distribution of economic benefits while some



members of the community may profit from tourism related businesses, others may not be able to participate in or benefit from these enterprise which could lead to income disparities and create economic imbalance within communities resulting to ills- envy, hatred, Malice and sometime communal crises and killings.

Loss of Local Authenticity and Identity:

As communities prioritize tourist demands over cultural integrity, they lose their originality and identity. Tourist may engage with cultural practices or artefacts without proper understanding or respect, potentially trivializing them.

Pressure on Resources and Spaces:

The Influx of Tourists may lead to overcrowding and increased competition for social amenities. This could impact negatively on the quality of life of local residents and strain the available infrastructure.

National development:

According to (Tadoro & Smith, 2020, p. 39), National development refers to "the process of improving the economic, social, and political well-being of a nation, encompassing aspects such as economic growth, poverty reduction, improved healthcare, education, infrastructure development, and good governance". Countries like Nigeria, that are still in developing process, national development mostly, focuses on addressing challenges like poverty, inequality, and infrastructure deficits to enhance overall quality of life says Ake,(1996).

Prospects of Cultural Tourism to National Development

The profits of cultural tourism to national development cannot be over emphasized as tourism and its economic potentials are part of a growing nations vision. Cultural tourism contributes to sustainable development communities and protecting cultural assets. Through cultural tourism development, a society can showcase its cultural heritage while contributing to its economic prosperity.

Cultural tourism is increasingly recognized as a driver of nation building, particularly in countries with diverse ethnic and cultural identities such as Nigeria. Tourism emphasizes heritage, arts, traditions, and values. Cultural tourism provides opportunities for preserving identity, fostering unity, and stimulating economic growth. In the Nigerian context, cultural festivals and heritage sites are not only tourist attractions but also mechanisms for strengthening social cohesion, promoting economic development, and projecting the nation's image internationally, with specific reference to Nigerian examples such as the Osun-Osogbo Festival, the Calabar Carnival, the Argungu Fishing Festival, and the Durbar Festival, (UNESCO, 2020).

Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Identity:

One of the most important contributions of cultural tourism to nation building is the preservation of cultural heritage. By promoting festivals, monuments, and oral traditions, cultural tourism ensures that indigenous practices are not lost in the wake of globalization. Richards (2018) notes that cultural tourism creates a bridge between past traditions and contemporary society, allowing nations to valorise their heritage while making it relevant to present realities.

In Nigeria, the Osun-Osogbo Festival in Osun State exemplifies this role. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the festival preserves Yoruba religious and spiritual practices while attracting



both local and international tourists. The festival not only sustains traditional art forms and rituals but also fosters a sense of identity among the Yoruba people and Nigerians in general. By preserving this heritage, cultural tourism strengthens national pride and builds the cultural foundations of nation building, (UNESCO, 2020).

Economic Growth and Job Creation

Cultural tourism is also a catalyst for economic development. It generates income through hospitality services, entrance fees, and the sale of indigenous crafts. Okonkwo (2019) argues that cultural tourism has significant potential to diversify Nigeria's oil-dependent economy by creating employment opportunities, particularly in rural communities.

The Argungu Fishing Festival in Kebbi State demonstrates this economic impact. Once banned due to security concerns but revived in 2020, the festival attracts thousands of tourists annually, boosting hotel occupancy, transport services, and local craft sales. It provides seasonal employment for youths and artisans, while promoting agricultural and fishing industries. Similarly, the Calabar Carnival in Cross River State contributes millions of naira to the local economy each year by attracting both domestic and international tourists. These examples highlight how cultural tourism supports inclusive growth, reduces poverty, and contributes to the economic dimension of nation building, (UNESCO, 2024).

Fostering Social Cohesion and National Unity

In a multicultural nation like Nigeria, social cohesion and unity are essential for sustainable nation building. Cultural tourism provides opportunities for intercultural dialogue, allowing people from different regions and ethnic backgrounds to interact and appreciate one another's traditions. Nwankwo and Ukaegbu (2021) emphasize that cultural events foster mutual understanding and reduce ethnic tensions by highlighting shared values.

The Calabar Carnival, often described as "Africa's Biggest Street Party," is an example of cultural tourism fostering national unity. The carnival attracts participants from across Nigeria and beyond, providing a platform for diverse groups to celebrate together. Its parade of colourful costumes, music, and dance brings together people from different ethnicities, promoting a collective sense of belonging. By creating shared experiences, cultural tourism strengthens social bonds and contributes to the unity that is crucial for nation building.

Recommendations

Cultural Tourism is an intrinsic part of nation building and development as expressed culture which is a social fact. It strengthens social bonds and contributes to the unity that is needed for a sustainable development hence our recommendations:

1. Cultural Tourism studies should be encouraged and included in schools for Cultural Heritage Preservation purposes.
2. Implementation strategies to preserve traditions, languages, and historical landmarks through collaborative policymaking and digital documentation should be envisioned.
3. Government should urgently tackle the problem of infrastructure development and maintenance. These include electricity, water and efficient transportation system, which has considerably positive impact.
4. Governments increasingly should recognize tourism as a tool for development. With adequate policy, funding, and infrastructure, cultural tourism can become a pillar of national development strategies in tourism operations.



5. Cultural values and arts should be preserved through non-commercialization and commodification.
6. Expanding cultural tourism can create employment in transport, hospitality, food, entertainment, and creative industries. Rural communities with rich traditions will benefit directly through craft-making, performances, and guiding services, thus reducing rural-urban migration.
7. Commercialization and commodification of Cultural Heritage; Festivals that demonstrate rich economic impact should be encouraged and preserved through partnership of the local communities. Expanding cultural tourism creates employment in transport, hospitality, food, entertainment, and creative industries.
8. There should be a collaborative strategy in making of policies for preservation of local traditions, historical landmarks and languages.
9. The challenges of security, loss of identity as a result of global factors should be prioritized over tourist interest.

Cultural tourism offers an alternative to overdependence on oil or single-resource economies. By developing cultural sites, festivals, and heritage centers, nations can broaden their revenue base

Conclusion

By way of exploring the concept of cultural tourism, its challenges and prospects towards national development, one can say that cultural tourism provides opportunities to market national culture abroad, strengthening international image and diplomacy. With innovations such as virtual reality tours, digital archives, and online cultural exhibitions, cultural tourism can reach global audiences. This prospect makes cultural tourism more resilient against disruptions like pandemics or security challenges. The prospects of cultural tourism lie in its capacity to boost economies, create jobs, preserve culture, foster unity, and project national image globally. With the right investment in infrastructure, technology, and policy, cultural tourism can become a cornerstone of sustainable nation building.

In Nigeria, investing in festivals like the Calabar Carnival or Argungu Fishing Festival, and the Nchaka (yam) festival can significantly boost non-oil income and promote entrepreneurship. Future investments in cultural tourism will encourage the safeguarding of monuments, indigenous languages, and oral traditions. This will help strengthen national identity and instill cultural pride in younger generations. Thereby promoting Community and sustainable development, As communities take ownership of cultural projects, tourism will empower local populations with skills and revenue. Sustainable practices can ensure long-term conservation of heritage sites while also boosting community resilience (UNESCO, 2024).

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