Convergence of Theatre and Tourism As Tools For Cultural Expression

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Abstract

Culture is as old as man and it is central to societal evolution and development. No society exists without culture which encompasses the customs and beliefs, arts, way of life and social organization of a particular country. It is also the art, music, dance, songs, literature, the beliefs and attitudes about something that people in a particular group or organisation share. It is the distinctive way of life of a people, their complete design for living and in another sense, the gamut of the knowledge, beliefs, customs, traditions and skills that are available to the members of a society. Unequivocally, there is a robust affinity between Theatre and Tourism in preserving, expressing and propagating culture in any society. It is argued that theatre and tourism are not only intricately woven but also provide invaluable tools for expressing and conserving the culture of any given society. The study, therefore, seeks to examine the relationship between Theatre and Tourism in preserving and expressing culture in the society. The literary design method of data analysis was adopted in extracting and analyzing information for the study.

Keywords: Theatre, Tourism, Culture, Cultural heritage, Sustainable development.

Introduction

Culture is a universal phenomenon and no culture is static. It changes as the society itself changes even in complexity. More to this, no culture is superior to another, and anyone or people claiming cultural superiority are but living in self-deceit or ignorance. Culture does not grow like a plant, nor can it be destroyed by an earthquake. It lives and dies with the attention man pays to it and the role which it is allowed to play. There is, therefore, no people without culture; nor can there be culture without a people. Culture is that which confers on a people their otherness, and their distinctive style of living. Pained by the level of colonial enslavement, oppression, and cultural imperialism, Ohaegbu(1985:178) asserts that:

> When external forces strip a living and sane man of everything else, his culture refuses to die and that is why neither the dehumanizing slavery nor the worst type of colonial oppression and assimilation experienced by the black race succeeded in destroying completely the cultural heritage of the African; they only succeeded in impeding the development and practice of this culture.

The implication of this is that, no matter the kinds of subjugation people may undergo, their culture will to a large extent subsist. Culture has been defined primarily as the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular society or group. Culture, like theatre and tourism products differ from one society to another. In expressing what constitutes culture, Anigala (2005:11) inputs that, "the thought patterns, attitudes, modes of communications, celebrations, etc. exhibited by an individual or individuals within a geographical orbit, express the cultural quotients of a community or country." He specifically defines culture as, "the totality of the individual in relation to all the forces acting upon him and his reaction to them which include physical environment, supernatural force and the social context" (Anigala 2005:13).

Culture, according to Egbeke Aja (2013) is "man-made not God-given." This suffices that man can create and recreate his culture and even change same at will. Thus, cultures are prescriptions, designs, and responses which are deliberately fashioned to guide all aspects of people's life. Giving a cultural exemplum from the ancient Ohafia society, Aja (2013:6) submits that:

> They endeavoured to tame and subordinate their physical environment; as they attempted to provide for their economic and security needs; as they devised norms, values, and principles that governed patterns of social relations to the problems of life and death; as they institutionalized the notion of good and bad, right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, truth and falsehood, and pattern of stable and shared expectations.

Uzuegbunam (1998:180) sees culture as, "a set of all historically created decisions for living, explicit or implicit, rational or irrational and accumulated over time and transmitted from generation to generation as necessary guide for human behaviour." She explains that, the cause and effect of complex relationships of morals, customs, traditions, ceremonies, rites, ritual, together with associations and institutions of any society constitute the culture of a people, nation, community or group. Nana Wilson-Tagoe citing Fanon expresses culture as, "the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through that which people has created itself and keeps itself in existence." He recognizes the fact that this body of efforts can never be stable and fixed which agrees with the views of Aime Cesaire (1972:290) that, "no living culture is ever static." Collectively, human beings struggle to master their physical environment and in the process create a social one. A change in the physical environment, and, or a change in the nature of their struggle, will alter their institutions and hence their mode of life and thought. This new mode of life and thought may on the contrary affect their institutions and general environment resulting in a dialectical process.
Towing the line of the universality of culture, Das (2010:1) submits that:

> The continual and dynamic process of change now regards the culture to be everywhere, under continuous creation, fluid, interconnected, diffusing, interpenetrating, homogenising, diverging, hegemonizing, resisting, reformulating, creolizing, open rather than closed, partial rather than total, crossing its own boundaries, persisting where we don't expect it to, and changing where we do.

Culture serves some purposes in the lives of the people; it is functional and performative. In this vein, Amadi (1985:61) believes that, "the distinct cultural attributes of a people, ensure their place and survival in history; it serves also as a springboard for the development of 'rounded' characters within a geographical environment." This character moulding emanates as individuals in a particular society imbibe the stipulated ways of life and practically express themselves emotionally, politically, socially and spiritually.

Culture influences the individual's participation and contributions to the process of harnessing the material and non-material resources of the society. In the process, man's soul and mind is developed. Culture, thus, becomes an indispensable element of the society, since without it the individuals may lose trace of their roots or identity. In fact, it acts as the epicentre for human identity and development. Victor Turner (1982:33) sees culture as, "the experience of individuals and the collective experience of its member as embodied in myths, rituals, symbols and celebrations." Against this background, culture becomes the personification that the individual becomes as a result of the various forces that collates to exert pressure on him and his response to them.

From the above antecedents, the affinity between theatre and tourism cannot be over-emphasized as tools for cultural expression and cultural renaissance. They are as old as mankind and the society. Their efficacy as tools for moral, political, intellectual, emotional and instinctive, traditional, economic, social and religious drive is remarkable. They inform as well as entertain. While informing and entertaining, they communicate like other media of mass communication. To this end, Obasi, Nelson T. (2013:43) posits that, "theatre and tourism has become major force to reckon with in global trade." This is because of the vital role they play in the social, cultural and economic development of most nations, and equally has the potential to preserve heritage. This can be exemplified by the numerous theatrical and film products on one hand, and the tourist aesthetics that abound globally.

As vehicle of social unification, theatre and tourism diagnose, interpret and explain the dramatic events and experiences in the society. Supporting this social view of theatre and tourism, Jon Russell Brown (1971:44) submits that, "theatre is a social institution where people meet and interact" - a kind of social institution that have rules of membership, hierarchies of responsibility and reward. Every social organisation has some form of organisation that serves to

help to realize its aims, carry out its functions, protect its standards as well as ensure its future continuance.

Theatre and tourism act as vehicles for national and international integration that culminate in the unification and cooperation of many nations through cultural, educational, economic, political and social cooperation. This is evidenced in such international blocks like the United Nations Organisation (UNO), African Union (AU), Economic of West African States (ECOWAS), G8 Nations, European Nations (EU), among others.

Theatre and tourism are also the demonstration of any action by any one or a group of people at a particular place and moment in time. While theatre is the social as well as an artistic experience directed at the audience as its social entity, tourism on the other hand, is a social, artistic and aesthetic experience by people to places of natural habitats and cultural beauty (Obasi, N. T. 2013:44).

Theatre and Tourism as Purveyors of Culture

The word "theatre" evokes different ideas to many people. An ordinary theatre-goer, may view theatre as merely a vehicle for entertainment. However, time has changed this perception for theatre goes beyond entertainment to include being didactic, pedagogic as well as a problem-solver. Wilson (1988:2), therefore, defines theatre as, "an experience – a shared, indivisible event that includes both those who perform and those who observe." This implies that both the actors and the audience are involved in a dramatic experience. Theatre occurs whenever and wherever human society has developed and is transitory, meaning that, a theatre performance changes from time to time as the audience encounters a series of shifting impressions and stimuli. To the Greeks, the word 'theatre' means "to watch or see." It is the expression of man's feelings, emotions and experiences; …. a resume of life and of creatures and things (Traore 1972:13). The implication of this is that, theatre embodies social reality as well as affords an escape from it. It stimulates as it entertains; but while stimulating and entertaining, it remains an integral part of society – reflecting society's feelings, and even occasionally acting as its guide.

Theatre or drama derives its life line from the society and the society's way of life interlaced in its norms, beliefs, culture; history and worldview. To this end, Kennedy (1973:44) describes African theatre as, "a form of communication and expression, built on the culture and integrated arts concept." Like culture, theatre or drama has been described as a universal phenomenon that is not exclusive to any particular society. Against this background, Clark (1981:57) reiterates that:

> If drama means the elegant imitation of some action significant to a people; if this means the physical representation or the evocation of one poetic image or a complex of such images; if the ritual elements to such representation or evocation are speech, mime, ritual, song as well as dance and mime, (which are embedded in culture) then there is drama in Nigeria.

In like manner, the primitive root of theatre and drama must be sought in the numerous religious rituals and festivals that exist in many Nigerian communities (Yemi Ogunbiyi, 1981:3). For as an expression of the relationship between man, society and nature, drama or theatre arose out of the fundamental human needs in the dawn of human civilization and has continued to express those needs ever since. The implication of this is the fact that, theatre and culture are neatly interwoven and work together for the good of the society.

Writing on the universality of drama and theatre, Clark (1981:58) adds that, "as the roots of European drama go back to the Egyptian Osiris and the Greek Dionysus so are the origins of Nigerian drama likely to be found in the early religious and magical ceremonies and festivals of the Yoruba, the *Egwugwu* ceremonies and *Muo* masques of the Ibo, and the *Owu* and *Oru* water masquerades of the Ijaw drama. The above shows that theatre and drama all over the world has the same ethno-centric focus and evolution which find expressions in the people's culture. Philip A. Ogundeji reasons that, if ritual is either a religious or secular event that employs theatrical arts in articulating the beliefs of a people, it therefore follows that ritual and theatre are related and they share the same function of edification, education and entertainment. They also have similar content and structure. Both articulate the spiritual, social, economic, political and psychological needs and fears of a people through performance.

African plays have strong trace of cultural nationalism which is sometimes spread in different streaks of national consciousness. To this end, Emeka Nwabueze (2005) emphasizes that, "didacticism is abundant in African drama and that playwrights embellish their plays with traditional African cultural materials." Theatre like culture is not static but is celebrated in many parts of the world according to their cultural patterns. To this effect, Onuorah Ossie Enekwe (2007:13) reasons that, "different periods have produced cultural products of quite different styles, requiring that the products have a unified design that is perceivable by the people for whom it is meant." All these cultural materials are propagated through the instrumentality of both traditional and modern drama which has ethno-centric origin. Theatre, therefore, can appeal to the people and bring them together in many ways, irrespective of their social, religious, economic and political differences. Re-echoing the integrative, communal and multi-dimensional nature of traditional theatre, Chike Aniakor (2001:64) argues that, "it has become possible to understand why African theatre is geared towards the communal integration of all aspects of life – recreational, ritualistic, economic, political, social, and ideological." The protagonist in ritual theatre, Aniakor emphasizes, often attempts to confront those forces inimical to the well-being of the community as well as its own earth-being, the success of which brings about cosmic restoration. In its functionality, traditional theatre is said to be central to life; its ideal and quintessential values for which it provides ready instrumentality. This helps to explore, extend, collage, satirize,

humourize, interrogate, as well as invert life through its formal aesthetic and instrumental armoury.

Body make-up is also an essential part of the people's way of life and expressive of their culture. In traditional past, designs were made on the body with different coloured dyes derived from trees, animals and mineral deposits. These materials and instruments of design occupied an important position in the traditional theatre. For this reason, Tracie Uto-Ezeajugh (2005:157) asserts that, "this tool when properly used, allows the performer to utilize his face to project his role to the audience." As one of the visual elements of production, make-up which is commonplace in most traditional performances complements costume by revealing the character embodied in the actor through physical appearances.

Festivals and subsidiary arts of story-telling, music, dance, mime, carving, black-smithing and sculpting are communal events – celebrative and functional. These live performances serve both the entertainment and religious needs of the people. The live theatre is central to the development and education of the human mind. It is also a transmitter of culture and vital tool for socio-political mobilization in the society. Dapo Adelugba (2003:2) supports this view when he describes theatre as, "a live culture." This is because theatre is a mirror of the society – reflecting the social, religious, economic, and philosophical as well as the political lives of the people. To this end, Joel Adedeji reiterates that, theatre and drama have religio-genic root which is true of other arts and other disciplines based on the life and beliefs of a people.

The tokens or symbols of both ritual and theatre are the same, such as masks, make-up, costumes, music, gesture, movements and other accoutrements. Like theatre, ritual is an organized event, both of persons and cultural elements. And by demonstrating the values of cooperative endeavour, theatre, like ritual, educates and socializes (Eric Bentley1956:242). As a purveyor of culture, Simon Ottenberg (1975:9) citing the Otunkpo masked performance of Afikpo area says that, "this is a full play with a sequence of movements involving a series of songs, short acts, pantomime and dancing, dramatizing events of the season, touching on the lives of the Afikpo community." It is seen as a morality play stressing traditional values and upholds personal and general standards of behaviour and co-operation.

Tourism, like theatre, is equally a universal phenomenon which life-line could be located in the people's environment and activities therein. Tourism is the practice of travelling and also the business of providing associated products, services and facilities that incorporate social, cultural and environmental concerns beyond physical development and marketing (David L. Edgell, et al, 2008:2). This shows that tourism is all-encompassing. To Mathieson and Wall (1982:1) tourism connotes, "the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations and the facilities created to cater to their needs".

The study of tourism is the study of people away from their usual habitat, of the establishment which respond to the requirements of travelers, and of the impacts that they have on the economic, physical and social well-being of the host. It also involves motivations and experience of the tourists, the expectations and of adjustments made by the residents of reception areas and the roles played by the numerous agencies and institutions that intercede between them. Tourism apart from its entertainment functions; serves other purposes such as economic, social and cultural needs in the society. It has been recognized globally as a significant but invaluable activity. Smith (1995:7) describes tourism as a "set of activities of a person travelling to a place outside his or her usual environment for less than a year and whose main purpose of travel is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited." It could be inferred from the above definition that, tourism is a kind of pastime and a means of relaxation from active work by holiday makers and honey-mooners. Tourism lends itself to those enterprises and organisations involved in enhancing travel and activity away from people's usual, leisure or business environment.

Tourism from all intents and purposes is a major force in global trade and it plays a vital role in the social, cultural, political and economic development of most nations, and has equally, the potentials to both preserve any heritage as well as to destroy (Obasi, Nelson T., 2015:48). This shows that tourism can make or mar a nation. For instance, the threats of terrorism or insurgencies pervading the global community and that of some viral diseases like ebola, zika and bird flues among others have all become a Sword of Damocles to tourism and the society at large. Tourism, like other disciplines, has developed into various genres since becoming a global phenomenon. Tourism can now be classified under mass tourism, winter tourism, adjectival tourism, education tourism, creative tourism, pro-poor tourism, medical tourism, sports tourism, sustainable tourism, among others. Another classification of tourism is incentive, health, business, adventure, cultural, leisure, youth or backpacking and interest tourism as the case may be (Cultural Tourism News, 2007:1).

As an expression of culture, tourism is the thought patterns, attitudes, modes of communications, celebrations, etc. portrayed by an individual or individuals within a geographical orbit that expresses the cultural quotients of the community. Cultural expressions also involve the diverse habitual norms and values expressed by individuals in a social setting. These cultural manifestations can be expressed through tourism which has become a universal activity. Ifegbo, L. I. and Aji, R. U. (2015:97) believe that, "the antiquities of a nation represents a major repository of a people's cultural heritage, and remains the only veritable tool with which "man" learns and understands the cultural practices and way of life of his forefathers." Cultural tourism, therefore, is the subset of tourism concerned with a traveller's engagement with a country's or region's culture other than his own. Specifically, it entails coming in contact with the host country's lifestyle, history, art, architecture, religion and other elements

that help shape their way of life. According to Sibiu (2017:1) "cultural tourism includes tourism in urban areas, particularly historic or large cities and their cultural facilities such as museums and theatres." It can also include tourism in rural areas showing their traditions of indigenous cultural communities embedded in festivals, rituals and the people's values and lifestyle as well as niches like industrial tourism and creative tourism. To G. Richards (2001:1) cultural tourism has been defined as, "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. The implication of the above is that the cultural artefacts of these tourism destinations are the major attraction of the tourists.

A report by the European Commission (2002) showed that people visited museums and galleries abroad almost as frequently as they did at home. While The World Tourism Organization (WTO) (2017) asserted that cultural tourism accounted for 37% of global tourism and forecast that it would grow at a rate of 15% per year. This underlines the growing significance of cultural tourism as a source of cultural consumption and expression. Solimar Staff (2015:1) in explaining how cultural tourism works asserts that, "cultural tourism allows travellers to be immersed in local rituals and routines away not only pretty photos but also shared memories of unique experiences." By so doing, cultural tourism encourages local communities to embrace their culture and boosts economic growth. Staff (2015) equally believes that developing culturally towards tourism programmes also encourages destinations to celebrate and promote what distinguishes their communities, thereby, providing opportunities for authentic cultural exchange between locals and visitors. Ifegbo and Aji (2015:97) see cultural resources as those tangible and intangible aspects of a cultural system both living and dead that are valued by or representative of a given culture or that which contain information about a culture. Cultural resources also refer to those rich materials and non-material attributes acquired within a society and transmitted from generation to generation (Okpoko & Okpoko, 2002). These are expressed in people's beliefs, festivals, diets, architecture, dances, drama, iron works, wood and stone carvings. These rich cultural resources can be harnessed, managed and preserved through cultural resource management. This process according to King (2002:1) is the protection and management of the multitudinous but scarce elements of cultural heritage given some considerations in a modern world. It also involves those practices that promote the preservation, conservation and enlightened use of archaeological and ethnographic resources for research, entertainment and educational purposes.

Economically, cultural tourism is 'good' tourism that attracts high spending visitors and does little damage to the environment or local culture while contributing a great deal to the economy and support of culture. Tourism, apart from enabling people make special memories by travelling away from their

usual to unusual environment; travelling to see new places, experience new cultures or just to enjoy the journey; is also geography in action. This is because geography is fundamental to the selection of a development site for any tourism business (Obasi, Nelson T., 2013:49).

Sustainable tourism as an emerging trend is a new concept in tourism leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life sustaining support systems. Sustainable development arising from the above has been described by World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987:29) as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

The responsibility of collecting, preserving and conserving Nigeria's cultural artefacts and historical monuments was invested on the National Commission for Museums and Monuments through Decree No. 77 of 1979 (now an Act of Parliament). Nevertheless, the numerous cultural resources in Nigeria can be located in various traditional festivals, archaeological, historical, and other natural sites that dot the land.

Conclusion

The study reveals the affinity between theatre and tourism and their import in conserving, preserving and expressing the cultural quotient of any society. Cultural expressions are the harmonization of the diverse habitual norms and values manifested by individuals in a social set up. Both provide entertainments and opportunities for information dissemination and above all, have art and culture as their major resources. Theatre and tourism are the demonstration of any action by any one or a group of people at a particular place and moment in time. While theatre is the social as well as an artistic experience directed at the audience as its social entity, tourism on the other hand, is a social artistic and aesthetic experience by people to places of natural habitats and cultural beauty. They have been viewed as tools for national and international integration that culminate in unification and cooperation, especially now that the issue and rate of terrorism, migration and other conflicts have tripled, thus, daring peaceful co-existence globally.

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