



Admiralty Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, ISSN 1597–278X

Contemporary Cultural Tourism Studies in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

Dominic Uduakabasi OKURE

Department of International Relations and Tourism Studies,
Admiralty University of Nigeria, Ibusa, Delta State, Nigeria

Research Article

ABSTRACT

Contemporary cultural tourism demands, the complexities of tourism's multi-sectoral nature, and the paucity of resources have adversely affected the outputs of cultural tourism researchers in Nigeria. This study sought to identify and articulate the challenges that usually confront Nigerian researchers in cultural tourism in their attempt to investigate, engage and share knowledge on the subject, with a view to proffering some solutions and contributing to the topic. Using the combined qualitative methods of library research and oral communications, twenty-one (21) scholars and researchers from across three Nigerian Universities in the south-southern and south-eastern regions of Nigeria, comprising students in the post-graduate programmes of studies, and academics from across the various ranks in the field of Tourism (and Hospitality) were purposively sampled. The study identified various challenges at different levels bordering on conceptual, methodological, and phenomenological issues, in addition to those involving the dynamics of cultural interpretation, commodification of cultural property, conflict of interests and values, subjectivity-objectivity divide, and sparse research resources, among others. It concludes that the collaborative inputs of the government, academic organisations, tourism industry operators and the researchers themselves are required to surmount cultural tourism challenges. The study recommends measures including adequate preparation by researchers, dedicated funding and sponsorship for cultural tourism research; the delineation by the National Universities Commission (NUC) of tourism studies as a Social Science from hospitality management to streamline research directions, and de-emphasising on quantity of publication for promotion over the quality and relevance of research outputs.

Keywords: Challenges, collaborative inputs, conflict of interests, cultural tourism, delineation, industry operators, research outputs

Corresponding author: Dr. Dominic Uduakabasi Okure: okure-gst@adun.edu.ng

INTRODUCTION

Current controversies about the nature, dynamics, and future directions of tourism as both an industry and an academic discipline have been grounded largely on the multi-sectoral nature of tourism on the one hand, and the increasing sophistication and complexities in tourism genres and demands on the other. These two factors have also elicited heightened levels of concerns about some of modern humanity's foremost and seemingly perennial concerns, such as poverty, climate change, sustainable development and cultural heritage preservation, among others. In the attempt to navigate the terrains of these controversies and contribute meaningfully to the growth of human knowledge and sustainable tourism practices, researchers are often confronted with multiple glitches. Besides, tourism itself, as a human endeavour, seems naturally open to many anticipated and unanticipated vulnerabilities like pandemics, culture loss, physical calamities and socio-political and economic upheavals. Although some of these issues are natural occurrences that appear to have always been part of the human experience across time and space, and while none of them has proven capable of completely crippling the tourism industry, they have often invariably and to a large extent affected what tourism researchers do and how they do it.

Among the various tourism genres, cultural tourism is, arguably, the more dynamic owing to the multiple frontiers that it traverses, some of which are quite complex in nature, especially as they touch upon peoples' identities and treasured heritage. Additionally, the increasing quest for cultural contents by tourists, and the dynamic and ubiquitous nature of culture itself make cultural tourism indispensable to the vitality and sustainability of tourism as a whole. Similarly, cultural tourism as a tourism genre is gaining exponential momentum both internationally and

domestically, comprising more than a third of international inbound tourism 2018, with expected increase over time (UNWTO, 2018; Richards, 2018). This makes it a subject of interest to national governments, industry operators, as well as scholars and researchers. Besides, the contribution of academics and researchers to cultural tourism's product development and marketing cannot be overemphasised, especially in developing economies like Nigeria, hence this study.

A *prima facie* assessment of the many bottlenecks that inundate cultural tourism research points to a number of factors. The first of these is definitional and conceptual, emanating from the challenge of assigning a clear-cut, unambiguous and non-complex intellectual delineation to concepts such as *culture* that will situate or locate it within a definitive epistemic province that discriminates from other provinces. Second, and leading from the definitional glitch, is the difficulty in navigating the interface between the tangible and the non-tangible elements of culture both in theory and in practice. Although scholars and researchers have made various efforts at disentangling the above conceptual barricades, other challenges remain that emanate directly from the nature of cultural tourism's contents and products.

This paper investigates challenges in contemporary cultural tourism research in Nigeria, with a view to contributing to the sparse body of knowledge on the subject matter. It, first, examines the conceptual, pragmatic and theoretical state of the arts of cultural tourism inquiries and practices in Nigeria and the wider tourism research community. Using the qualitative methods of archival investigation and personal interviews with cultural tourism scholars from across three Nigerian Universities, in addition to the researcher's perspective, it identifies and articulates the challenges that researchers in cultural tourism usually confront in their attempt to investigate, engage and share knowledge

on the subject, suggesting ways in which some of the identified challenges can be surmounted, with a view to building a more pragmatic cultural tourism research regime that will effectively contribute to knowledge and development in the sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As indicated above, this section of the study examines the state of the arts in cultural tourism discourses from the conceptual, pragmatic and theoretical perspectives.

Conceptual Clarification

Culture and Tourism

Culture and Tourism, from a socio-anthropological perspective and even by their very nature, have always shared inextricable ties that arise from their mutually inclusive dynamics. People travel across the globe in search of new cultural experience, artefacts and cultural benefits. These movements occasion the exchange of ideas, goods and services, which in turn yields new cultural perspectives. It has indeed been argued that all touristic activity is cultural because cross-cultural encounters from tourism create opportunities for cultural experiences based on otherness, whose complexity largely depends on the degree of the tourism's connection to the life of the communities visited (Allis, 2017; Richard, 1996). However, research enquiries into the nature of the relationship between the two fields, and specifically those that seek to probe the nature of culture as a motivation for tourism are relatively novel and evolving. The relationship between culture and tourism is, therefore, examined along these two trajectories, that is, *culture* and *tourism* as separate but intertwining domains of academic discourse and human endeavour on the one hand and on the other hand, cultural quest as a form of tourism, that is, *cultural tourism*.

Culture

Concerning *culture*, a good number of researchers have tended to engage the definitional and conceptual frontiers, especially in anthropological, sociological, and other social scientific discourses. Some classical definitions of culture had emphasised its social attributes, viewing it as the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determine the texture of human lives (Sapir, 1921), or as a construct that describes the total body of belief, behaviour, knowledge, sanctions, values, and goals that mark the way of life of any people, comprising the things that people have, the things they do, and what they think (Herskovits, 1948). Again, a society's culture has been opined to comprise what individuals must subscribe to, to effectively function therein (Goodenough, 1996). Similarly, and from the ethnographic perspective, culture has been designated to include the composite realities of knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits that humans acquire as members of society (Tylor, 1871). Additionally, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) had attempted to examine the concept of culture from such diverse perspectives as the topical, historical, behavioural, normative, functional, mental, structural, and symbolic, at the end of which they identified three major components of culture, namely, what people think (ideational), what they do (praxis), and their tools for survival (material).

Other scholars, especially of African extraction, have largely viewed culture as occupying a reverential position in the scheme of things, being part of a peoples' social identity; that which is fundamental to their collective wellbeing and tied to their spirituality; shaping their worldviews and moulding their interpretation of existence (Ogbonnanya, 2017; Gyekye, 2014; Oko Elechi, *et al*, 2010). Culture, therefore, "means more than arts, song and dance...The culture of a people is their total way of life, and this

is seen as well in their work and recreation as in their worship and courtship; it is seen also in their ways of investigating nature and utilising its possibilities and in their way of viewing themselves and interpreting their place in nature” (Wiredu, 1997: 10). It is also seen in relation to peoples’ wellbeing (Sunday-Idemudia & Adedeji, 2023), linking it with how a people derives and interprets wellness regarding its interactions with nature and other humans and social contexts, and defined within the framework of group norms, values, kinship relationships and ties.

Notwithstanding the diverse approaches, the above perspectives tend to converge on three elements that seem fundamental to the understanding of culture, namely, that it is a complex interrelationship of values, customs, beliefs and practices that constitute the way of life of a specific group, which assigns it a social significance. Secondly, culture is learnt through socialisation and is not transmissible or acquired genetically (Eagleton, 2005). Thirdly, culture defines communities, characterising and differentiating them from others, which makes the idea of cultural boundaries meaningful. However, since contemporary research perspectives on culture span across multiple disciplinary frontiers, leading to a wide variety of theoretical, methodological and ideological viewpoints that are difficult to capture in any single work (Alexander & Seidman, 1995), scholars have sought to bridge these frontiers by seeking to view culture in terms of humanity’s *heritage* in its *tangible* and *intangible* components, in which case heritage differs from culture as the latter is inclusive of the former and not vice versa (Okure, 2022).

Logan (2007) identifies cultural heritage as essentially a product of selection by a society, comprising the heritage of tangible and intangible cultural assets of the people that are inherited from past generations. This counters the

misconception that cultural heritage is merely irrelevant to present. While research and discourses on cultural heritage have taken on different trajectories over the decades, the basic understanding of heritage as encompassing almost anything that one generation hands down to the next has been relatively constant. Viewed as the use of the past in the present for such purposes as commemorations, economic development and conservation plans, museum exhibitions, national identities, tourist attractions, among others (Blake, 2000), it is both tangible and intangible. *Tangible* cultural heritage is construed as the physical or material objects, collections and built or natural structures that are endowed with cultural significance and authenticity. *Intangible* cultural heritage, on the other hand was formally defined as: “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage,” as expressed in “performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; traditional craftsmanship” (UNESCO, 2003).

Okure (2020) had earlier identified two major frontiers – intellectual and pragmatic – in the cultural heritage discourse. The intellectual frontier concerns conceptual developments and theoretical critical junctures, while the pragmatic frontier encapsulates practical issues and challenges in conservation and management strategies, with a third frontier bordering on persistent technical, logistical, and theoretical challenges in implementing international heritage conventions at regional, sub-regional, and national levels.

Tourism

Tourism has become increasingly recognised as a complex and globalised phenomenon with demonstrated socio-economic importance (Darbellay & Stock, 2012). Towards the end of the 20th Century, a popular drift in conceptualising tourism was the systemic approach proposed by Molina (1997), seeing it as a system composed of a set of parts or subsystems, namely, the *Superstructure* comprising public and private sector organisations and their laws, regulations, plans, and programmes; *Demand*, made up of tourists living in the country and abroad; the *Infrastructure* that includes airports, roads, water supply networks, sewage, telephones, and others; *Attractions*, which include the natural and the cultural; *Equipment and facilities*: hotels, motels, campgrounds, trailer parks, restaurants, cafes, travel agencies, pools and tennis courts, among others; and the *Hosting community*, which comprises local residents directly and indirectly linked to tourism. These subsystems interact to achieve a common goal in maintaining the tourism system. However, this fell short of providing directions for a definitional consensus for tourism.

Among contemporary researchers, *tourism* has yielded to various shades of definitional and conceptual approaches within the multi-sectoral constituents of the tourism value chain. These approaches have largely been typified by contextual and other contingent factors. Whereas Netto (2009) argues that the various definitional and conceptual approaches to tourism by various experts within the tourism value chain and subfields pose the threat of reducing the whole of tourism to its subfields, the approaches themselves remain legitimate for such diverse purposes as research, statistics, industrial practices, as well as legislative and administrative objectives, which require their respective specific nuances. Similarly, it has been argued that among the elements that cannot be overlooked in

any veritable conceptualisation of tourism are: the author's worldview, the tourists' perspective (nature, duration and purpose), and the extant industry practices of tourism itself (Gilbert, 2004). These submissions tend to converge on the impracticability of a monolithic approach to conceptualising tourism. However, for the purposes of consistency, standardisation, measurability and regulatory procedures, a commonly accepted definition is desirable.

The most universally accepted of the conceptualisations of tourism for various intents and purposes, emanates from the world regulatory body, the United Nations' World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in its *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008*, drafted in close cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other members of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Tourism Statistics, which was created in 2004 at the request of the United Nations Statistical Commission. The Inter-Agency Coordinating Group comprises the UNWTO, United Nations Statistics Division, ILO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Eurostat, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The recommendations incorporate findings and conclusions of the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account, inputs received from national statistical offices, national tourism administrations and international organisations during a worldwide consultation. The document (hereafter referred to as IRTS, 2008) contains some basic concepts and definitions meant to guide and serve as a common reference in the compilation of data, which have been largely adopted by scholars, researchers and industry operators as standard definitions and concepts. The strength of the document not only derives from the high calibre and blend of its auctorial sources, but also from its incorporating tourism practices and

issues from such wide perspectives as tourism demands, tourism products, tourism supply, employment in the tourism industry, and tourism's relationship with macroeconomic frameworks.

From the pragmatic perspective, tourism and its various genres are defined and driven by multiple human dynamics. Accordingly, the UNWTO sees tourism essentially as "a social, cultural and economic phenomenon related to the movement of people to places outside their usual place of residence, pleasure being the usual motivation" (IRTS, 2008: 1). Similarly, and with specific emphasis and focus on economic factors, 'tourism is defined as the activities of persons, identified as visitors. A visitor is someone who is travelling under certain conditions, namely, for holiday, leisure and recreation, business, health, education or other purposes.' Therefore, 'Tourism comprises the activities of all these categories of visitors' and in this regard, 'is much wider than the traditional perception of tourists, which includes only those travelling for leisure (IRTS, 2008: 1-2). The document also navigates between such terms as 'travel', 'traveller' and 'visitor', in relation to tourism and tourism statistics. Accordingly, 'Travel' refers to the activity of travellers. A traveller (domestic, inbound or outbound) is someone who moves between different geographic locations for any purpose and any duration'. Similarly, 'A visitor is a traveller taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited'. The document goes on to affirm that 'These trips taken by visitors qualify as tourism trips', and that 'Tourism refers to the activity of visitors', and 'is therefore a subset of travel and visitors are a subset of travellers'. Moreover, IRTS (2008: 10-11) classifies 'a visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound)' 'as a tourist (or overnight

visitor) if his/her trip includes an overnight stay, or as a same-day visitor (or excursionist) otherwise'. Such delineations are particularly useful not only for statistical purposes, but also for the generation of data for tourism research and studies.

IRTS (2008) further distinguished between three main forms of tourism, namely, 'Domestic tourism, which comprises the activities of a resident visitor within the country of reference either as part of a domestic tourism trip or part of an outbound tourism trip', 'Inbound tourism, which comprises the activities of a non-resident visitor within the country of reference on an inbound tourism trip', and 'Outbound tourism, which comprises the activities of a resident visitor outside the country of reference, either as part of an outbound tourism trip or as part of a domestic tourism trip'. These basic forms of tourism, according to the document, can merge in various ways to generate other forms of tourism, such as 'Internal tourism, which comprises domestic tourism and inbound tourism, that is, the activities of resident and non-resident visitors within the country of reference as part of domestic or international tourism trips', 'National tourism, which comprises domestic tourism and outbound tourism, that is, the activities of resident visitors within and outside the country of reference, either as part of domestic or outbound tourism trips', and 'International tourism, which comprises inbound tourism and outbound tourism, that is, the activities of resident visitors outside the country of reference, either as part of domestic or outbound tourism trips and the activities of non-resident visitors within the country of reference on inbound tourism trips (IRTS, 2008: 15). From the foregoing, it can be deduced that the discrepancies and seeming divergence in the conceptualisation of tourism and allied definitions and terms can effectively be streamlined by contextual clarity,

specificity and consistency by authors and scholars. This equally applies to the genres of tourism viewed from the perspective of activities engaged in by tourists as defined by their intentions. This is in line with Middleton (1981) assertion that tourism may be defined in terms of particular tourists' activities selected by choice. It also clearly suggests that there could be as many genres of tourism as tourists' intentions and activities.

Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism, understood from the standard perspective of the United Nations' World Tourism Organisation, and in line with the above submissions, is tourism undertaken with the essential motivation of learning, discovering, experiencing and consuming the cultural products – tangible and intangible – in a tourism destination (UNWTO, 2017). Moreover, all tourism has been described as cultural experience (MacCannell, 1993; Urry, 1990). This builds on the assumption that cultural consumption cannot truly be conceived of outside the cultures of tourism destinations.

McKercher and Du Cros (2012) distinguish between four definitional twists of cultural tourism, namely, the tourism-derived, the motivational, the experiential and the operational. Such twists or approaches to understanding *cultural tourism*, however, do not seem to provide the necessary clarity. Perhaps, a less conflicting definition of cultural tourism would be one that sees it 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 (Richards & Munsters, 2010). This makes cultural tourism distinct from heritage or archaeological tourism, for instance, as it is seen to clearly revolve around cultural needs and cultural activities.

Cultural activities in tourism operations and research, has been categorised into three broad headings that encompass the various engagements in which cultural tourists usually partake (IRTS, 2008). These include the *creative arts and entertainment activities*, which concern the production and promotion of, and participation in, live performances, events or exhibits intended for public viewing; the provision of artistic, creative or technical skills for the production of artistic commodities, live musical, sports, amusement and other performances. There is also the category of *museums activities and operation of historical sites and buildings*, which includes operation of museums of all kinds and operation of historical sites and buildings, excluding renovation and restoration of historical sites and buildings, restoration of works of art and museum collection objects, as well as activities of libraries and archives. The third broad category concerns *botanical and zoological gardens and nature reserves activities*, which includes operation of botanical and zoological gardens, including children's zoos, and operation of nature reserves, including wildlife preservation, among others. This excludes landscape and gardening services, as well as operation of sport fishing and hunting preserves.

The above categorisation of cultural activities seems to draw largely from the scopes along which the UNESCO views the various components of humanity's tangible and intangible heritage, which also harbours a substantial amount of scholarly research. For instance, Lanuza and Fernández (2015) analysed the evidence available in international literature (Scopus database) on tourism research in UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Their analysis examined 178 contributions from both consolidated and emerging destinations, and revealed that the UNESCO World Heritage List as at 2015 held 1,052 properties, 814 of which are cultural. This clearly indicates that not

only does culture nurture and sustain tourism, but also that tourism is at the vanguard of cultural preservation.

Theoretical Framework

Most of the extant researches on cultural tourism have emanated from socio-anthropological, socio-economic, and other similar concerns, and have, as such, utilised extant theories in sociology, economics, anthropology, among other, such as the functionalist, interactionist, social exchange and conflict theoretical models depending on particular aspects and nuances of their studies. The present study, for the purposes of academic expediency and normative compliance, considered a theoretical framework based on the theoretical and methodological approaches found in contemporary cultural tourism discourses that contain a wide range of qualitative and quantitative research in the field of cultural tourism, including surveys and other researcher-created procedures (Richards & Munsters, 2010, Smith & Richards, 2013).

Considering that the overall objective of this study was to explore the specific problems and the complexities cultural tourism researchers encounter in the Nigerian context, it was considered that any theoretical framework for the discourse will have to be essentially epistemological on the one hand, and ethnographic on the other to fully capture these complexities. To this end, the *General Systems* theory was adopted.

The General Systems Theory is believed to have been largely popularised by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1901–1972) in the twentieth century (Lohmann & Netto, 2017), viewing systems as a complex of elements that stand in interaction. The key word here is *system*, which can be considered as any organised totality or whole, and can be used for different types of systems, such as the human body, a country's economy, a municipality's political organisation and

tourism in any region (Lohmann & Netto, 2017). The theory allows each of these systems either to be analysed as a whole or to be divided into parts to facilitate their understanding and study. To be complete, a system should have an environment, that is, a location. It should also have units; relationships; attributes; input; output; feedback – referring to the control of the system to keep it working properly – , and a model to facilitate its understanding. Cultural tourism is a sub-system of tourism as a system (Leiper, 1990) comprising geographical and other elements, the interaction of which is influenced by external environmental factors and others. Consequently, cultural tourism as a whole is governed and influenced by elements and factors that are located within these broad categories, even as the tourist's and destination's elements appear to be the more critical of these. Similarly, cultural tourism research, especially those that seek to evaluate, interpret, promote and market cultural tourism products and practices require some degree of familiarity with the knowledge systems that produce them and their symbolic relevance for both the destination and the tourist.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised the combined qualitative methods of library research and purposive sampling of scholars and researchers from across three Nigerian Universities in the south-southern and south-eastern regions of Nigeria. A total of twenty one (21) persons comprising students in the post-graduate programmes of studies, and academics from across the various ranks in the field of Tourism (and Hospitality) were selected. The students numbering thirteen (13) and drawn mainly from two of the Universities in the south-east were interviewed in two focus groups of six (6) and seven (7), while the remaining eight (8) comprising lecturers from the ranks of Professor (2), Senior

Lecturer (2), Lecturer-I (3) and Lecturer-II (1) were interviewed orally.

STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCOURSE

A research on cultural tourism, from the perspective of this study, requires the ability to navigate the interface between cultural realities and their interpretations from both the perspectives of their originating contexts and their consumers, in addition to the relevant tourism-specific issues. In other words, cultural tourism research traverses the domains of culture and tourism, as well as the peoples, places, organisations and structures that sustain these. This study endeavoured to isolate those challenges that were viewed and interpreted as primarily pertaining to cultural tourism research in Nigeria from the others, and in so doing, the following challenges were identified.

Conceptual Challenges

While conceptual ambiguities have been identified as a major challenge in tourism research (Moswete & Darley, 2012), respondents to this study further admitted that conceptualising *cultural tourism* in a manner that is devoid of subjectivism and truly encapsulating all that the term implies remains a major challenge. This was attributed to the multi-sectorial and cross-disciplinary nature of tourism studies, which has seen concepts adopted from other disciplines into tourism studies, creating semantic, lexical and hermeneutical pandemonium as 'researchers variously attempt to anglicise concepts and phenomena that clearly do not have English linguistic and cultural equivalents' (Personal communications, 2004). This has often led to conceptualisations that are clearly inconsistent with the construction of the realities they represent in the Nigerian indigenous cultural contexts. Furthermore, conceptual challenges in cultural tourism

research in Nigeria partly emanate from the fact that a number of the cultural interpretations and conceptual formulations that are found in literatures and research material on Nigerian cultures are widely derived from the pseudo-anthropological and other manuals of colonial investigators who were often unqualified on the one hand, and on the other, too quick at superimposing their alien cultural assumptions on phenomena that defied their comprehension. An English researcher on Nigerian culture, for instance, only has to fall back on English concepts that may only bear some similarities to the original Nigerian concepts, but which often significantly distort the realities and their semiotic imports. The word *mlayin*, an Ogu term used for spurring the *Zangbeto* masquerade, similar to the Yoruba *oriki*, has been variously translated as 'cognomen' and/or 'praise poetry', none of which sufficiently expresses its meaning. *Mlayin (Oriki)* is neither poetry nor cognomen. It is a more serious set of utterances; a kind of invocative incantation that stirs a spiritual entity into action, which cannot be made by a neophyte' (Personal communication, 2024).

Methodological Challenges

Respondents identified the non-delineation between tourism studies and hospitality studies and management in academic curricula as an issue. From a purely academic point of view, Tourism Studies and Hospitality Management belong to two separate, but closely related spheres. While the latter refers to various subsets of specialised services that are often at the service and consumption of the former, and is, therefore, quite restricted, the former embraces a wide range of activities that have been brought under a common parasol and viewed as a single subject. Hospitality is an aspect of the tourism value chain, with its merits extending beyond the confines of tourism, whereas tourism involves movement of

persons, goods and services, as well as the geographical, economic, anthropological, spatial organisational, even political landscapes, and contexts within which they occur. Researchers admitted to often finding themselves at the crossroads in the handling of data and in the interpretation and application of their findings to specific contexts in manners that are opposite to formulating appropriate strategies and action plans for sustainable tourism development.

According to a respondent: 'The current changes by the National Universities Commission (NUC) from basic minimum to core curriculum, laudable as it may seem, does not really help matters. Tourism and Hospitality are to be compulsorily studied as Management Sciences' (Personal communication, 2024). Tourism stands at the interface between the social and management sciences. The dynamics of *peoples, places*, and *culture, vis à vis* the reasons, means and modalities for their interaction are the things that immediately confront the tourism researcher. Consequently, scholars are often faced with the problem of having to decide between purely social scientific and management approaches. Additionally, there is the problem usually encountered in choosing between empirical or positivist and phenomenological measures in the handling and interpretation of research data. There have also been problems associated with sampling, data collection and data analysis in relation to consumer tourism surveys *vis-à-vis* community tourism-related issues (Moswete & Darley, 2012), especially in regions of Sub-Saharan Africa. McKercher (2018) also enumerates issues that relate to methodology and attitudes towards tourism (and hospitality) research that need to be redressed: the changing nature of academic research; students' and teachers' lack of critical thinking; scholars becoming method robots; publishing and authorship pressures that hinder career

development and creativity; and similar issues that also hinder the academic progress of tourism studies.

Additionally, Tourism Studies usually requires the quantitative social scientific approach of observation, synthesis and analysis commonly used in geography and others, while cultural studies cannot dispense with the ethnographic method which is largely qualitative. Such major considerations as spatiality and causality, which are common features in tourism research, could often prove elusive when applied to cultural studies and phenomena. Cultural tourism researchers in Nigeria are often not sufficiently equipped to logically navigate this fragile interface in choice and application of research methods. Such cultural practices as masquerade cults, for instance, can only be meaningfully studied from the specialised perspectives of insider privileged information, harnessed by the combined *emic* and *etic* perspectives of local communities, tourists and researchers and their perceptions. The crux of this challenge is that researchers are usually not able to distinguish between the various methods and approaches for achieving factual and reliable findings as against mere speculative assumptions.

Phenomenological Challenges

Closely related to the above, was identified as *the phenomenological* challenge. This challenge to contemporary cultural tourism research in Nigeria is to be understood from the dual perspectives of researchers' experience of the cultural tourism realities they encounter, and their handling of the data generated by their research. Some post-graduate respondents admitted to not being able to professionally handle the elements of narrative, interpretation, analysis and hermeneutics concerning cultural tourism phenomena in a manner that clearly demonstrates the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity in the presentation of research data. As

acknowledged previously, every experience, including cultural experience, is unique to the experiencing mind and cannot be probed independently of that mind, and even when such experiences are communicated, it is only the experiencing mind that best appreciates what was experienced. Interpreting research data and communicating such interpretation in a manner that does not create entirely new and, therefore, false sets of realities constitute phenomenological challenges in cultural tourism research.

Moreover, cultural realities like masquerade cults in Nigeria vary in their symbolisms, relevance and socio-cultural identities. Again, the *Zangbeto* tradition of the Ogu has such symbolisms and identities that have highly evolved over time, transcending the usual ambiances of ceremonials and entertainment that are associated with other masquerades. It has some functional relevance in contemporary social control and community policing, as well as in the overall spiritual consciousness of the Ogu, which convey on it a triple fold symbolism that includes the organisational, the cultic and the cultural (Okure, 2015), and which cannot be overlooked in scholarly interpretations.

The Dynamics of Cultural Interpretations

Cultural tourism research often requires creativity, tact and capability in navigating the fragile interface between aesthetics and symbolism in cultural interpretation, especially regarding the evaluation of patterns of cultural products consumption, and in the assessment of tourists' motivations and attractions. Some of the sampled researches in cultural tourism tended to overlook this distinction in their analyses and discourses due to overreliance on foreign literature, thereby presenting skewed interpretations of African culture that are ultimately gross misrepresentations of entire value systems. This challenge seems to be more prevalent with respect to masked cults and similar

traditions. Researchers in Nigeria tend to 'borrow' extensively from foreign literature and alien cultural ideological constructs in their assessment of Nigerian masquerade practices, often, with the assumption that the masking tradition is a universal practice.

Commodification of Cultural Properties

The commodification of cultural properties was also identified as a challenge to cultural tourism research in Nigeria. Cultural properties, in this context, refer to the broad spectrum of cultural resources that constitute the major attraction for cultural tourism. The commodification of cultural properties refers to instances in which cultural items and their associated values are presented as commodities that can be traded for money. This is to be clearly distinguished from crafts and artefacts that are usually produced by indigenous craftsmen of various cultural regions for sale to tourists and other consumers of such products. It concerns the conversion of symbolic cultural practices and their associated values and artefacts to economic commodities in defiance of their inherent cultural and social values as well as their sacrosanct symbolic relevance to the collective consciousness of the peoples that they represent. The challenging issue, here, constitutes the susceptibility of cultural data to counterfeiting. This study revealed that when and where cultural property were commodified, researchers were often vastly exposed to cultural data that were inauthentic, as people became merchants of cultural property, information and values that were well beyond their competence. This, invariably, led to knowledge claims about cultural values and meanings that were far removed from the entrenched norms and value bases that originally produced them. Researchers were often exposed to 'fake insiders' (Personal communication, 2024) who claimed vast knowledge of issues they were not well versed in.

Conflicts of Interest and Values

Another challenge that confronts cultural tourism research in Nigeria arises from conflict of interest and value among researchers, especially beginners. The conflict of interest usually consists in researchers' lack of concern for discovering and sharing knowledge. Some of the sampled researchers seemed to be under pressure to produce academic papers either as part of their academic programme or as requirements for academic promotion. There were also instances in which researchers were contracted (paid) to produce research reports on certain issues that bordered on cultural tourism. In a number of these instances, the overriding interests were on producing papers, reports and projects, rather than generating knowledge for solving the myriads of society's problems. This rendered the final outcome of these 'research' endeavours irrelevant and inconsistent with the rigours of contemporary cultural tourism knowledge generation. Secondly, certain cultural practices in Nigeria, including masquerade celebrations, are perceived by a number of researchers as diabolical, anachronistic, and incompatible with their religious and moral values. Consequently, they are often unable to confront the rigours of getting to the 'bottom' of certain issues under investigation. In such cases, superficial and inauthentic interpretations were imposed on data and presented as research findings or contribution to knowledge.

The Subjectivity-Objectivity Divide

Researchers' inability to subject their opinions and assumptions to objective scrutiny, especially concerning ethnographic material, is an outstanding issue in cultural tourism research. Although it seems not to attract a great deal of intellectual attention at the moment, this problem has affected the use and interpretation of research data in ways

that misrepresent worldviews and aspirations, especially of indigenous communities in cultural tourism destinations. In the Nigerian context, cultural tourism researchers have sometimes either proposed or laid claims to certain knowledge categories that were not open to objective scrutiny and verifiability as such researchers were working on subjects that related to their domains of origin or exclusive areas of their sub-specialisation. In such cases, research findings and conclusions not only tended towards dogmatism, they were also replete with researchers' subjectivity in manners that significantly marred their applicability and replicability, which are essential features of standard research. This has also contributed to the paucity of standard and reliable material on cultural tourism in the country, thereby making research endeavours overly toilsome, especially to upcoming researchers.

Convergence versus Divergence

The convergence theory claims that owing to factors like technological advancement; global communication; travel, and tourism; inter-organizational and national collaborations; immigration; cross-national and ethnic marriages, the world is under pressure to become global and more homogenised and as such the world's cultures are converging towards commonality. As more and more people from different regions and cultures cross national borders, trade goods and assets, communicate, exchange ideas, they expose themselves to other cultures, and export their own cultures. Consequently, they are becoming increasingly similar in their needs, tastes, lifestyles, values, and behaviour patterns despite their countries of origin and national characteristics. Researchers voiced that 'such expressions as "international standards", "international best practices", and others, have come to signify that divergent and individuating elements of indigenous cultures must be

downplayed or completely overlooked in favour of the so called “global” cultural preferences’ (Personal communication, 2024). This not only constitutes a disservice to the cultures of Nigeria, but has also often led to the formulation of skewed cross-cultural comparisons that were not factual, as well as superimposing foreign cultural models and meanings on the nation’s indigenous cultures.

Dearth of Academic Interest

The dearth of genuine academic interest in cultural tourism studies and research constitutes another challenge. This is evident in the relatively low level of student enrolment in the programme as well as low research incentive by the government and industry stakeholders. Among the sampled population, there was a noticeably low interest in cultural research. There, nevertheless, appeared to be a high level of rhetorical interest in the whole tourism sector and an equally high optimism about its potential economic benefits, even by the Federal and States governments. However, these have not been matched with an equally high level of commitment to investing in the sector by way of robust research grants and sponsorship. Besides, this study identified a low level of collaboration by the government and industry operators with academics in advancing cultural tourism in particular, and the whole of tourism in general, compared to other sectors and disciplines. This clearly runs counter to the common knowledge in contemporary civilisation, that academia – where ideas are generated – remains the engine room for generating ideas for development and nation building.

Socio-economic and Political Insecurity

This study also identified socio-economic and political insecurity as a challenge to cultural tourism research and engagements. Tourism research, generally, requires atmospheres of serenity, security

and social stability to thrive. This is particularly true of cultural tourism that positively contributes to bridging the rural-urban dichotomy in a nation’s spatial organisational development. In many regions of the world, including Nigeria, insecurity stands as a major obstacle not only to cultural tourism research, but to the growth of the entire tourism industry (Adesina, 2013; Okure, 2020).

Nigeria, as a country has also witnessed several ethnic, religious crises and acts of terrorism and banditry, including kidnappings, which appear to be escalating at an intolerable scale. These crises and criminal activities individually and collectively create insecurity and breach to public peace that not only affect legitimate social, economic and educational activities including research in the country, but which also have the very damaging consequence of giving the signal to citizens and the rest of the world that Nigeria is not a safe and secure place, and as such is not suitable for economic investment and tourism activities. Other factors identified in this regard include lack of cultural unity and proper national orientation, undue tension between religion and culture, lack of interest in long-term investments by successive government regimes, misconceptions about civilisation – whereby development tends to mean substituting the indigenous with the foreign – absence of clear policy directions, and lack of political and policy continuity.

Negative Tribal Sentiments

Nigeria’s multi-tribal composition is one potentially beneficial social capital that has not always rubbed off well on the citizenry, especially concerning matters of national cohesion and development. Unfortunately, this negative thrust also often finds its way into research approaches and discourses. A multi-tribal arrangement is regarded as a potentially beneficial human capital on the consideration that it provides a rich

resource base for diverse human capital development strategies that draw from the multiple cultural, social and economic indices within its ambiances. According to a respondent, 'Nigeria's multi-tribal arrangement has, over the years, been significantly polluted by pseudo-religious, political, ethnic, and various ideological extremisms that have polarised its, otherwise, united and strongly bonded citizenry' (Personal communication, 2024). This has often led to certain tribal elements claiming and seeking to exert superiority over others through deliberate acts and utterances that cast aspersions and seek to undermine the collective wellbeing and social output of other tribes. Similarly:

Through exaggerations, under-reporting, misrepresentation, and, sometime, outright negative rhetoric, scholars and researchers of cultural tourism have introduced tribal or anti-tribal sentiments to their research discourses that either overly enthroned their tribal cultural elements over others or undermined other cultures, presenting them as inferior and obsolete in some cases (Personal communication, 2024).

This has also created such sentiments in which researchers were unwilling to collaborate with their peers, especially on matters that touched on tribal culture or other such sensitivities.

Sparse Resources

Unequal distribution of technological and intellectual resources across the various regions of Nigeria was also identified as a challenge. This has also translated to unequal access to resources that provide information for researchers, especially on cultural tourism statistics and

trends. Such tools like functional and uninterrupted internet services, reliable and stable energy supply, among others, are not easily accessible to researchers across the various regions of the country. 'Where there are avenues for financial resources and funding, excessive bureaucracy and arduous protocol make it extremely challenging for researchers to access such resources' (Personal communication, 2024). Besides, 'Nigeria's cultural resources are underpublicized by government-owned media, instead priority is usually given to publicising the activities of the government over and above others' (Personal communication, 2024). There is also no readily available and up-to-date comprehensive national list of Nigeria's intangible cultural heritage, which feeds the cultural tourism industry and from which researchers can draw in their bit to contribute towards expanding the literature base on the subject. For instance, the Cultural Industries and Heritage department of the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture (FMIC) disclosed quite recently that only 12 major festivals have been identified across the 6 geo-political zones of the federation to be developed and upgraded to international festivals. These are Argungu fishing festival, Osun Osogbo festival, Mmawu festival, Eyo festival, Oju-Ode Oba festival, Durbar, New yam festival, Keana salt festival, Ekpe heritage festival and Bade fishing festival. This is an official, but also a grossly under-representative inventory of the variety of rituals, languages, crafts, festivals and communal celebrations, knowledge systems, symbolic representations, and other intangible cultural elements spread across the more than the 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria, that have shaped and defined the cultural identities of the communities associated with them and deserve international publicity. Consequently, researchers' awareness of the cultural momentum of the country in relation to

cultural tourism is marginal, especially for beginners.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study reveals that cultural tourism research in Nigeria is confronted by numerous challenges. Beyond the issues and challenges that occupy the interface between general tourism research, including such that border on conceptual, methodological, and socio-political contexts, and those that are cultural-tourism-specific, the Nigerian researcher must confront those challenges that are peculiar to the Nigerian socio-cultural domain, including those that are rooted in its tribal composition and infrastructural deficits. There are also issues and challenges that are based on particular contexts within which researchers operate. All of these require the collaborative inputs of the government, academic organisations, and tourism industry operators as critical stakeholders. On the other hand, researchers can surmount some of these challenges by adequate preparation and by investing more in the data collection process, engaging more in participant observation with insider knowledge base and indigenous resources than in foreign literature. Additionally, though certain cultural groups and their practices could be quite difficult to penetrate for authentic data generation, where a researcher's interest in gathering authentic data is paramount, such a researcher will always usually find a way to what he/she wants. This is simply the nature of academic research that cannot be wished away.

Similarly, while there appears to be no centralised reliable source of official and authentic information on the current state of cultural tourism in Nigeria, and while cultural tourism practices in Nigeria seem not to be well positioned to positively feature in the nation's micro and macro socio-economic development agenda, the resilience and consistency of

scholars in contributing their inputs remain vital. Besides, the present quest for alternative income generating avenues through economic diversification, and job creating ventures in Nigeria could find some long term solutions in an aggressive national commitment to the pursuit of a cultural development scheme and the promotion of cultural tourism through active and deliberate engagement of academics who are capable and willing to undertake rigorous and relevant research on the subject and provide useful ideas for implementation. Personal responsibility, honest and committed participation in national life, and dedication to the principles of social justice, which are indispensable to the sustainable development of Nigeria's domestic tourism, are qualities that cannot be acquired through wishes and empty rhetoric, but must be learnt. They require deliberate collective action by the various stakeholders, which could include the introduction of elements of cultural tourism education into the educational curriculum of Nigeria at the primary and post-primary levels to sensitise the citizenry at an early stage of the opportunities therein, with a view to generating genuine interest in the subject.

Additionally, the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Ministry of Information and Culture could generate measures, including dedicated funding and sponsorship, for promoting cultural tourism research across the various regions and geo-political zones of the country. Also, the National Universities Commission (NUC) could, especially through the currently implemented Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS), consider delineating Tourism Studies as a Social Science from Hospitality Management, rather than assigning both to the domain of Management Sciences. This will go a long way in streamlining research directions and approaches, as well as

produce more relevant output from researchers.

Researchers must also be willing to face the rigours of standard academic research before embarking on such ventures; and Universities and Institutions of Higher Learning should the-emphasis on *quantity* of publication for promotion and pay attention to the *quality* and *relevance* of research outputs.

REFERENCES

- Adesina, O. S. (2013). Unemployment and security challenges in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(7): 146-156.
- Alexander, J. C. & Seidman, S. (Eds). (1995). *Culture and societies: Contemporary debates*. Cambridge University Press.
- Allis, T. (2017). Culture and tourism. In Lohmann, G. & Netto, P. A. (Eds). *Tourism theory: concepts, models and systems*. CAB International.
- Blake, J. (2000). On defining the cultural heritage. *International & Comparative Law Quarterly*, 49(1),
- Darbellay, F. & Stock, M. (2012). Tourism as complex interdisciplinary research object. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30(1), 441-458.
- Eagleton, T. (2005). *A ideia de cultura*. UNESP.
- Gilbert, D. C. (2004). Conceptual issues in the meaning of tourism. In S. Williams (Ed). *Tourism: Critical concepts in the social sciences*. Routledge.
- Goodenough, W. (1996). Culture. *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*. Vol. 2 Henry Holt and Co. Pp. 291-299.
- Gyekye, K. (2014). *Philosophy, culture and vision: African perspectives: selected essays*. Sub Saharan Publishers.
- Herskovits, M. J. (1948). *Man and his works: The science of cultural anthropology*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Middleton, V. T. C. (1981). *Conference summing up: International conference on leisure-recreation-tourism*. The Tourism Society.
- Kroeber, A. L., & Kluckhohn, C. (1952). *Culture: A critical review of concepts and definitions*. Peabody Museum Press.
- Leiper, N. (1990). Tourist attraction systems. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 17(3), 367-384.
- Logan, William S. (2007). Closing pandora's box: Human rights conundrums in cultural heritage. In Silverman, H, Ruggles, D. F. (Eds.). *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights*. Springer
- Lohmann, G & Netto, A. (2017). *Tourism theory: concepts, models and systems*. Cabi International.
- MacCannell, D. (1993) *Empty meeting grounds; the tourist papers*. Routledge
- McKercher, B. (2018). What is the state of hospitality and tourism research 2018? *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(3), 1234-1244
- McKercher, B. and Du Cros, H. 2012. *Cultural tourism: the partnership between tourism and cultural heritage management*. Routledge.
- Molina, S. (1997). *Turismo: metodología para su planificación*. Trillas.
- Moswete, N. N., & Darley, W. K. (2012). Tourism survey research in Sub-Saharan Africa: Problems and challenges. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 15(4), 369-383.
- Netto, A. P. (2009). What is tourism? Theoretical phases and principles. In J. Tribe (Ed). *Philosophical Issues in Tourism*. Channel View Publications. Pp. 43-60.
- Nicholls, R. W. (1984). Igede funeral masquerades. *African Arts*, 17(3), 70-76.

- Ogbonnanya, J. (2017). *African perspectives on culture and world Christianity*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Oko Elechi, O., Morris, S. V., & Schauer, E. J. (2010). Restoring justice (Ubuntu): An African perspective. *International Criminal Justice Review*, 20(1), 73-85.
- Okure, D. U. (2015). The Zangbeto masked cult as an agent of social control among the Ogu of Tarkwa, Lagos, Nigeria. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Okure, D. U. (2020). Nationalising intangible cultural heritage in Nigeria for optimised cultural tourism: the Zangbeto model. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities*. 9(1), 69- 79. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijah.v9i1.7>.
- Okure, D. U. (2022). Myth, semiotics and historical inertia in cultural heritage tourism: The stone images of the national museum, Esie, Nigeria. *Academic Journal of Current Research*. 9(3), 28-41.
- Richards, G (1996) *Cultural Tourism in Europe*. CAB International
- Richards, G., & Munsters, W. (2010). *Cultural tourism research methods*. Cabi International.
- Richards, G. (2018). Cultural tourism: a review of recent research and trends. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*. 36, 12-21.
- Ruiz-Lanuza, A., & Pulido Fernández, J. I. (2015). El impacto del turismo en los sitios patrimonio de la humanidad. Una revisión de las publicaciones científicas de la base de datos Scopus. *PASOS Revista de Turismoy Patrimonio Cultural*, 13(5), 247-1264.
- Sapir, E. (1921). *The meaning of language theory and practice*. Washington DC: USA Centre for Applied Linguistics.
- Smith, M., & Richards, G. (2013). *The Routledge Handbook of Cultural Tourism*. London: Routledge.
- Sunday-Idemudia, E., & Adedeji, A. (2023). Well-being and culture: an African perspective. IntechOpen. doi:10.5772/intechopen.109842.
- Tylor, E. B. (1871). *Primitive culture: researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art and custom* (Vol. 2). J. Murray Inc.
- UNESCO. 2003. *Basic texts of the 2003 convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, 2014 Edition* Accessed 12/5/2024. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/023/002305/230504e.pdf>
- UNWTO. (2014). Glossary of tourism terms. Accessed 11/5/2024 from <http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/Glossary+of+terms.pdf>.
- UNWTO. (2016). *Tourism highlights*. Accessed 10/4/2024 from <http://www.eunwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284418145>
- United Nations (2010). *International recommendations for tourism statistics 2008* ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/83/Rev.1. United Nations Publication. https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/Seriesm/SeriesM_83rev1e.pdf.
- Urry, J. (1990). *The tourist gaze: leisure and travel in contemporary societies*. SAGE Publishers
- Wiredu, K. 1997. Democracy and consensus in African traditional politics: a plea for a non-party polity. In E. C. Eze, Ed. *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*. Blackwell Publishers
- World Tourism Organisation, UNWTO. (2017). *Ethics, culture and social responsibility*. UNWTO Press
- World Tourism Organisation. (2018). *Report on tourism and culture synergies*. UNWTO Press doi.org/10.18111/978 284418978