

Contributions of Culture Towards Tourism and Economic Development of Communities: A Study of Ahoada, Rivers State

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Abstract

This paper discussed the contributions of culture towards tourism and economic development of communities using Ahoada, Rivers State Nigeria as a case study. The paper sought to establish the relationship between culture and the economy of communities, and identified some factors that stimulate and or inhibit cultural excellence and economic growth in our communities. Primary data were collated by use of questionnaires administered by hand; and oral interviews. The population of study was 12,848 while a sample size of 388 was determined using Taro Yamane formula at 0.05 margin of error. The study adopted the simple random sampling technique and analysed data by use of percentages as well as the Chi Square. The paper concluded that notwithstanding some cultural traits that inhibit development such as marriage and burial ceremonies, superstition and ignorance among others, culture should be integrated into governance and harnessed for economic sustainability of communities through cultural tourism and the establishment of cultural institutions.

Keywords: *Tourism, Culture, Development, Economy, Governance*

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Background to the Study

There are many different societies in the world today which are markedly identifiable through their cultural differences such as language, dress, tradition etc. These differences persist because of the background of the people and their different characteristics. They are also significant in the way and manner societies organize themselves in their shared conception of morality and in the ways they interact with their environment. No doubt, these differences and perceptions are buttressed by the fact that though culture is universal, every society has its own aspects. Thus it is difficult most times to find aspects of culture that are common to all cultures. The culture that may be morally accepted in Nigeria may be “contra-bonos-mores” that is “against good morals” in another country. Thus particularism becomes a factor in discussing culture. Culture is a basket of attitudes, activities and results. It transcends all the spheres of life and envelopes all aspects of living. It is the quest for cultural excellence that necessitates communities, societies and countries in propagating and establishing institutions devoted to cultural matters such that they become part and parcel of the community which they service.

Culture in its quest has contributed greatly to the economic development of communities but will make an even greater contribution when it is included in the State, local, regional, urban and rural economic development initiatives. Indeed it has been proved (Navrus and Ready, 2000) that culture has a transformative power on existing development approaches helping to broaden the term of development initiatives and making development much more relevant to the needs of people. Development interventions by world bodies that are responsive to the cultural context and the particularities of a place and community and advance a human centered approach to development are most effective and likely to yield sustainable, inclusive and equitable results. Culture is transversal and cross cutting concern and, as such affects all the dimensions of development.

Statement of the Problem

One of the goals of every society is sustainability of economic development through different policies and instruments including culture. Notwithstanding policies towards sustainable economic development, culture still has its ways of retarding and inhibiting economic development. This scenario has plagued economies to the extent that many nations are beginning to rethink their policy thrusts.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to assess the contributions of culture in increasing the economic development of communities especially Ahoada community in Rivers State of Nigeria. To this end the specific objectives of the study include

- a) To provide a greater understanding of the contributions of culture to the economic development of Ahoada, Rivers State
- b) To identify the relationship between economic development and culture
- c) To identify factors that may stimulate cultural environmental harmony in communities
- d) To identify the various forms of culture inhibiting economic development in Ahoada Rivers State

- e) To identify factors that could affect sustainability of the economy of Ahoada Rivers State.

Research Questions

In pursuance of the objectives of this study, the following research questions were raised

- i. What are the contributions of culture to the economic development of Ahoada Rivers State?
- ii. What is the relationship between economy and culture?
- iii. What are the factors that can stimulate cultural environmental harmony in Ahoada?
- iv. What are the various forms of culture inhibiting economic development in Ahoada?
- v. What are the factors affecting sustainability of the economy of Ahoada, Rivers State?

Review of Related Literature

The concept of culture has been viewed by different scholars. Tyler (1871) was of the opinion that “culture is that complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs and many other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. His views were closely related with those of Linton (1941) which thinks that culture is “a way of life of a people, the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation”. Kluckhohn (1960) noted that a good deal of human behavior can be understood and indeed predicted if we know a people's design for living (their culture). It could be said therefore that culture determines the way and manner members of a society feel as it defines their activities and directs their outlook in life.

That culture determines the way and life of a people presupposes the fact that it is composed of both material and non material components. Material culture consists of the material products made by man and used in the society in order to satisfy the varied needs of man. Under this category are cars, houses, clothing, etc. Thoughts or ideas that make up a culture are called the non-material culture. In contrast to material culture, non-material culture does not include any physical objects or artifacts. It consists of the aggregate of values, mores, norms, etc., of a society; the ideational structure of a culture that provides the values and meanings by which it functions. Culture shapes the way things are done and why they should be so. As a set of attributes, Ahamfuna and Nnajieta (2005) understand culture as a constantly changing phenomenon, both shaping and being shaped by social and economic aspects of human interaction.

A culture oriented economic development is one that integrates the symbolic and creative elements into an aspect of the economy, pursuing distinctions between localized individuals and social knowledge and globalizing markets. It is thus that cities these days spend more in cultural programs as well as large infrastructure projects which are supposed to be drivers of sustainable development and maintenance and which maintenance is a task for such cities.

Sustainable development as a concept has been examined from different perspectives of scholarly thought and according to the World Food Program (WFP) reflects the allowance of for future generation by the preservation of natural resources and the rehabilitation of such

resources carelessly treated in the past. Gbadegesin and Aluko (2010) posit that sustainable development is the provision of adequate and affordable basic needs of life for the present generation without jeopardizing the prospects of subsequent generations. The principal goal of sustainable development is meeting present needs in such a way that will not jeopardize the potential of posterity to meet their needs. This involves the practice and meanings associated with the production, use and management of resources (Eziyi, 2010).

Though economic development has traditionally required a growth in the gross domestic product, it has been found to be limited (Okoronkwo, 2015). Sustainable development thus involves and necessitates the improvement in the quality of life for many though a decrease in resource consumption for the affluent.

Area of Study

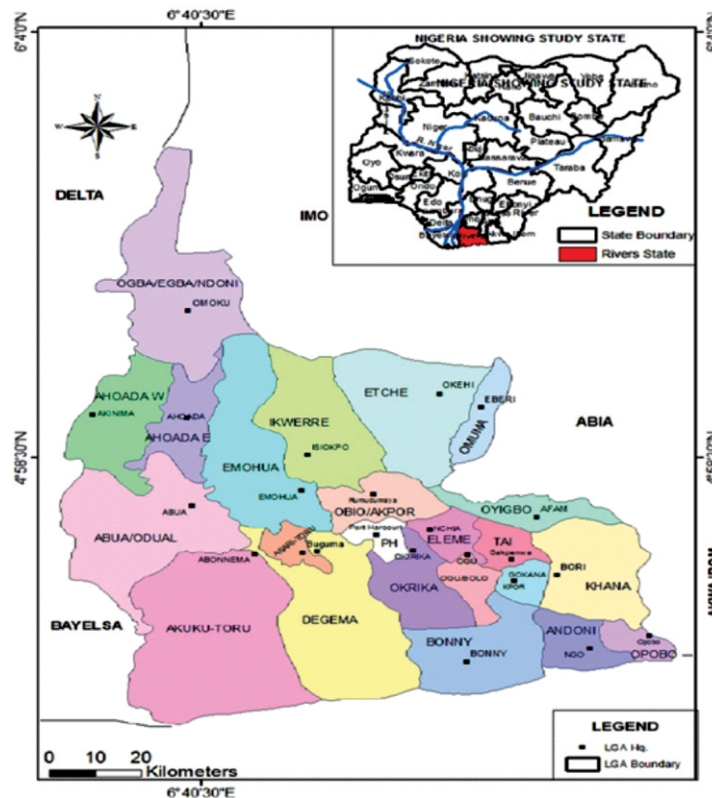


Fig. 1: Map of Rivers State Showing Local Government Areas and headquarter locations

Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Rivers-State-Showing-Local-Government-Areas-and-Headquarters_fig1_288986350

Ahoada is the administrative headquarters of Ahoada East Local Government Area of Rivers State Nigeria. It has been the administrative headquarters of Old Ahoada Division in pre independence days including Ogba, Egbema, Engenni, Abua, Odual, Etche, Omuma, Obio, Akpor, Ikwerre and parts of Port Harcourt. Ahoada lies between latitudes $5^{\circ} 04' 50''$ N and longitude $6^{\circ} 38' 02''$ E. Administratively, Ahoada is divided into two local government

Areas of Ahoada East with headquarters at Ahoada city and Ahoada West with headquarters at Akanimi. The population of Ahoada according to the National population commission census (2006) is 583,900 that is, 233,700 for Ahoada East and 350,200 for Ahoada West. This is projected to 700,680 in 2018.

The people of Ahoada speak Ekpeye language and are known as Ekpeye people one of the ethnic nationalities that make up Rivers State in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The Ekpeye people are usually included as a sub group of the Igbo people on linguistic and cultural grounds. Other ethnic groups of Enginni and Ogbogolo also inhabit Ahoada but in the minority.

Research Methodology

Primary data were collated by use of questionnaires administered by hand; and oral interviews. The population of study was 12,848 while a sample size of 388 was determined using Taro Yamane formula at 0.05 margin of error. The study adopted the simple random sampling technique and analyzed data by use of percentages as well as the Chi Square.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Table 1: Categories of respondents

Category of respondents	No. of questionnaires distributed	No Retrieved	% contribution to total response
Social/Cultural group members	155	135	40
Economists	78	67	20
Traditional Rulers/Elders	35	33	8.89
Artists	43	41	11.1
Investors	35	25	8.89
Farmers	42	32	11.1
TOTAL	388	333	99.98

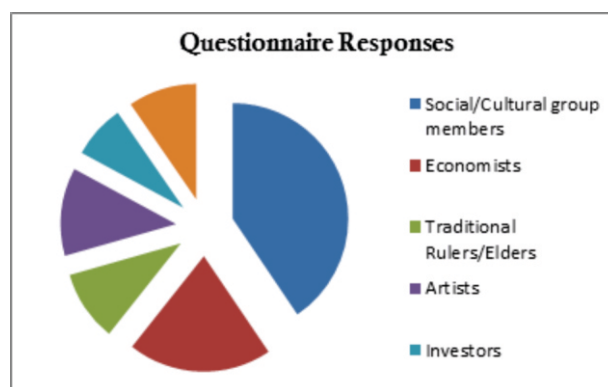


Fig. 1: Questionnaire Responses

Out of 388 questionnaires distributed, 333 were received showing a percentage response of 85.8. This is adjudged to be good enough upon inferences were inferred and conclusions drawn.

Table 2: Relationship between Economy and Culture

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	288	86.7
No	45	13.3
TOTAL	333	100

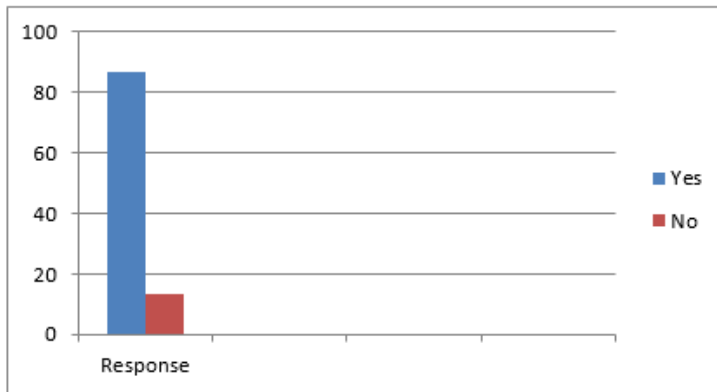


Fig. 2: Relationship between economy and culture

According to respondents, every economy is hinged on the cultural values of the people. Hence, 86.7% of the respondents affirmed to question on the relationship between economy and culture as against 13.3% of the respondents who are of the view that the culture of Ahoada has not in any way affected the economy positively.

Table 3: Factors that stimulate cultural environmental harmony for firms

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Patronage	52	15.6
Festivals	126	37.8
Tourism	74	22.2
Security	44	13.3
Infrastructural Development/Social amenities	37	11.1
TOTAL	333	100

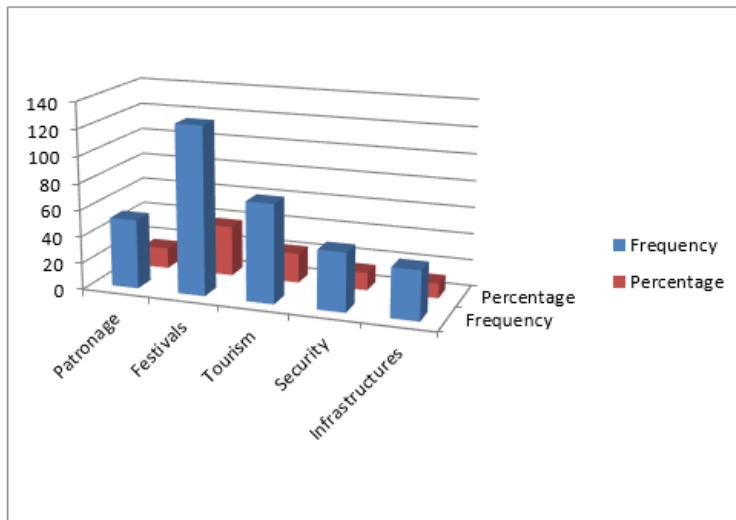


Fig. 3: Factors that stimulate cultural Environmental harmony in Ahoada

Table 3 and the corresponding Figure 3, shows that festivals attract foreigners and investors in cultural economy and as such represent a major factor that stimulates cultural environmental harmony in Ahoada. It represents 37.8% as against 22.2% from tourism which is the nearest in ranking. Other factors – security, infrastructure, patronage are all considered but none was ranked as good.

Table 4: Forms of culture inhibiting Economic development in Ahoada

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Customary land tenure system	114	34.4
Superstition	76	22.8
Ignorance	70	21.1
Expensive burials and marriage ceremonies	43	12.8
Patronage of herbal homes	30	8.9
TOTAL	333	100

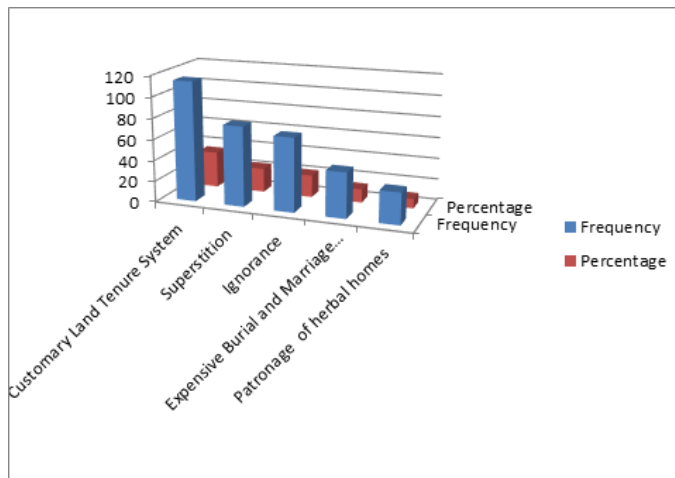


Fig. 4: Forms of culture inhibiting Economic growth in Ahoada

Figure 4 explained the forms of cultural heritage inhibiting economic development in Ahoada. Customary land tenure system is the most common form of culture known to be inhibiting economic growth in Ahoada with 34.4% followed by superstition (22.8%), Ignorance (21.1%), Expensive burial and marriage ceremonies (12.8%) and Patronage of herbal homes (8.9%).

Table 5: Factors affecting the sustainability of the economy of Ahoada

Factor	No of responses	Proportion to the number of respondents (%)	
Poverty	230	69	248.4
Trading	37	11	39.6
Non industrialization	30	9	32.4
Involvement in private sector of the economy	13	4	14.4
Lack of vocational business	23	7	25.2
TOTAL	333	100	360

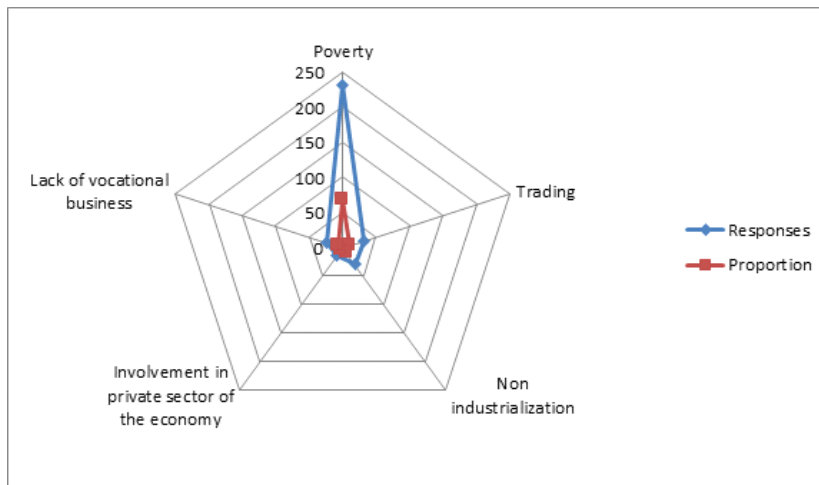


Fig. 5: Factors affecting the sustainability of the economy of Ahoada

As could be seen there are different factors that are affecting the sustainability of the economy of Ahoada, Rivers State. These factors though myriad were condensed and summarized into high level of poverty, trading, non industrialization of the town by government action or inaction, insufficient involvement of natives in the private sector of the Ahoada's economy, and lack of vocational business by the indigenes. Figure 5 reveals the view of respondents that the high level of poverty prevalent in Ahoada accounts for almost two-thirds of the factors affecting sustainability of the economy of Ahoada, Rivers State.

Ho: Culture does not contribute to economic development of Ahoada

Table 6: Contribution of Culture to Economic development of Ahoada

Variables	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
Contribution of culture	61	19	33	12	125
Economic development of Ahoada	15	8	1	1	25

Source: Field work 2018

Category	O (observed frequency)	E (expected frequency)	O - E	(O - E) ² *	(O - E) ² / E *
Category 1	61	31.25	29.75	885.063	28.322
Category 2	19	31.25	-12.25	150.063	4.802
Category 3	33	31.25	1.75	3.063	0.098
Category 4	12	31.25	-19.25	370.563	11.858
Total	125	125			45.08

* if df = 1, then the formula employs a continuity correction, replacing (O - E)² with (Abs(O - E) - 0.5)²

Df = 3; Chi Square = 45.08; Chi Square value needed to reject null hypothesis = 7.815

Result- Reject the hypothesis that culture does not contribute to economic development of Ahoada.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has been able to show that culture has a strong relationship with the economy of an area since every economy depends on culture. The study also was indicative of the fact that culture has contributed immensely to the development of Ahoada by generating assets and influencing the flow of goods and services. The study identified forms of culture inhibiting the development of the economy of Ahoada as well as those stimulating it; and concludes that the sustainability of the economy of Ahoada Rivers State is affected most adversely by a very high level of poverty of the citizens as well as non industrialization of the area by present and past governments, insufficient involvement of citizens in the private sector of the area's economy and lack of vocational businesses.

In view of the foregoing the study recommends the following

1. Government should see the need to support cultural tourism, creation of industries, cultural institutions and culture based urban revitalization as powerful economic sectors that will generate decent employment, stimulate local development and foster entrepreneurship.
2. Cultural institutions should become bridge builders by integrating traditional knowledge to foster environmental sustainability
3. Communities should spearhead the promotion of inter-cultural dialogue to harness social cohesion through which means conducive environment could be built for development
4. Culture should be integrated in the conception, measurement and practice of development with a view to advancing equitable and sustainable development.

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