



Cultural Tourism as an Exponent of Art and Crafts Sector in African Economy

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Abstract. The arts and crafts sector in African is a vibrant intersection of numerous cultures, reflecting the diversity and creativity of the African people. Arts and crafts, inclusive of sculptures, painting, poetry, woven works, beadworks and textile among others, are deep-rooted in African heritage and bear a substantial contemporaneous value. They embody, the spirit of African Culture, thus enabling tourist to connect with Africa's trans-generational ethos and rich cultural heritage. The potential for cultural tourism's growth and invariably, the unique proliferation of the African economy, therefore stems from the international integration of these arts and crafts into the tourism sector. The key components and elements influence the tourist decision making process in choosing a destination to travel.

Keywords: Cultural, Tourism, Crafts, Arts, Economy, Sustainability.

1. Introduction

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism where travelers experience the culture, lifestyle, history, art and heritage of a destination. These tourist actively seek out cultural experiences, which can vary from visiting historic sites, exploring traditional arts and crafts, experiencing local customs and traditions, to relishing authentic cuisines. By engaging in cultural tourism, travelers gain valuable knowledge and understanding of different cultures. In the 21st century, cultural tourism has emerged as one of the most rapidly growing forms of travel. Due to emerging economic markets, increased worldwide accessibility, and the increasing desire of the tourist to engage and immerse themselves in unfamiliar cultures, cultural tourism has become more mainstream. The interest in cultural tourism continues to grow and according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), approximately 37% of global tourism is considered cultural tourism, and this percentage rises yearly (UNWTO, 2017). Cultural tourism plays a pivotal role in the tourism industry, serving as a Key driver in shaping the experience of travelers Worldwide. The intricate relationship between tourism and culture in multifaceted. Influencing the choice of destination,

the design of travel experience and the overall satisfaction of tourists.

The primary difference between cultural tourism and traditional forms of tourism lies in the traveler's motivation. Traditional tourism typically involves sightseeing, relaxation and entertainment. In contrast, cultural tourism is about immersing oneself in a different culture. It involves visiting both tangible and intangible assets include customs, cuisine, and traditional arts and crafts. Cultural tourism plays an integral role in showcasing a nation's unique heritage, tradition, and diversity to the rest of the world. In Africa, the arts and crafts industry harbor a rich cultural tapestry that conveys distinct stories, histories, and civilization of the continent. Therefore, the integration of this sector with the tourism industry can engender a suitable and enriching cultural tourism experience.

Cultural tourism plays a crucial role in economic development. It generates economic benefits by creating jobs, fuelling local economies, and fostering sustainable development. It also helps in preserving local traditions and heritage, thus fostering pride and identity among local communities. Although, the rise in cultural tourism is due to several factors including; advancement in technology and transportation as more people can travel across the world more easily; increasing awareness about the importance of cultural preservation, such that numerous destinations invest heavily in infrastructure aimed at conserving and showcasing their cultural heritage to visitors, as well as increase people's innate desire to explore and comprehend the world's diverse cultural heritage, cultural tourism however, has its drawbacks. There can be negative impact on the local culture and environment. The introduction of tourists to local cultures can sometimes results in cultural appropriation, distortion, and commodification. Artists and craftsmen can easily be exploited by the visitors, alternatively, the arts and crafts objects may lose its ingenuity and become mass produced commodities. These drawback necessities responsible strategies to mitigate the possible negative impacts and maximize the benefits of cultural tourism.

2. The Art of Craft sector of the African Economy

Cultural tourism develops at a considerable speed and diversifies continuously in a multifaceted way. It constitutes not only the base for the booming European City tourism but acts more and more as an instrument for fostering tourism in a rural areas. The main objective of this kind of policy is to maintain or improve the quality of life for the local people. The cultural Tourism develops at a considerable. The art and craft sector play a significant and often underestimated role in the economic development of Africa. Arts and crafts Are intrinsic cultural elements in African societies, have traditionally been a source of livelihood for many people across the continent. This sector contributes to the African economy by generating income via the production and sale of various items of various items ranging from textiles, ceramics, sculpture to paintings, jewellery, and leatherwork. In Africa, the arts and crafts sector has been experiencing considerable growth and progress over the years, which can positively be accelerated. This growth has spawned numerous entrepreneurial opportunities and resulted in employment creation and poverty reduction for artisans and small-scale producers. A report by UNESCO (2013) demonstrates that the cultural and creative industries in Africa, which include arts and crafts, generate annual revenues estimated over 4.3 billion USD and create about one million jobs. The global demand for authentic African art and crafts has been on a steady upward trajectory with much of these products exported to Europe, America and Asia. This global interest stem from the unique cultural essence and aesthetic appeal exhibited in these artworks, making them highly valued by collectors, dealers and enthusiasts worldwide. The export of these cultural products adds significant to Africa's foreign exchange earnings, aiding economic development and growth. The digital era has further spurred growth in the African arts and craft sector. Platforms like Etsy, eBay, and African-based online marketplaces such as Africa are enjoying a blooming business based on African crafts. These platforms enable artisan to reach wider audiences, thereby increase market access and fetch better prices for their products. For instance, Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, offers an excellent example of arts and crafts contributing to national economic development. Nigeria's film industry, also known as Nollywood, is the country's second –largest employer after agriculture (British Council, 2014). Nollywood earns an estimated \$590 million annually, contributing significantly to the national GDP (World Bank, 2020). South Africa is another African nation where art and crafts sector significantly contributes to the economy. The South Africa Cultural Observatory found that 1.7% of all jobs in South Africa (about 1 million jobs) are within the cultural sector, which includes arts and crafts (SACO, 2020). Beyond these examples, other African nations like Kenya, Ghana, Egypt and Morocco have expensive arts and crafts industries accounting for a significant portion of their economies and offering much-needed employment opportunities.

Furthermore, the African arts and crafts sector is intrinsically linked to tourism and contributes to the tourism and contributes to the tourism industry particularly, as an elixir for cultural tourism. Tourists are drawn to African not only for the safari experience but also for the rich, diverse, and unique cultural heritage displayed in the arts and crafts markets. These visitors are often the primary customers for the African crafts, leading to a symbolic relationship between two sectors and enhancing the economic value of crafts. Consequently, this boosts local economies and further asserts the importance of this sector in African economic development. Despite these positive development especially in the importation of visitors as tourist to the African landscape, challenges will still linger. Key among them include inadequate resources and poor infrastructure, insufficient technical and managerial skills, and limited access to credit facilities. Additionally, the sector is largely informal, and most artisan operate on a subsistence level, thus impeding scalability. However, growth can be fostered in this sector by major stakeholders taking intentional steps especially in the area of cultural tourism. Another advantage of cultural tourism over other forms of expanding the art capital market is dual the importation of wealth into the economy. The visitors invest into the African economy both through the business of art and crafts. Additionally, by fostering cultural tourism, there is opportunity to encourage greater appreciation for the African local ethnicities, thereby, rewriting the African narrative on a global scale. Arts and crafts are tangible and material objects of culture and African is a rich reservoir of immense cultural heritage. There is significant potential for development in the art and craft sector, if hinged on cultural tourism as a catalyst, and when aptly harnessed, can lead to sustainable economic development.

3. Prospects and Strategies for Cultural Tourism and Arts and Crafts in the African Economy

Cultural tourism has evolved to become one of the most dynamic and fastest growing sectors of the global tourism industry. In particular, African countries, endowed with a unique and diverse cultural heritage, offer promising prospects for cultural tourism development. Cultural tourism represents an area of significant economic benefits to museums and heritage sites. Challenging economic times in particular require cultural and heritage facilities to explore ways and means to increase an attendance and self-generated revenue and to control operating expenses. Doing so require the sector to look carefully at their operating policies and practices to enable them focus on issues such as customer service, partnership and packaging opportunities. And to be open to entrepreneurial approaches while continuing to meet their heritage preservation and education mandates.

African being a continent with 54 countries, is endowed with diverse culture, landscapes, wildlife, and climate variations

that make it an attractive destination for cultural tourism. One key prospect for cultural tourism in Africa is the richness and diversity of the African heritage. This includes historical sites, landmarks, and monuments that tell the story of human civilization, such as the Great Pyramids of Egypt, Carthage in Tunisia, and the Robben Island in South Africa. These sites represent significant cultural tourism in Africa and the diversity of its indigenous cultures. Each African nation offers a unique blend of ethnic groups, each bearing distinct cultural practices, traditions, arts, and festivals. This offers a unique cultural experience for tourists, contributing to diversifying the tourism product and promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding. Furthermore, the African landscapes, including the Sahara Desert, Victoria Falls, Mount Kilimanjaro, and the Nile River, provide unique backdrops that enhance the cultural tourism experience, allowing tourists to connect with nature while appreciating cultural aspects. The presence of historical sites, diverse repertoire of indigenous culture and unrivalled landscapes and natural views, ensures the continuity of cultural tourism in Africa. However, several challenges need to be addressed to maximize this sector's full potential.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported that cultural industries, including arts and crafts, represented around 3% of the world's GDP in 2008, with Africa showing significant potentials for growth (UNESCO, 2013). A 2018 report by the International Trade Centre (ITC) suggests that handicraft exports from African countries exceeded \$ 1 billion, demonstrating the sector's vitality (ITC, 2018). Similarly, a report by the African Development Bank (AfDB) underscores that the creative economy, particularly crafts and visual arts, can contribute substantially to Africa's foreign exchange earnings, job creation, and cultural promotion (AfDB, 2018). These reports are manifestations of the vast wealth of the wealth of the creative economy. This can however be greatly improved to stages of limitless proliferation to the benefit of the African economy. To effectually integrate and endanger cultural tourism in the arts and crafts sector in Africa and foster growth in the sector, there are premeditated steps stakeholders have to undertake. The government entities will need to work collaboratively with tourism operators, cultural institutions, artisans. Feasible development strategies and policies must be designed to protect and promote traditional arts forms, initiate skill transfer programs, facilitate local artist involvement in cultural tourism, and ultimately, preserve the African cultural heritage. These strategies are parallel and would influence both the tourism sector and the creative sector.

As earlier stated, negative impacts on the local culture and environment can emanate from cultural tourism. Also, cultural appropriation, distortion and commodification as well as exploitation of local artists are possibilities. It is therefore, paramount that policies should be enacted to

counteract these developments and maximize the benefits of cultural tourism. Creating a favorable policy environment, includes reviewing and enacting policies protecting intellectual property rights and standardization thereby enhancing market access, scalability. The policies should also be consistent and sustainable to prevent staggering development due to political change. This would invariably improve the working conditions of artists. Policies and infrastructure regarding the environment and maintenance of cultural sites can also be implemented. This entails proper site management and maintenance of cultural heritage, ensuring respect for cultural rights, and addressing the effect of climate change on historic sites. In so doing, the natural environment is preserved while the visitors and artists can be protected. Additionally, in creating an enabling environment for these artisans, there is need to foster policies that encourages access to credit facilities and technology. These are vital aspects to enable production of art objects and crafts that would be consumed at the tourism expedition. These credit facilities and technological innovations would solve the challenge of limited resources and poor infrastructure which confines the creative processes of several artists.

Capacity building is also crucial, and can be achieved through training artisans in entrepreneurship, marketing, and financial management. These training would be aimed at both technical and managerial education and would cover topics of techniques and methods of production, materials and new technologies in arts as well as training on how artists can maintain ingenuity even in a highly commercialized and competitive environment.

Promoting the standardization and documentation of African arts and Crafts plays a critical role in preserving authenticity as well as increasing the value of these products in the global markets. Understanding that the arts and crafts sector is largely informal, and most artisans operate on a subsistence level which consistently limits scalability. With flexible standardization structures and grassroots documentation, first originally of art forms would be preserved and copyright rules can be enacted. Also, substandard or mediocre art production and art laundering would be limited if not completely obliterated.

Moreover, in terms of immaterial culture, skills and knowledge associated with traditional art form and crafts represents a significant intangible cultural heritage that can become a focal point for cultural tourism. Experiences such as live demonstrations of craft making or immersive workshops, where tourists can learn first-hand the techniques of African arts and crafts production, can induce an authentic cultural experience. Such experiential tourism will not only embrace interaction but also encourage creativity and engagement with African communities.

Furthermore, these interactive experiences can enhance the socio-economic profile of African communities. The sale of traditional arts works and crafts can provide crucial income streams and employment opportunities for local artisans. Further, cultural tourism can stimulate inward and infrastructure growth in areas known for their artistic prowess. Concurrently, successful integration of the arts crafts sector with tourism can educate global audiences about the historical and cultural importance of African artistry and craftsmanship. And with consistency and efforts, this can help redefine the African identity among the global audience. It is pivotal for African countries to invest heavily in sustainable tourism practices, innovate tourism products around their cultural assets which are the arts and crafts of the people, promote awareness and understanding of the cultural heritage, and create a conducive infrastructure and operational environment for arts and tourism to thrive. This would maximize increased interest in cultural experiences, redirect global trends to Africa thereby, positioning Africa as the top creative market and cultural tourism destination.

4. Conclusion

The arts and crafts sector is integral to Africa's economic landscape. Its immense contribution, ranging from employment creation, income generation, boosting of local economies and foreign earnings, is cardinal to Africa's economic growth. Moreover, it is rich reservoir of the continent's cultural heritage as arts and crafts re the material objects of culture. The integration of the arts and crafts sector in cultural tourism can amplify the visibility and understanding of Africa's diverse cultural heritage. By creating authentic and immersive experiences, cultural tourism would not only contribute to socio-economic development but also ensure sustainability and preservation of invaluable traditional arts and crafts for future generations. The deliberate and strategic merging of the two sectors is full of promises that could be the pillar of the economic development of African nations if appropriately harnessed.

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