

CERAMICS AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA: A NEGLECTED GOLD MINE

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Abstract

The activity of traveling for pleasure has become a global industry today. The ever increasing ease of international travels has given the tourism industry a big boost making it one of the world's most income earner and job creator. Organized tourism Nigeria was established in 1962 by a group of practitioners to project the tourism potentials in the country. Tourist attractions abound in Nigeria, ranging from natural attractions like waterfalls, springs, rocks, beaches, etc. Man made attractions like resorts, ranches, etc. Surprisingly, ceramics is almost not listed. This paper queries this and seeks to investigate the current place of ceramics in the tourism industry versus its place in some other foreign nations. The paper discovers that ceramics is a major tourist attraction in these foreign countries and contributes to GDP of host countries. The paper concludes by suggesting possible steps the Government can take to package local ceramics and make it more attractive to qualify it for listing as tourist attraction.

Introduction

Tourism is the activity of traveling for pleasure, and has become one of the most global industries today. With the increasing ease of travel and smoothness of movement across international borders, the tourism sector boasts of being the world's biggest export earner generating enormous foreign exchange earnings and employment. Tourism has become a catalyst for growth and development in nations like Malaysia, South Africa, Indonesia, Kenya, Egypt etc, as it generates considerable amount of resources for governments even as it stimulates bigger investments in different sectors of the economy, thereby contributing to improved living conditions of the people. Knowing these, Governments in different countries invest in the industry through promotion of tourist attractions like local Arts and culture; invest in infrastructure like roads, hotels, parks and resorts which are sometimes located close to natural sites like waterfalls or game reserves.

The paper shall investigate tourism in Nigeria, its history and development, mention tourist

attractions in some parts of the country and impact on their immediate environment. It shall investigate the current place of ceramics as far as tourism is concerned. Thereafter, the paper shall attempt to borrow ideas from some other countries where ceramics play a major role in the industry. Finally, the paper shall make suggestions on what the Nigerian Government should do to harness the enormous potentials inherent in ceramics and how it can be integrated into the tourism industry.

History of Tourism in Nigeria

If tourism is the act of travelling for pleasure, I believe no one can date when it all began in Nigeria. I believe people from different parts of the globe must have visited the country for sightseeing, educational research and relaxation during the colonial era. Documentation may not have been carried out in this regard since there was no organized body charged with the responsibility to do so. Few concerned individuals who may have had a good knowledge of the role of this industry were said to have established organized, tourism in Nigeria way back in 1962. NTWG

(2009) states: "Organized Tourism in Nigeria dates back to 1962 when the Nigerian Tourist Association was formed by a group of private practitioners to project the tourism potentials of Nigeria and encourage both domestic and international activities" NTWG (ibid) further says that "The efforts of the association led to the admission of Nigeria as a full member of the international union of Official Travel Organization (IUOTO) now World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 1964, and the promulgation of Decree 54 of 1976 establishing the Nigerian Tourist Board".

As the body became operational, it became obvious that the decree establishing it feel short of certain requirements and an amendment to enable the body have a wider coverage of activities. Hence NTWG (2009) declares that: "To meet the challenges of the times and in line with the tourism policy, the decree was amended to give birth to the Nigeria Tourism Development Cooperation (NTDC) Decree 81 of 1992". The new decree expanded the organization's coverage area. Outside of becoming the apex tourism agency of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, it was charged with the overall responsibility of promoting, marketing and coordinating tourism activities in the country.

The following are its terms of references relevant to the relevant to the subject in view as stated by: NTWG, (2007)

- Creating the enabling environment for tourism activities to flourish through the promotion of good standards and efficient service delivery in the hospitality industry and to facilitate investment sector.
- Ensuring the promotion and marketing of the tourism products and services within and outside the country,
- Facilitating and encouraging private sector and local communities participation in the development of the tourism industry; and
- Promoting technical and professional tourism services.

Tourist Attractions in Nigeria

The paper shall attempt to establish sites the International community and our Governments

regard as tourist attraction. Wikipedia says: "Tourism in Nigeria centers largely on events, due to the country's ample amount of ethnic groups, but also includes rain forests, savannah, waterfalls, and other natural attractions". The Nigerian South African Chamber of Commerce. Htm adds to this discussion, it says;

Tourist attractions abound in Nigeria, ranging from natural attractions like hills, waterfalls, springs, lakes, mountains, rocks, beaches, etc; Olumo Rock in Abeokuta, Obudu Cattle Ranch, Man made attractions like resorts, parks, game reserves, ranches, etc; and Cultural attractions such as Festivals, carnivals, etc. The tourist attractions in Nigeria are spread out in the different states that make up the federation. Tourists come to Nigeria to enjoy its picturesque cites, some of which are natural wonders, its artistic treasures, beautiful beaches, resorts, parks, festivals and food.

Having identified some tourist attractions across Nigeria, it is expedient to know some of the sites. The Nigerian South African Chamber of Commerce Htm lists tourist sites as:

Tinapa, the first integrated business and leisure resort in Nigeria, with world Class facilities for business, leisure and entertainment, located in Calabar; the Agbokin and Kwa Falls; a Game Reserve at Okwangwo in Obudu local government and Oban Forest Reserves both of which were combined to create the Calabar National Park.; the Boshi Game Reserve; the Mary Slessor Cottage; and a National Museum. In Akwa Ibom, there is the Oron Museum famous for its collection of fine African carvings; the Ibeno Beach, and the Opobo Boatyard with its natural sand beaches at Ikot Abasi. Ojukwu Bunker in Abia wherein relics and inventions of the Nigeria civil war are displayed. Lagos State, the former national capital is proud of her many tourist centres/attraction. These include the long stretch of beaches from Lekki Beach to Alpha Beach; Tarkwa Bay Beach; Badagry Coconut Beach; Eleko Beach; Kuramo Beach widely

noted for night beaching; Maiyegun Beach; the French Village; the National Theatre; the Murtala Mohammed Memorial Botanical Garden; Ogun State is naturally prettified with the Olumo Rock, a massive outcrop of granite rocks of primitive formation, the highest point of which is about 137m above sea level in Abeokuta among others. Nature's gift of the Ikogosi Warm Spring located in Ekiti State. The warm water from the rock meets with cold water stream 100m below. It has lodging facilities. Nigeria is also proud of the Erin-Ijesha Water Falls in Osun State; Ibadan University Zoo, Agodi Zoological Garden, Upper Ogun Games Reserve. Finally, Abuja, the beautiful and well-planned National Capital is a must-visit for all tourists for while the Zuma Rock greets you welcome, the large Aso Rock hills tells you; the sitting of Federal Capital Territory is here.

There is mention of pottery site as a tourist attraction despite the fact that pottery making is an industry in some communities here in Nigeria. On the other our National website, www.onlinenigeria.com/tours/index.asp identifies seventy tourist sites in Nigeria. Among them are "Azumini Blue River Rose; The Long Juju shrine of Arochkwu; The Hills of Benue; Wikki Warm Springs; Yankari National Park; Igbo-Ukwu, Nok Village, Birinin Kudu Rock Painting, Dr Ladi Kwali Pottery Centre etc".

A casual checking of three lists shows that ceramics is almost not recognized as a tourist attraction. Neither the foreign nor our national website listed pottery making communities as tourist sites. It is quite appreciated that Dr. Ladi Kwali Pottery centre made the list, but the fact is that the centre is currently not worth seeing because it is near total decay.

The paper decided to visit Ekit, Ogun, Osun, Lagos, Taraba, Cross River, Delta, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Abia, Bauch, Adamawa, Sokoto,, Katsina, Kebbi, Zamfara, Kogi, and Ebonyi States Government tourism sites, but was shocked to find that ceramics was not listed on any of them. Except of course Niger State, which listed Dr. Ladi Kwali Pottery centre;

Growing Pot in Mokwa and Tatiko Cottage Industry. Nok culture was listed on Kaduna state site.

This paper therefore asks the following questions: Are there no communities in Nigeria where Pottery is practiced? If there are why are they not listed? Could it be that the potteries are not developed enough for show casing? Or could they be operating in very remote areas oblivious of civilization, or are potters very secretive of pottery tradition and are unwilling to reveal their trade secrets? This paper shall attempt to find answers to these questions.

Pottery Communities in Nigeria

It will be an effort in futurity trying to capture all the communities in Nigeria where pottery is practiced. But I shall attempt to capture as many as possible. Callaway (1965:30) in Fowowe, (2004:6) says "Besides, pottery making was one of the major crafts for which Ibadan was known in the pre-colonial and colonial days". It is common knowledge that pottery is practiced in Ladi Kwali Pottery centre Suleja and Tatico. By association I also know that pottery is practiced in Bida, Lapai, Ushafa and Abuja environs. Fatunsin, (1992), suggests pottery is practiced in the following areas of Yoruba Land, Impoe-Ijebu, Penmodu, Saki, Isua, Okeho, Abeokuta, Illorin, Oke-Eri, Ijebu, Fidit, Ilora, Ogga, Oyo, and Ara/Ijero Ekiti. Fowowe (1999) reports on Bini pottery. Bassey, (2006:103) reports: "The Ibibio people have well established pottery tradition in most of the major communities of the Ibibio land in Akwa Ibom State. Pottery practice is a family heritage., it is a skill that is inherited from one generation to the next". If this information is anything to go by, it means pottery has been practiced in these communities for several decades if not centuries, therefore ought to have grown into an industry worth tourist attraction. What happened?

Ahuwan, (2004:62) talks about: "Mal.Idi Hunkuyi, one of the oldest living Hausa potters. He was born in Tandama in 1923, Katsina state where he learnt the art of making pots from his father" This clearly suggests that pottery practice in this community would be at least 100 years. Why has it not grown beyond cottage industry?

Gukas, (2004:70) postulates that: "Based on some Ngas beliefs, the art of could pottery is the prerogative of their women folks. As a rule all traditional Ngas pots no matters how small or big, were designed to have pointed base. However, the pots may vary in shape and size to fit the traditional functions." He further says "Ngas men are prohibited from coiling clay in the same way their women folks do for pottery, because the Ngas believe that if a man coil clay, his penis will no more get erected during sexual intercourse, as such he cannot fertilize a woman". He further adds that "the other myth that follows is that his penis will grow to the length of the clay coil, as he coils the clay" The concern of this paper in this case is that, pottery has obviously been practiced in this community for a very long time for it to have become a way of life: The myths surrounding the practice of pottery among the Ngas attests to this and are enough materials for the government to develop upon and make Ngas pottery worthy of tourist attention. The study could continue on and on, but for the sake of space and convenience, I would like to conclude this aspect of the study. The above information is a testimony to the fact that pottery is practiced in many different communities in Nigeria. Another fact is that as a tradition the communities must have practiced pottery for more than a century. In addition they must have developed indigenous designs, which can help project the pottery and culture of the people.

This brings me to the next question. Why are these pottery communities not listed as tourist attractions.

There are no ready answers to this question; however few academic guesses shall be attempted:

1. Lack of interest or ignorance by the government
The government may not have reckoned with craft of this nature as a potential tourist attraction, hence does not see reasons why it should be listed.
2. The areas where some of these communities are located may be so remote that they are almost non-existent
3. The potters may be working in isolation, hence do not have strong representation before the authorities. The need for synergy among the

potters cannot be over emphasized in this regard.

4. There is need for a body to be put in place to manage such neglected areas. The body should be charged with the responsibility of indentifying the potentials of each community where pottery is practiced; research into the indigenous shapes and designs, thereafter do a comprehensive documentation of their pottery products with a view to highlight their uniqueness.
5. There could be this wrong notion on the side of the Government that enough of pottery can be seen in museums.

At this juncture, I would like to investigate briefly, the tourist industries in some other countries. A visit to <http://www.visitstoke.co.uk>; an English website, reveals the importance of Stoke-on-Trent (popularly known for ceramics) to British Tourism Industry. It says:

Welcome to Stoke-on-Trent, the World Capital of Ceramics Stoke-on-Trent, the City fondly known as The Potteries boasts visitor centres, world class ceramic museums including the Wedgwood Museum, factory tours, pottery cafes and over 25 pottery factory shops. A holiday in Stoke-on-Trent is sure to make everyone happy with our excellent leisure and entertainment facilities including Alton Towers, the unique Trentham Monkey Forest and the 800 acre Trentham Estate - so come along and enjoy! We are the home of the pottery industry and if pottery is your passion then you will not be disappointed with the world renowned brands such as Wedgwood, Royal Doulton, Portmeirion, Moorcroft, Emma Bridgewater and Aynsley to name just a few based here. There are at least 30 pottery attractions based here in the City of Stoke-on-Trent.

The facts are very clear here, the British tourism industry recognizes ceramics as a potential tourist attraction and systematically woven it into the fabric of its tourism industry.

The Japanese boasts of Ceramics museum. Rick Charette, in

<http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/location/regional/tochi> promotes some items which could arouse tourist interest. He says:

Interesting facts about soup bowls, cups and plates. The Maria Felchlin Collection, dating back to 1968, shows the 200 year old tradition of ceramics manufacture in the Thal district. Opened in 2006, the big, rambling wooden complex at the center of Shuili Snake Kiln Ceramics Cultural Park lies almost hidden away in forest cover beside Provincial Highway No. 16, just south of the town of Shuili and just before its junction with Provincial Highway No. 21, which leads to nearby Sun Moon Lake.

Inside is the kiln itself, a museum area, a multimedia exhibition room, a boutique, and a breezy open-front coffee shop. Intimate contact with ceramics-making comes in the pottery demonstration area, where masters show off each step of the craft, the DIY pottery classrooms, and the Wish Pottery area, where you “write your wish on the pottery and your dream will come true.”

During the DIY sessions, craftsmen assist visitors in making their own simple housewares such as bowls and mugs, then help to fire them. Those who cannot wait for pieces to dry (about 30 minutes) can have them mailed to them, for a fee.

The 30-meter long brick kiln, sitting on a slope to get the heat inside to move upward – the firewood is placed in the lower section – looks very much like a fat snake. It is a priceless historical relic, and is only rarely fired these days, to keep it in condition. It takes 3~4 days and an incredible amount of wood to bring it up to, and keep it at, the desired 1,100 degrees Celsius. The ash created within comes to rest on the ceramic pieces, creating the inimitable wood-fired look. When not in operation you can walk through it.

The 30-meter long brick kiln, sitting on a slope to get the heat inside to move upward, looks very much like a fat snake. There is a fair bit of English signage in the museum area, but a tour brings a much more intimate and

info-rich experience. For English tours, park management suggests you contact them two weeks in advance. Among the precious info nuggets given me during my most recent guided visit was that in the past local folk would come during kiln firings and, when temperatures were right, dry their clothing on the outside and bake sweet potatoes inside, and ladies would walk through quickly with wet heads to get a free perm, hair curling instantly. Among the many unusual and/or beautiful works on display is a water cistern that is not a water cistern. In WW II the Japanese in Taiwan realized they'd make great individualized air-raid bunkers, buried to their lip, each customized for one man and provided a lid and a step inside for easy exit. They were ordered in the thousands. Another is an ingenious teapot invented for royalty in which the access hole is at bottom, not top, preventing easy poisoning. Figure out how it works before your guide tells you!

Here we see technique demonstration being promoted as tourist attraction; even an ancient kiln design, individualized air-raid bunkers; an ingenious teapot invented for royalty in which the access hole is at bottom, not top, preventing easy poisoning. Can we learn from this?

European Tourism Day which was celebrated in Brussels, 27 September 2011 is a clear testimony to the fact that ceramics plays a major role in tourism in Europe. The theme for the event was: “The promotion of ceramic heritage”: “the global approach of Limoges”: “Limoges, capital of Arts and Fire”: “The tourism strategy to promote the ceramic heritage”: “The promotion of ceramic heritage”. Here we see a synergy of local, national and international efforts at promoting the effort of Limoges' ceramics. The packaging of this product is second to none. This paper strongly advice our Governments to replicate this.

Back in Africa I visited Morocco on <http://www.visitmorocco.com/index>; one of Morocco's tourism website and discovered the this:<http://www.visitmorocco.com/index.php/en/g/l-am-going-to/Other-cities/SAFI/Authentic>

From the sea front at Kechla, let's go back in time in history to explore the beautiful Safi, one of Morocco's ceramics capitals. Our tour could start at the Ksar El Bahr (Castle of the Sea). This square bastion was built on the water's edge in the 16th century by the Portuguese, whose presence would last for 50 years. Passing the ramparts, we enter the medina by the Souk street. Along with the Place de l'Indépendance, this is the liveliest place in the city. Flanked by stalls, all the crafts trades are represented here. Level with the Great Mosque, a path leads to the Portuguese Chapel. This was constructed in 1519 at the center of the chancel of the old cathedral. At the end of the Rue des Forgerons, the potters' quarter occupies the hill to the left. Its land contains exceptional clay which is the origin of Safi's reputation. A visit to the cooperative's school allows you to follow the various production stages of pottery. To find out more, don't miss the Kechla. This massive Portuguese fortress with crenellated towers offers a pretty view over the city and the sea. Through a monumental gateway giving onto the méchouar (square), we arrive at the buildings housing the national ceramics museum. Ceramics were introduced by a potter from Fez in 1875. Ceramics from Safi, which are recognized internationally, stand out due to their blue color and the highly sought-after pieces of all shapes and sizes. Famous in Morocco and around the world for the quality of its ceramic pottery, Safi is also a small town steeped in history on the edge of the Atlantic coast.

Here we see a blend of architectural history with pottery to woo tourists. The would-be tourist is even taken back into history of ceramics of that city. The Nigerian Government can replicate this by doing similar write-ups on pottery heritage of different Nigerian communities and post them on our national websites.

Summary

With the increasing ease of travel and smoothness of movement across international borders, the tourism sector boasts of being the world's biggest export earner generating enormous foreign exchange earnings and employment; the case is not different in Nigeria. The Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) says: "in 2011 that the country generates approximately N80 billion (\$509m) annually from tourism, which is extremely modest in comparison to financial services and telecommunications, in spite of the wide range of attractions the country has to offer". In terms of employment the sector has generated in Nigeria; WTTC states that "The total contribution of Travel and Tourism to employment (including wider effects from investment, the supply chain and induced income impacts, was 1,774,000 jobs in 2011(2.9% of total employment)" and it postulates that by "2022, Travel and Tourism is forecast to support 2,912,000 jobs (3.5% of total employment)" The question is how do these facts affect ceramics? How much of these jobs is ceramics oriented? The answer is rather difficult to give due to the fact that we do not have a data base that captures productivity in different sectors of the economy. However, I want to believe that the Federal Government has taken a step in the right direction in this regard. The minister for tourism was quoted as saying that "In a bid to better leverage the country's potential, Nigeria recently launched the Tourism Development Fund. Once it becomes available for disbursement, the N5 billion (\$31.8m) fund will be used to support different aspects of the sector..." The minister further says that: "Our vision is that 70 percent of the tourism fund will go to visual art, some toward tourism infrastructure, while a certain percentage will be set aside for the development of tourism products, as well as training," This where Ceran as body should come in. This body should be able to make a case for the development of ceramics at the national assembly.

Conclusion

To say that tourism has become one of the fastest growing sector in most economies is a fact that cannot be overemphasized. Tourism has become a catalyst for growth and development in nations like Malaysia, South Africa, Indonesia, Kenya, Egypt etc, as it

generates considerable amount of resources for governments even as it stimulates bigger investments in different sectors of the economy, thereby contributing to improved living conditions of the people. The Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation had said that the country generates approximately N80 billion (\$509m) annually from tourism, which is extremely modest in comparison to financial services and telecommunications, in spite of the wide range of attractions the country has to offer. Investigation revealed that there are little or no Government investments geared towards promoting local ceramics as a means of cultural preservation as it is done in some other countries; hence, ceramic centers are either not recognized at all or not listed as tourist attractions and therefore cannot be said to have any significant contribution to the revenue generated.

The paper also identified the lack of continuity and preservation of ancient pottery tradition and Government's insensitivity or lack of interest as probable factors responsible for the decay in this sector and therefore not taken seriously to merit tourist attraction. There is no

doubting the fact that Nigeria has a lot of tourism potentials as far ceramics is concerned and that the sector can also help relieve the country's unemployment burden to a very large extent if the potentials are well harnessed. Governments and the organized private sector should as a matter of urgency do a comprehensive survey of ceramics communities in Nigeria, do a proper documentation of their activities, products and techniques. This can become the Ceramics Road of Nigeria; created to uphold and promote the history of one of our most important examples of craftsmanship. It should touch upon several local pottery communities comprising a selected few within the six Geopolitical zones in the country. This would go a long way in preserving our productive traditions which will in turn have a deep impact on neighboring communities; thus sparking competition among them. I believe this would go a long way in pushing these communities to develop their products to highest standard possible to attract tourists. Thereafter this neglected gold mine would be ready for mining.

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