

## REPOSITIONING CULTURAL TOURISM TOWARDS ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF IHIALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ANAMBRA STATES, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*Tourism industry is operating below capacity, unorganized and largely neglected by both government and the private sector, with no organized effort to unlock its potentials. These potentials when harnessed could provide sufficient economic benefit to the society. Therefore, the need to awaken and reposition cultural tourism towards economic diversification becomes imperative. This study was designed to examine the various cultural activities, ascertain the major economic activities in the study area, determine the status of the activities and investigate suitable measures for repositioning the activities towards economic diversification in the study area. Staff of tourism board and members of the community who has direct or indirect relationship with cultural activities (i.e custodians of cultural sites and other participants in cultural issues) in the community constitutes the study population. A total of 100 respondents were drawn for the study. Purposive sampling technique was employed to sample the respondents. 5 Tourism Board members and 95 members of the community were selected. Primary source of data was utilized through the use of questionnaire and observation. Data collected were subjected to statistical computation using descriptive analysis with the aid of SPSS software. The study reveals that cultural tourism has significant positive impact on economic diversification and a better option for economic development through its diverse activities. Conclusively, Aghalieaku and Ozubulu cultural activities are well organised, financed and usually record high level of patronage with intensive security than Ekwulobia & Omaba Yearly New-Yam Festival which were just coming up and several measures were put in place towards economic diversification in the community. Meanwhile all the measure were positively significant from the mean coefficients as indicated in table 3 above. Recommendations were made that government should encourage cultural tourism activities in the state by allocating by participating and allocating funds for the development and running its activities, more intensive awareness through sensitization and educational programs should be engaged to enlighten the people of the benefits of cultural tourism activities with the view of developing the activities and reposition them as an option for diversification of the economy, particularly Ekwulobia & Omaba Yearly New-Yam Festivals and both the government and private tourism firms should work on making the tourist destinations where these cultural activities take place known and accessible.*

**Keywords:** Cultural, diversification, economic, repositioning, tourism

## Introduction

A strong growing sustainable economy is the goals of every nation in the world, being it under develop, developing or developed. However, the over reliance on crude oil and importation of products without making efforts towards harnessing other potentials for economic diversification and perhaps, economic growth is an issue of concern across the globe. The most important things to reiterate about the African region's economy are that it remains undeveloped and is becoming increasingly marginalized in a competitive global economy where other developing regions are making the fastest headway. African countries continue to rely on exporting primary commodities which cannot generate enough investment capital from within and is largely failing to attract foreign investments.

Nigeria, the most populous black nation and the largest economy in Africa with over one hundred and fifty million people and over three hundred and fifty-six thousand square miles land mass is blessed with abundant human and natural resources (Okiki links, 2010). For decades, the country has been over relying on oil to drive its economy. Following the massive decline in global oil prices and the damage it has done globally and particularly to the Nigerian economy and the 2015 budget and the recent budgets. It has become a necessity now to policy makers to seriously explore all relevant and viable measures of reviving and recovering the economy from this ugly state to avoid total collapse.

In the last six months, global oil prices have been experiencing sharp decline leading to severe fall in revenue. As a result, the country's budget benchmark price for this year is pegged at \$65 per barrel. The continuous fall in the global oil prices forced the federal government to adopt austerity measures, reduce oil benchmark prices severally; from \$78 per barrel to \$65 while the Central Bank of Nigeria has devalued the naira (PMNEWS, 2015).

Unfortunately, the global benchmark which has greater influence on that of Nigeria's benchmark fell recently by \$ 1.92 to \$ 51.18 (PMNEWS, 2015). For the Nigerian economy largely import-driven and oil-dependent, this implies a shortfall in revenue gap, increase in prices of goods and services and inflation. Therefore, a holistic approach is needed to cushion the effect and economic diversification could be a better option.

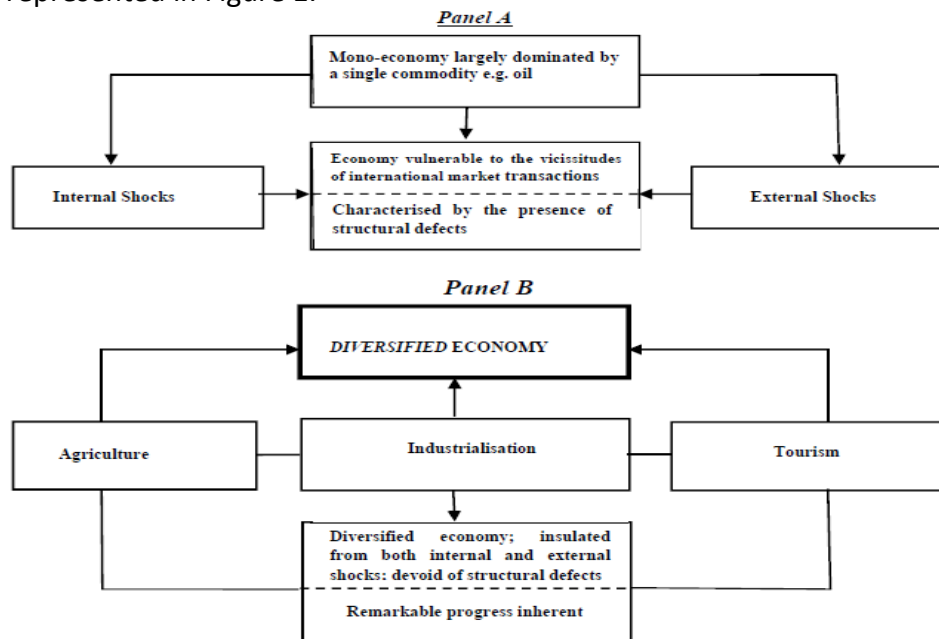
Butcher (2001) noted that, culture as a function of the society can also be seen as a prerequisite for social and political creativity, which depend on the

creativity of individuals. In looking at the development of Polish tourism, it is possible to find some positive examples where culture in its intangible sense does influence socioeconomic development as a stimulating factor. Cultural tourism and its endowed elements when developed and harnessed could contribute significantly towards tourism development and indeed economic diversification. This could serve as an option and a measure for augmenting the sources of earning among individuals and subsequently enhancing the GDP of the country.

Broadly speaking, it is believed that a diversified economy is one with expanded varieties of determinants of income and employment – is relatively more stable and less sensitive to the wider fluctuations associated with economies with one or few industries. While diversification shield economies from extreme vicissitudes of cyclical actions since risk is equally distributed across wider range of industries, an economy anchored on one or few industries has its risk concentrated on a handful of industries. Economic diversification is the expansion of production over many sectors that could be rendered more functional and appealing. For Ali (1999) it is the variation in the spread of a country's existing product mix. With diversification, stronger and well performing industries will support the economy to maintain healthy growth through compensatory employment generation even if some other industries perform below installed capacity. This is why some economists and policy makers argue that diversification is employment insurance with diversified economy providing more employment during fluctuations. It is also debated that diversification promotes resilience, especially to exogenous episodes and developments.

Unlike some modern resource-rich economies such as Netherlands, Canada, Australia, etc where oil exploitation and exportation is seen as additional economic activity, it is treated uniquely as the only source of wealth in Nigeria, and oil revenue instead crowds out other economic activity. Economic diversification will help expand other determinants of sources of employment and income, and hence eliminate or at least reduce overdependence on a single source of income. Oil resources are finite and economic diversification is among the approaches to ensure variation in the country's product mix and hence guarantee economic growth and sustenance even in a post-oil economy. Finally, the persistent civil conflicts, terrorism, militancy and secessionist tendencies which are linked to overdependence on oil resource in Nigeria may abate with successful diversification that would expand peoples' choices, create employment opportunities and growth of income.

The effects of diversification in an economy (if properly carried out), is represented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. effect of diversification on an economy**

**Source:** Authors Computation, 2019

The above chart indicates the possible impact of diversification on an economy. It is explicit as shown in *panel A* that dependence on a single commodity, for instance, oil, in the case of Nigeria, the economy is prone to both internal and external shocks, which ultimately result in structural defects. The reason for such defects is anchored on the fact that in the event of any deficit, there will be no other sector(s) to mobilise surpluses for use by the deficit sector(s). Given the shift (total or partial)—but in most cases partial, away from a single item to other sectors of the economy (i.e. agriculture and tourism) as reflected in *panel B*, the economy tends to be insulated from shocks.

As submitted by Adubi (2004), in Nigeria's rural communities, the rural population is large, poor, resilient and hardworking. An individual is a farmer, a hunter, and a trader at different seasons. His livelihood strategies can negatively impact on the ecosystem and tourism resources due to absolute poverty. What is required is innovation in the production process; diversification of the economy through tourism development for alternative livelihood strategy. The industry to say the least is operating below capacity, unorganized and largely neglected by both government and the private sector, with no organized effort to unlock its potentials. This explains the

reason why other African nations such as Gambia, Morocco, Namibia, Tanzania, etc are outpacing Nigeria in terms of tourism contribution to GDP and international patronage. Nigerians are taking out-of-home holiday; however, even those who take holiday will prefer travelling abroad for vacation than in Nigeria. A national patronage survey conducted in 2014 reveals that less than 20% of Nigerians who spend their holiday abroad had visited the Obudu cattle Ranch or the Yankari Game Village, while more than 50% of the regular visitors to these resorts are foreigners. Nigerians are fuelling the tourism in France, USA, China, Japan, Dubai, UK, Ghana, etc.

Meanwhile, Ihiala in Anambra State, Nigeria is a community that is blessed with numerous cultural activities capable of transforming and repositioning to augment the available resources for diversification purpose and perhaps economic growth. However, this study was designed to achieve the following objectives, to: examine the various cultural activities, identify the major economic activities in the study area, determine the status of the activities and investigate suitable measures for repositioning the activities towards economic diversification in the study area, as these will provide relevant information for future researchers and policy makers on how cultural tourism can be developed and positioned towards economic development and diversification as well as identifying the cultural potentials in the study area.

## **Literature Review**

It is a well-known fact that Nigeria ranks among the most richly endowed nations of the world in terms of natural, mineral and human resources. Nigeria has a variety of both renewable and non-renewable resources, some of which have not yet been effectively tapped. Solar energy, probably the most extensive of the underutilized renewable resources, is likely to remain untapped for some time, and the vast reserves of natural gas produced with crude oil have yet to be fully utilized (Akpan, 2009). The government anticipates that the tourism sector repositioning will make it a major source of revenue generation (Isioma and Ashikodi, n.d.).

Diversification implies movement into new fields and stimulation and expansion of existing traditional products. Diversification does not discourage specialization, but requires that resources be channelled into the best alternative uses (Iniodu, 1995). In macroeconomic planning, diversification promotes growth and development through the mobilization of savings from surplus sectors for use in the development of deficit sectors

of the economy. Options for diversifying an economy abound, such as agriculture, entertainment, financial services, industrialization, information and communication technology, tourism, etc.

Previously, from the result of the decline in the oil revenue generated by the Nigerian government, and fallout from the global financial crisis, the Nigerian government had started looking for other ways to generate revenue to stimulate the country's economy. The Nigerian government selected tourism sector as one of the government priority sectors crucial to its economic survival -part of the government seven point economic growth agenda and its 2020 program for sustainability economic development (Isioma and Ashikodi, n.d.).

## **Methodology**

Ihiala is a city in Nigeria, located in the Southern part of Anambra State and within the region known as Igboland. Ihiala is the largest city in Ihiala Local Government area has a population of about 87,788 as at 2006 census figure (<https://en.m.wikipedia>) which also consist of several other towns like Amorka, Azia, Lilu, Okija, Mbosi and so on and it covers an area of about 304sqkm. Ihiala is located 48km North of Owerri and 40km South of Onitsha with civil servants, farmers, traders, artisans as it major occupation. The study population constitutes the staff of tourism board (53) and members of the community who has direct or indirect relationship with cultural activities (i.e custodians of cultural sites and other participants in cultural issues) in the community. A total of 100 respondents were drawn for the study. Purposive sampling technique was employed to sample the respondents. 5 Tourism Board members and 95 members of the community were drawn for the study. Primary source of data was used for this study through the use of questionnaire and observation method. Data collected were subjected to statistical computation using descriptive analysis such as table, percentage and charts on the basis of the responses gathered from the questionnaire administered with the aid of SPSS software.

**Table 1: Major economic activities engaged in the study area**

Keys: MED-Mostly Engaged, ED- Engaged, U- Undecided, NED-Not Engaged, CNED- Completely Not Engaged

Variables	MED	ED	U	NED	CNED	Mean	Remark
<b>Farming</b>	50.0	42.2	7.8	-	-	4.41	3 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>Fishing</b>	19.2	43.3	-	16.8	20.7	3.14	6 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Wrestling</b>		24.4	13.3		62.2	3.06	7 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Trading</b>	48.9	23.3	-	16.7	6.7	3.21	5 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Artisan</b>	84.4	15.6	-	-	-	4.87	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Catering Services</b>	67.7	32.3	-	-	-	4.55	2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Other sporting events</b>	39.6	60.4	-	-	-	4.13	4 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field survey, 2019.

Table 1 shows the major economic activities engaged in the study area. It was revealed by the that Artesian job is the major economic activities engaged in the community with the highest mean score of 4.87 while the least was wrestling with the mean score of 3.06. Other activities engaged in the community; Catering Services with a mean score of 4.55, Farming 4.41, Sporting 4.13, Trading 3.21 and Fishing with 3.14. This signifies that the whole identified economic activities in table 2 were actively engaged by the residents of Ihiala community and as such, Ihiala is a home of commercial activities.

**Table 2: Available Cultural Activities and their developmental status**

Variables	Developed	Developing	Not Developed
<b>Yearly Ofalla Festival</b>	9.6	64.4	26.0
<b>The Ijele masquerade</b>	20.2	71.2	8.7
<b>Aghalieaku Cultural Festival and Ozubulu</b>	54.8	19.2	7.7
<b>Ekwulobia and Omaba Yearly New-Yam Festival</b>	34.6	42.3	23.1

Source: Field survey, 2019.

Table 2 shows cultural activities and their level of development in the study area. It was revealed that the Aghalieaku Cultural Festival & Ozubulu are developed with 54.8% of the respondents attesting to that, followed by the Ekwulobia & Omaba Yearly New-Yam Festival with 34.6% alongside with The Ijele masquerade with 20.2% and it revealed that the Yearly Ofalla Festival is

not developed. This indicate that Aghalieaku and Ozubulu cultural activities are well organised, financed and usually record high level of patronage with intensive security than Ekwulobia & Omaba Yearly New-Yam Festival which were just coming up.

**Table 3: Sustainable measures adopted by the community towards repositioning these cultural activities for economic diversification**

Keys: SA-Strongly Agree, A- Agree, U- Undecided, D-Disagree, SA- Strongly Disagree

Variables	Rating					Mean	Remark
	SA	A	U	D	SD		
Through Sensitization and Educational programmes	44.0	36.7	10.0	-	-	4.66	2 <sup>nd</sup>
By Advertising on social media	21.3	62.4	7.6	-	-	3.87	4 <sup>th</sup>
Proper implementation of government policy for economic diversification	74.6	16.4	-	-	-	4.85	1 <sup>st</sup>
Support from relevant agencies	31.3	22.2	9.1	12.4	16.0	3.51	5 <sup>th</sup>
Aggressive community involvement	67.0	21.6	11.3	-	-	4.59	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Source: Field survey, 2019.

The above table shows the sustainable measures adopted by the community towards repositioning these cultural activities for economic diversification. The result indicates that Proper implication of government policy was the major way of repositioning these cultural activities with mean value of 4.85. Other measures adopted by the community for economic diversification are; through sensitization and educational programmes (4.66), aggressive community involvement (4.59), by advertising on social media (3.87) and support from relevant agencies (3.51). This indicates that the above identified measures were to a greater extent, employed in repositioning the existing cultural activities for economic diversification which will subsequently aid economic growth and development in the community.

## Conclusion

This study has proven beyond reasonable doubts that Ihiala community is blessed with several economic activities with significant impact such as: artisan, farming, fishing, catering services and so on. It was deduced that Aghalieaku and Ozubulu cultural activities are well organised, financed and



usually record high level of patronage with intensive security than Ekwulobia & Omaba Yearly New-Yam Festival which were just coming up and several measures were put in place towards economic diversification in the community. Meanwhile all the measure were positively significant from their mean coefficients as indicated in table 3 above i. e proper implementation of government policy on economic diversification, through sensitization and educational programmes, aggressive community involvement and so on. Therefore, Cultural tourism has significant positive impact on economic diversification and a better option for economic development through its diverse activities.

## Recommendations

From the research conclusions, the following recommendations were made;

- i. The government should encourage cultural tourism activities in the state by participating and allocating funds for the development and running its activities.
- ii. More intensive awareness through sensitization and educational programs should be engaged to enlighten the people of the benefits of cultural tourism activities with the view of developing the activities and reposition them as an option for diversification of the economy, particularly Ekwulobia & Omaba Yearly New-Yam Festivals.
- iii. Both the government and private tourism firms should work on making the tourist destinations where these cultural activities take place known and accessible.

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