

HERITAGE SPORT TOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The growing perception that heritage resources support sporting events and attract travelers is of serious concern to individuals, groups and organizations. This article focuses on some notable heritage sites in Nigeria with associated sporting activities and their social, economic and cultural significance. In depth review of literature was undertaken on research findings on Argungun fishing festival and Mare mountain climbing expedition in Kebbi and Ondo State respectively. There are indications that these inherent natural heritage resources in the study sites have contributed significantly to the social, economic and cultural lives of the inhabitants in the local communities and the nation. Other derivable benefits such as promoting nature conservation, supporting government funding, cultural exchange and strengthening community image and sense of place are also discussed. The finding gives credence to United Nation for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)- ICOMOS declaration of the theme of International Day on Monuments and Sites in year 2016 as The Heritage of Sport. Policy makers, scientists communities, government agencies, tourism practitioners and cultural heritage managers will benefit tremendously from the output from this study.

Keywords: Conservation, Festival, Heritage, Sport, Tourism.

INTRICATE LINK BETWEEN SPORT, TOURISM AND HERIATGE

Sport and tourism are regarded as the fastest growing industries across the World. This assertion supports the findings of (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2003). on the social and economic contributions of sport and tourism sectors. Tourism and Sport offer recreation activities that improve health of the people and their physiological well being. Pigram, 2006 observed that both tourism and recreational sporting activities promote travelling and interaction with other people and intimacy with the environment. The introduction of sporting events and involvement of domestic and international participants in have contributed significantly to the revenue of countries like Malaysia (Ibrahim, Mapjabil, Kumalah, Amin & Rosmiza, 2016). Sporting, recreation, festival and tourism bring much needed enjoyment, relaxation, amusement and satisfaction. Sporting activities as part of events lined up in celebrating cultural festival are regarded as important tourism resource of many societies and heritage of many communities (Kuuder, Adongo & Abanga, 2010).

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This explains the reason why tourism is regarded not only as a single industry but rather series of industries that collectively facilitate and service the unprecedented global, national and local movement of people for recreation, entertainment, sport, education, cultural, religion, medical, family, and business purposes (Neto, 2003). In the same vein, (Lippke, 2001; Oladeji & Adedapo, 2013) provided a list of recreation activities including watching Television, attending an Opera, base jumping, moving the lawn, taking your children to zoo, playing snookers/checkers, downloading music, writing book, an evening in the town. It can be described as all forms of activities that amuse or stimulates.

There are various categories of sport and recreational activities one can engage in especially during leisure hours. Some might involve travelling outside the local environment while some can be practice within the vicinity. When it involves travelling for a period of more than 24 hours then it can be regarded as sport tourism for recreation, relaxation, amusement or enjoyment (Standeven & De Knop, 1999). Stressed that Sport tourism involve participation in passive and active recreational activities organized casually or in an organized manner either for monetary gain or commercial or business or non-profit oriented that led to travelling away from home and work locality. In other words, sporting activities can also be categorized as indoor or outdoor. According to QOF (2014), outdoor recreation activities have been defined as those activities that are undertaken outside the confines of buildings (ie, in the outdoors); can be undertaken without the existence of any built facility or infrastructure; may require large areas of land, water and/or air; and may require outdoor areas of predominantly unmodified natural landscape. The list of these form of activities are provided to include (but not limited to) non-competitive: Ballooning, boating/sailing, bungy jumping, bushwalking, camping, canoeing, canyoning, caving, climbing, conservation activities, cycling, fishing, fossicking/collecting, four-wheel-driving, geocaching, hang-gliding/paragliding, horse riding, hunting (recreational), jet skiing, kayaking (river and sea), kite flying, motor/trail bike riding, mountain bike riding, nature studies, orienteering, parachuting, picnicking, rafting, rock climbing, rogaining, ropes courses, sail boarding, scuba diving, shooting (recreational), skateboarding/ rollerblading, skiing (snow), cross country/nordic, skiing (snow), downhill, snorkelling, surfing, trail running, touring and waterskiing. On the other hand, Indianetzone (2016), described indoor activities as recreational actions that are undertaken within the home or specifically indoor for body fitness and healthy well being. The author provided a list of indoor activities including swimming, volleyball, table tennis, squash, badminton and even football. Organized activities in such clubs may also include Aerobics, Bowling, Billiards, Golf, Aquatics (a work out in the pool), Karate and Taekwondo.

Sport tourism drew the attention of the World in 2001 following the successful organized World Conference on Sports Tourism in Barcelona State (World Tourism Organization, International Olympic Committee, 2001). Until this period tourism and sport appeared as two distinct areas of activities. However, in the recent time, policy makers, researchers, government institutions are beginning to realize the inherent potentials and benefits that can be realized collectively through synergizing these two related fields. Another notable event is the Commonwealth Game that have been organized over the past decades in some countries like Malaysia, USA etc. In recognition of the importance of Sport tourism to heritage conservation, UNESCO has decided to dedicate the theme of the year

2015 International Day for Monuments and Sites to draw the attention of the World on the significance of sport in heritage management. When sport is linked to the culture of the community they represent a very important legacy directly connected to the heritage resources (Hinch & Higham, 2006). In most cases they represent a tourist magnet to that particular community hence they are regarded as heritage sport tourism. (Newman, 2001). Newman consciously reported that it could be misleading to assume that majority of visitors to heritage sites are attracted by the unique cultural and natural properties in these sites even when there are evidences that many do. Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to the future generation. Our culture and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. They are our touchstones, our points of reference, our identity (Agbelusi, 2009). In the same way that sports are inextricably linked to a nation's culture they also represent an important legacy tied to a country's and/or a region's heritage

It will be recalled that World Cultural and Natural heritage received global attention on the 16th November, 1972 when the 17th session of the general conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) was declared primarily the UNESCO convention concerning the protection and preservation of the World Cultural and Natural heritage. Barely 10 years after this convention, on the 18th April, 1982 to be precise during a symposium organized by International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in Tunisia, it was suggested that an "International day for Monuments and sites" should be celebrated simultaneously throughout the World and was later approved at the UNESCO General Conference in 1983. This is hinged on the premise that UNESCO is the organization that lists World Heritage Sites. Cultural heritage can be regarded as mountains, group of buildings and sites with historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value. Natural heritage refers to outstanding physical, biological and geological formations, habitats of threatened species of animals and plants and areas with scientific, conservation or aesthetic value (UNESCO, 2000). Over the years, UNESCO has used the theme of World Heritage Day celebration as a medium of education, conservation and preservation of heritage sites, advocates for peace, justice, food security and sustainable development. A list of the theme in the last six years is a pointer to this fact as stated: Year 2009 WHD Theme-Heritage and science; Year 2010 WHD Theme- heritage of agriculture; Year 2011 WHD Theme- cultural heritage of water; Year 2012 WHD Theme-world heritage and sustainable development, Year 2013 WHD Theme - heritage of education; Year 2014 WHD Theme- Heritage of commemoration. Year 2015 WHD Theme-This was used to mark the 50th anniversary of ICOMOS and the theme for Ondo State for that year was Periscope view of heritage sites in Nigeria: Past, Present and the Future.

In recognition of intricate link between sport and heritage, the theme of year 2016 International Day on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) was dedicated in celebration of heritage and sport, since sport is perceived to have developed from mankind with attendant variation that could be traced to cultural practices that are of outstanding values likened to the development of architecture, art and techniques (ICOMOS, 2016).

Monument and sites consists of archeological works, works of monumental sculpture, painting, elements or structures of an archeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and a combination of features which are of outstanding values from the point of view of history, art, sport or science. Hence, they are regarded as our

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heritage, our legacy from the past what we live with today, and what we pass on to the future generation. Our culture and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. They are our touchstones, our points of reference, our identity and contemporary tourist magnet. The growth of tourism industry has been reported to be enormous, from 441 million International tourist arrivals in 1990 to 763 million international arrivals in 2004 with 52% of these being for sport, recreational and leisure tourism (UNWTO, 2005). Tourism is considered as one of the fastest growing industry, accounting for more than one-third of the total global services trade. It generated about 10 per cent of total GDP and provide more than 235 million jobs in 2010, representing 9 per cent of global employment. The United Nations in 2013 reports that “Travel & Tourism’s total contribution to the global economy stood at \$7trillion representing 9.5% of global GDP. In total, nearly 266 million jobs (8.9%) of total employment were supported by Travel and Tourism in 2013 that represents 1 in 11 of all jobs in the world is in tourism (John, 2000; WTTC, 2014). This thriving leisure culture has led to the evolution of a sports tourism industry that has begun to earn an international reputation. For instance, Sports and physical activities are a part of the increasing variety of leisure activities and pastimes that are becoming popular among Israelis (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IMFA), 2013). According to this report, Israel offers numerous local and international sports events that attract athletes and fans from all over the world. Soccer, basketball, judo, tennis, and skiing are only some of the most predominant and popular sports that attract onlookers and participants of all ages. Sports tourism is open to everyone: amateurs, fans, professional athletes and their trainers and coaches who come for a range of activities from training camps through friendship games to international championship competitions.

In other to facilitate management and development of sustainable tourism at World Heritage properties through fostering increased awareness, capacity and balanced participation of all stakeholders UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme (UNESCO-WHSTP) was initiated. UNESCO-WHSTP represents a new approach based on dialogue and stakeholder cooperation where planning for tourism and heritage management is integrated at a destination level, the natural and cultural assets are valued and protected, and appropriate tourism developed.

NOTABLE HERITAGE SPORT TOURISM IN NIGERIA

A. ARGUNGU FISHING FESTIVAL

The Argungu International Fishing and Cultural Festival is an annual event held for four-days in Argungu, the capital city of Argungu Emirate Council in the North-Western Nigerian State of Kebbi. In view of the international recognition of this festival, it was inscribed in 2016 on the representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO-Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2016) and listed the majority of fishermen are the followers of Islam and Predominant farmers. People from different destination to Argungu just to witness the occasion (NPC, 2007). The town of Argungu which has been hosting the annual fishing and cultural festival is located North-East of Birnin-Kebbi Town at a distance of about 58 km along the bank of River Rima or Gulbin Kebbi. The geo-physical nature and characteristics of the festival site in Argungu are river areas (Matan-Fada, Mala, and Gamji), irrigation, and orchards (Lambu in Hausa). Argungu is the Headquarters of both Argungu Emirate and Argungu Local Government Area. The

population of Argungu Local Government area was estimated to be 195,484 (NPC, 2007).

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF ARGUNGU FISHING FESTIVAL

The social, cultural and economic significance of Argungu Festival was appraised based on findings from published literature in referenced journals and proceedings. (Dantata, 2007). reported that Argungu Fishing Festival has impacted contributed to the local economy in term of income earning for the participants. The social significance of the festival was established through popularizing the name of Argungu town, a pride to the local community and advancement of infrastructural facilities. The government of Kebbi State also realised the economic importance of the festival in term of revenue generation and contributions to the GDP of Nigeria (Mba, 2011).

The celebration of the event is also considered as a mean of preservation and conservation of the rich cultural values dated to 16th century. In the 16th century (the days of Kanta), the fishing festival at Kebbi had probably taken a National character. The spectacular rallying powers of Kanta, who used to travel in a boat receiving homage throughout his riverine empire, must have served to bring desirability as well as efficacy of a Centralized festival. Kanta himself was known to have encouraged both localized and annual festivals as a passport to having a very firm hold on his subjects. Kanta had worked hand in hand with officials and chiefs of fishing and waters who also advised him on matters of particular significance for the welfare of his kingdom such as during warfare and during communal fishing and harvests. In this period, three major public rituals were observed; the Gyaran Ruwa, the Fashin Ruwa & the Gyaran Gari. The Gyaran Ruwa and Fashin Ruwa relate to water and have direct impact on fishing while the last one ceremony is for land propitiations. The Gyaran Ruwa particularly pertains to the basic rituals of purification of waters which proceeded the great fishing day with the view of having a hitch free fishing festival on the appointed day (Argungu Emirate Council News, 2018).

The festival depicts the unique cultural attribute of the people of Argungu as farmers and fishermen. This put in plain words the reason why the festival takes place usually in February-March after all agricultural work has ended to mark the end of the growing season and errands the fishing season (Shyllon, 2007; Asogwa, Umeh & Okwoche, 2012). Opined that Argungu fishing festival is of cultural values to the Kebbawa people of Kebbi State that considered the festival as a means of preserving and conserving their culture, object of identification and sense of liberty. Cultural belief of the people in water related event is stemmed in the potency of rivers Fashin Ruwa and Gyaran Ruwa. The authors expatiate on the social significance of this event to include as a means of recreation and rendezvous for entertainment, interaction and dissipation of pressure; and also that the celebration of this festival serve as avenue to create employment and generate income for the host community and government of Kebbi State. Argungu fishing festival is considered to be of social values to the participants and represent a mean of identification and maintenance of peace the host community and neighbouring communities in Sokoto State that shared cultural practices together (UNESCO-Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2016).

Packaging of other sporting activities with this event has added glamour to this fishing festival and has equally expanded from a day to a weeklong festival of

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culture and tradition. These activities include Boat Regatta, Traditional Wrestling, and Traditional Archery sporting events (Yusuf, 1982). Various programmes that are usually lined up to commemorate this cultural event include Durbar, Cultural Nights, Argungu Motor Rally, Agricultural Show, National Catapult and Archery Competition, Kabanchi Display, Traditional Wrestling and Boxing, Tug of War, Fishing and Races (Asogwa, 2002).

B. MARE (MOUNTAIN CLIMBING) CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Mountains provide numerous ecosystem services one of which is recreational opportunities during sport of climbing mountains they are storehouses of € biodiversity; support hundreds of millions of people with vital services (Gret-Regamey, Brunner & Kienast, 2012) and its simply one of the finest outdoor opportunities available to the lover of high places. Mountain climbing is challenging and it requires perseverance, it involves putting hands and feet onto rocks and sometimes ice and snow depending on the terrain and prevailing climatic conditions, before finally reaching the peak (Wood, 2014). The climber can pause and look across a natural world ruled by nature and her raw beauty. MARE is one of the notable mountain climbing heritage of sport event in Nigeria. The unique topography of Idanre Hill offer enabling environment for this event to thrive. Idanre hills constitute one of the highest elevated parts of southwestern Nigeria (Afolayan, Agbelusi, Adekayode, Bello-Olusoji & Oladeji, 2007). The hill is characterized by a hilly topography with elevation ranging from about 600 ft (182.88 metres) around the south western corner and 2980 ft (883.92 meters) above sea level at the northwestern corner of the core area of study (**Figure 1**).

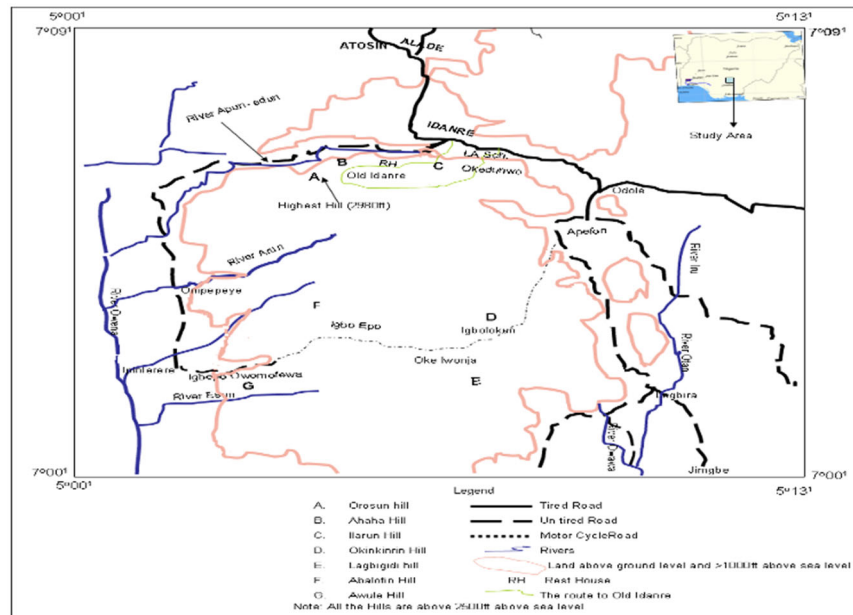


Figure 1. Topography of Idanre hill.

MARE is coined from Yoruba word *Mare bosile* meaning don't fall down. The idea to celebrate this cultural festival was initiated by the then Governor of Ondo State in December, 2009 with the intention to promote eco-tourism, recreation, the rich cultural heritage of the people of Idanre and advance environmental conservation education (Hakeem, 2012). Sporting activities that are usually lined up to commemorate this weeklong event include mountain climbing, musical extravaganza, cultural carnival and educational fiesta.

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF MOUNTAIN CLIMBING FESTIVAL

Mare festival was established against the backdrop of appreciating the impact and utilization of nature from the magnificent Hills at Idanre, Ondo State (Kashim, 2015). The festival thus reflects the ecological and cultural values inherent heritage resources of Idanre Hills and the host communities. In to her words, the festival celebrates the land, the people and its rich cultural and draws cultural enthusiasts from around the World yearly to Ondo State.

Mare festival is perceived to be of Cultural, Social, historic and economic significant to the people of Idanre (Arowosafe, & Oladeji, 2019). The authors emphasized the social significance of Mare festival in support of the of Derrett (2003). Notwithstanding, the sporting festival of this nature are regarded as a heritage resource that is very historic Bonye (2006) reflection of the rich diversity of history and culture of the people. This hisrotide sporting fiesta also provide avenue for interaction between man and the immediate environment (Babalakin, 2011). For instance in 2015, the activities lined up in commemorating this historic event include Marathon race, Ayo Olopon and Raffle draw (Oladeji & Akinrinola, 2010). Opined that Idanre Hills has potentials to support sustianble tourism that can meet the social and economic needs of the host communities in term of job creation and employment opportunities for the people.

AYO OLOPON

Ayo olopon games are played by elders, adult men and young men. There are women who also know how to play and they teach their children. Women also play against men but never in public places. In the Yoruba-speaking territories, the game board is called: ayoolopon and the seeds are called: Omoayo. The games are interesting for both players and spectators who are much interested in the evolution of consecutive rounds. Even players let you play against them and they will explain various local games. But in most cases, in exchange for money, yes, yes few people will do it selflessly. The number of viewers and the curiosity to see a white man playing any ayoolopon game will increase dramatically. And when you win a game, as happened to us, you become almost a local celebrity and the player who has lost, collects jokes from friends and neighbors.

You can hear expressions or phrases such as “ayòlópónjé erét’ópilè niilè Yorùbá” (ayoolopon is a game created by Yoruba people); or as: “awonàgbàlagbàfèranlátimáa ta ayòlópón” (Older people like to play ayoolopon games).

There are many Yoruba proverbs using terms like “ayo” and “omoayo”, which talking about perseverance, endurance, confidence in oneself, ingenuity, audacity or wisdom. This fact illustrates how ayo game is very popular and known among the Yoruba people, as is reflected in various moral and didactic sentences in their language.

OTHER BENEFITS OF PROMOTING SPORT TOURISM AND RECREATION

Conservation

Sporting events that are directly linked to the heritage resources of a community helps in creating better appreciation of the world's natural resources, such as landscapes (mountain climbing), seascape (fishing festival) or wildlife. All these stimulate a desire to protect the natural environment as National Park or

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UNESCO Heritage Site for either conservation of cultural properties or unique natural features. Typical example in Nigeria are the two UNESCO World Heritage Sites –Sukur Cultural Landscape in Adamawa and Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove. People living around these sites choose to visit these places for relaxation, recreation and tourism.

Government funding

As sporting activities develop in an area, the local government often realize the opportunities hence tend to do everything necessary to support and maintain it.

Support local businesses

Aside from tour guides, a range of local businesses benefit from heritage sport tourism. During celebration of these festivals packaged with other sporting events as enumerated in commemorating Argungun fishing festival and Mare festival, craftspeople, innkeepers and restaurateurs all provide services that help tourists discover local features.

Cultural exchange

Heritage sport tourism provide avenue for socializing , interaction, cultural exchange and meeting people thereby learn to live more closely with nature and themselves.

Strengthen community image and sense of place

Heritage sites provide a place for citizens to gather for citywide festivals, as well as public and private events.

Human rights

Heritage sport tourism not only educates visitors about their culture, historic and inheritance, it can also help raise awareness about political and social issues in their immediate communities.

Multiplier effect

It brings about development of other attractions and opportunities especially when there is no any linkage. For instance apart from direct employment , people also engage in the sales of food, drinks and offering services like accommodation, tour guides, local interpreters and tour packages.

CONCLUSION

As attention is drawn to the aptitudes of opportunities and benefits of promoting heritage sport tourism there is need to be conscious of the danger of unsustainable practices that might degrade the cultural and historic values. Sport tourism and recreational activities should be executed in an environmentally responsible manner with low negative impact to achieve sustainable development in local communities across Nigeria. Promoting sporting events across heritage sites could also serve as opportunity to generate income needed to support the economy of Nigeria that is currently in recession. It is highly pathetic that while countries like Libya can boast of three of their site on the UNESCO World Heritage List, Nigeria with population of over 150 million can only recorded two (Sukur Cultural Landscape and sun Osogbo groove). Thus, Nigeria Government should intensify efforts in her quest to enlist additional sites on UNESCO World Heritage List.

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