

Propelling enduring heritage tourism in Nigeria: lessons from Rome

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Abstract

Despite the abundance of heritage resources, Nigeria has not been able to develop a thriving heritage tourism industry. The result is that benefits accruable from heritage tourism have continued to elude the nation. Italy, with emphasis on the capital, Rome, is today a top heritage tourism destination. In this study, attempt was made to (i), examine the factors that have contributed to the huge success of Rome in heritage tourism development and (ii), examine the lessons which Nigeria can learn from the Roman experience in propelling enduring heritage tourism. The methodology for the research was qualitative using field observation and literature search as data-gathering techniques. Data collected were analyzed thematically. The following were identified as success factors in heritage management for tourism development in Rome: cleanliness of heritage sites, excellent documentation of heritage properties, well-developed tourism circuit, good maintenance culture, availability of tourism facilities, provision of public funding for heritage conservation, tax incentives for heritage management, and involvement of souvenir technocrats, etc. Using the theory of Glocalization, it is argued that Nigeria can employ the aforementioned as lessons in the management and promotion of heritage for a robust heritage tourism development.

Keywords: *Enduring heritage tourism; Glocalization; Heritage management; Nigeria; Rome.*

Background

Heritage connotes inheritance; something bequeathed from the past and preserved by present generation for posterity (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). With enabling environment, much of heritage resources in a given place can be translated into viable tourist attractions for sustainable development. Indeed, heritage and tourism have a symbiotic relationship, since heritage provides attractions for tourists, while tourism makes a strong case for preservation of heritage (Timothy & Boyd, 2003; Boniface, 1995; Orbasli, 2000).

In Nigeria, Okpoko and Ezeadichie (2002) citing Alagoa (1988), remark that the cultural heritage of Nigeria, which is incorporated in the prehistory, present day practices, and what people anticipate for the future, can form the basis for tourism and economic development. There are over 250 ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, many of which have unique archaeological, historic and ethnographic heritage resources that can be harnessed for heritage tourism.

Yoel (2000, p. 334) avers that “without tourism, Italy's balance of payments would have been in serious difficulty over recent decades”. As Branchini (2015) reported, Italy's first Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) for the year 2010, produced by tourism-related industries, was €82.833 million in value-added. Euromonitor, specializing in market analysis for the international tourism industry, ranked tourist arrivals in cities internationally, and placed Rome in the twelfth position with 8.67 million tourist arrivals (a 13.9 percent growth from 2011). No doubt, proper heritage management has greatly aided Italy to occupy a pre-eminent spot in tourism development. On the other hand, Nigerian's TSA, did not seem to exist until 2019 (Osa, 2019). However, a six-year record showed that visitor statistics had fluctuated between 1,555,000 in 2010 and 1,889,000 in 2016. There was a drastic drop to 715,000 visitors in 2011 and 486,000 visitors in 2012 (World Tourism Organization, 2019). The available receipts showed a continual increase from \$736,000,000 in 2010 to \$2,611,000,000 in 2017 (a 0.67 percent growth from 2011) (World Tourism Organization, 2019).

Regrettably, heritage management in Nigeria is at low ebb, such that it lacks the capacity to support flourishing heritage tourism, despite the existence of numerous heritage resources and heritage management institutions such as National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) and legal procedures for heritage preservation. This has culminated in Nigeria's very low ranking in tourism. In the year 2019, for instance, Nigeria was ranked 129th in the global tourism index by the World Economic Forum (Business News Report (2019)). The lackadaisical attitude towards the management of heritage assets in Nigeria, and their promotion for tourism development appear very pathetic when compared to the giant strides being made in other places, including Rome, the capital of Italy (Gbadegesin & Osaghale, (2014); Opata & Apeh, (2016)). Thus, there is the need for a holistic overhaul of heritage management practices and processes in Nigeria. It should be borne in mind, however, that enhanced heritage management practices may not automatically result in increased heritage tourism, as there are other variables that should be considered, including infrastructure, level of crime and violent conflicts, and funding. As a starting point, nonetheless, it is imperative to take a cue from best practices around the globe, and adapt them to local realities.

This study examines the Roman model of best practices in heritage preservation, and demonstrates how lessons drawn from the Roman experience can be applied to heritage management in Nigeria for viable heritage

tourism. Although, there are African countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Ethiopia, and Kenya that have made appreciable progress in heritage tourism, the authors' decision to study the Roman model was informed by the research visit to Rome by one of the authors.

Theoretical underpinning

The study was guided by the conceptual model of 'Glocalization', which gained traction from the work of Robertson (1995). Glocalization takes its root from the Japanese idea of *dochakuka*, which means 'becoming autochthonous' (Noel, 2005). In the view of Marshal (2005) as cited by Yanik (2008), Glocalization is the course of action, or the process enabling global systems to produce goods and services, which are intended for local consumption, and sending back of locally specific information or data to the global system as feedback.

For Prakash and Singh (2011), glocalization is a concept that explains the interactions between global and local dimensions in any strategy i.e. political governance strategies, business marketing strategies, media and communication strategies, etc. Glocalization is predicated on the assumption that developmental actions are more effective if global and local trends are integrated. This explains why the proponent - Roland Robertson, referred to glocalization as 'global localization' (Yanik, 2008).

Glocalization was adjudged a suitable conceptual framework for the study, in that it emphasizes the need to adapt global best practices in various fields to local contexts for sustainable development. This becomes pertinent because in contemporary development discourse, blind grafting of ideas or policies (in the name of best practices) in total disregard of contexts would not result in success (Khondker, 2005). Since Glocalization involves fusion of ideas and not blind imitation (Khondker, 2005; Patel & Lynch, 2013), it comes in handy to help the writers argue for the adaptation of heritage management practices in a developed city (Rome, Italy) to the context of a developing nation like Nigeria. Chang, Milne, Fallon and Pohlmann (1996, p. 285) argue that "the global and the local should be enmeshed in any future theoretical frameworks that are developed to help understand the processes and outcomes of tourism". Similarly, Teo and Li (2003, p. 303) state that "for tourism, the global and the local form a dyad acting as a dialectical process". Conclusively, the framework shall be used to allay the fears of readers, who may wonder why heritage tourism management in Rome (a city in a developed country context) would be an appropriate model for Nigeria (a developing country).

Methods

The qualitative paradigm of research was employed for the study, whereby literature search and field observation (undertaken by the first author) were used to gather data. On-site observation was done in such areas as the Colosseum (see plate 1), St. Peter's Basilica, the Spanish Steps (a grand staircase with 138 steps leading down to the Piazza di Spagna), the Roman Forum, the Vatican Museums, Da Vinci's Saint Jerome, Roman amphitheatres, and Historical Markers like Obelisks and Julius Caesar Walls. The visit took place in May, 2018. Literary sources were used to supplement the data gathered through on-the-spot observation in Rome and for collecting data on the Nigerian heritage sites.

The data was presented using interpretative-descriptive narrative, while thematic analytical approach was used in analyzing data. This is concerned with examining, identifying and recording patterns or themes within data collected (Thomas, 2006). Themes that cut across sets of data were used to describe the phenomena of interest. Although two of the Romanian heritage sites were briefly discussed, lessons were drawn from the various Rome heritage sites visited.

Results

Some heritage sites in Rome

With forty properties and a good number of them located in the capital city, Rome, Italy has more inscriptions on the World Heritage List than any other country. This feat is suggestive of the country's comprehensive and unrelenting approach to managing heritage resources. De Guichen (1995) sums it up when he stated that Italy is a point of reference for the conservation community worldwide. Rome boasts of rich religious, artistic, architectural and historical heritage, some of which include: Valcamonica - Rock Drawings, Padua-Botanical Garden, Sacri Monti, St. Peter's Basilica, the Spanish Steps, the Roman Forum, the Vatican Museums, Da Vinci's Saint Jerome, Historical Markers like Obelisks, Julius Caesar Walls, Venice-Venice and its Lagoon, Ferrara - The City of the Renaissance, and The Properties of the Holy See. Also worthy of mention is the Roman amphitheatres. Amphitheatre is a roofless, oval-shaped building with rows of seats and open space at the middle. More often than not, amphitheatre is used to refer to public entertainment arena used by the Romans in prehistoric time. According to Frank (2005, p. 1), Roman theatres were "complex buildings". The seating was arranged in a semicircle around the orchestra, but the stage and scene building were joined to the auditorium and rose to the same height, creating a sense of enclosure more like that of a modern theatre. The Colosseum is one of the key Roman amphitheatres.

The Colosseum is one of Rome's most popular tourist attractions (see plate 1). It has links to the Roman Catholic Church as on each Good Friday, the Pope leads a torchlight 'way of the cross' procession that starts in the area around the Colosseum. In 2018, it was the most popular tourist attraction in the world, with 7.4 million visitors (Colosseum, 2019). Some also regard it as one of the oldest dark-tourism sites because, the arena was in Ancient Roman time, used for brutal bloodbath 'games' such as gladiator fights and throwing people sentenced to death to the lions or other wild animals – all to the public delight of tens of thousands of spectators.



Plate 1: Interior and Exterior views of the Colosseum

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colosseum>

Overview of some heritage sites in Nigeria

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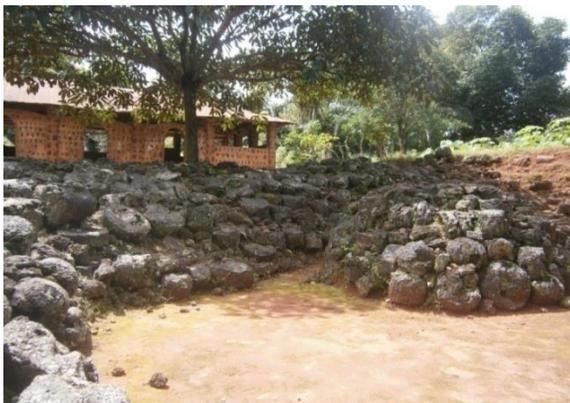


Plate 2: Lejja Historical Iron Smelting Site
Source - Authors' Fieldwork (2019)



Plate 3: Sukur Cultural landscape
Source: Na'Acha et al (2019)



Plate 4: Monolith destroyed by fire
Source - Abu, Enor, and Coulson (2016).

Heritage management in Rome

Italy has developed a decentralized system for heritage conservation with active involvement of local authorities (regions, provinces, and municipalities) in heritage work (Council of Europe, 2003). The Ministry for Heritage and Cultural Activities administers cultural policies in Italy, including the conservation of historic assets through its local administrative branches (Soprintendenze) specializing in various aspects of cultural heritage (Council of Europe, 2003).

Constitutional reform allows the regional authorities to possess concurrent legislative power with the central government in managing the historic assets and promoting cultural activities. The provincial authority of Rome is entrusted with the duties of co-coordinating the cultural policies among the municipalities in Rome, such as the allocation of regional funding to different municipalities. According to Council of Europe (2003), major protection measures applicable to cultural heritage include:

- Listing: Cultural properties are protected if they are listed by the Ministry for Heritage and Cultural Activities.
- Maintenance of Listed buildings: The Ministry for Heritage and Cultural Activities has the power to enforce the carrying out of any necessary works to a listed building and require the owner to reimburse the costs so incurred.
- Pre-emption: Owners of listed buildings who plan to sell their properties must notify the Ministry for Heritage and Cultural Activities such intention. The Ministry has the power to purchase the listed building concerned by pre-emption at the same price offered by a potential buyer.
- Blending of Old and New buildings: Rome has managed to blend old and new buildings in the city, with most of the new constructions sited along its periphery, particularly in areas devoid of significant monuments (Council of Europe, 2003).

The Ministry for Heritage and Cultural Activities and the local and regional authorities provide public funding for heritage conservation through the following means:

- Lottery fund: A fixed percentage of the national lottery revenue is allocated for the restoration and preservation of cultural properties.
- Bank Foundations: Foundations established by local savings banks play a key role in financing cultural activities in Italy.
- Fundraising and contributions from non-governmental organizations and private associations serve as another funding source (Fact Sheet for Heritage Conservation in Rome, 2006-07).

Tax incentives available for heritage conservation are:

- Exemption of the listed buildings from inheritance tax.
- Deduction from taxable income of all donations and sponsorship given by individuals and corporations.
- Allowance for property owners to deduct from their taxable income the expenditure incurred in the maintenance and restoration of their listed buildings.
- Interest subsidy: The government subsidizes interest on loans taken out by private owners for carrying out authorized conservation works to their listed properties (Fact Sheet for Heritage Conservation in Rome, 2006-07).

In Italy, there are also several concrete actions undertaken to combat illicit trafficking of cultural items.

These measures can be summarized thus:

- Adoption of special laws on protection of cultural heritage such as the Legislative Decree 42/2004 and subsequent amendments: Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape.
- Establishment of Export Offices which are coordinated by an information system that allows them to make real time checks on every item to be exported.
- Creation within the public prosecutor's offices, of a pool of magistrates specialized in the field of cultural heritage.
- Establishment of an inter-ministerial committee for the recovery and return of cultural objects. This committee employs "cultural diplomacy" as a strategy in carrying out its functions (excerpt from G7 Meeting of Experts on the protection of Cultural Heritage in Florence, 2007).

With resolute efforts towards heritage management, the city of Rome is today, one of the world's most popular tourist destinations. Millions of tourists flock to Rome every year to experience its charm and culture, and to see its ancient ruins and artifacts. Schreiner (2013) notes that tourism is among the most vibrant sectors in Rome, where it provides employment to thousands of people and positively impacts the overall economy of the city of Rome. Schreiner further submits that the income accruable from tourism also helps to keep the national museums, monuments, landmarks, and art in pristine condition.

Discussion

Lessons from Rome

A good number of factors account for the enviable height which Rome has attained as a booming heritage tourism destination. In line with the theory of glocalization, Nigeria can adopt some measures from Rome, but with modifications that suit her peculiarities in the quest to become a veritable heritage tourism destination. These are discussed using the following themes.

- **Good heritage maintenance culture**

It is evident that Italy has good maintenance culture for heritage. The Ministry for Heritage and Cultural Activities has the power to enforce maintenance activities on any listed building and requires the owner to reimburse the costs so incurred. Kolawole (2002) in Odediran, et al (2012) advocates that maintenance culture requires the correct diagnosis of defects, current remedial measures, sound technical knowledge of material usage, management resources as well as the formulation and implementation of integrated plan and policies to sustain utility. The absence of these qualities has led to the decay of Nigeria's physical, social, aesthetic, and economic environment (Odediran, Opatunji & Eghenure, 2012). In the context of heritage management, it becomes glaring that poor maintenance culture has dealt a heavy blow to heritage preservation in Nigeria and consequently, presents serious challenge to the progress of heritage tourism. If the various Roman monuments such as the amphitheaters and the leaning Tower of Pisa are not maintained, they may have deteriorated to a level where they cannot be showcased as tourist attractions.

- **Environmental cleanliness**

The use of tourism circuits or clusters to enrich visitors' experience in Rome is worth emulating. Circuit tourism, according to Ozment, "involves visits to more than one destination during a trip away from home" (2000, p.80). Circuit tourism is typified by short lengths of stay at each destination on the circuit, a pre-planned itinerary, and regional or national clustering of attractions.

Some areas in Nigeria are endowed with numerous heritage resources but have not been developed into circuit tourism. For instance, in the south-eastern Nigeria, there are Lejja prehistoric iron smelting site (archaeological heritage), Isiugwu rock shelters (natural heritage), Awhum waterfall, Ezeagu tourist complex, colonial monuments at the heart of Enugu State all of which are geographically contiguous and also close to the famous Igbo Ukwu archaeological sites, Ogbunike cave, Nnewi, and Onitsha main markets (business tourism) in Anambra State, etc. In addition to the aforesaid, tourism circuit can be developed in Cross River State with a plethora of monoliths in Bakor and Ikom local government areas (Diminyi, 2014). Emeafor (2016) also observed that the proximity and spatial patterning of tourism sites, especially those identified in Afikpo North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State make it more rewarding to develop them as a tourism circuit. Harnessing and developing heritage resources into a niche or circuit would enrich heritage tourism and enhance tourist flow.

In addition, tourism circuit will provide the springboard for the emergence of a network or cluster of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which while rendering services to tourists, also enhances the local economy in the locality. The promotion of clusters, according to Novelli, Schmitz and Spencer (2006)

encourage the beneficial combination of services and products for an improved tourist experience. To achieve this, good road network, and other amenities must be put in place to ensure good connectivity and sustainable services to visitors.

- **Functional policies**

Rome promulgated functional policies which enabled them to successfully develop their heritage tourism. There is the pre-emption policy which empowers the Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities to purchase a listed building, which the owner wants to sell at the same price offered by a potential buyer, so as to reduce the chances of destroying heritage under the control of individuals. Although Nigeria has certain policies for the development of enduring tourism, such as the cultural policy of 1988, environmental policy of 1989, the tourism policy of 1990, the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation Decree of 1992, the Environmental Impact Assessment decree of 1992; there is usually a wide gap between policy (theory) and implementation (practice). Like Folarin (1996), Osuagwu (2009) argues that although Decree 77 of 1979 did not provide for traditional management and enforcement systems in the maintenance and protection of immovable cultural heritage, the implementation of the export permit provision and trafficking on antiquities is fraught with notable flaws as illegal export of antiquities persists

- **Blending of old and new structures**

Sustainable urban planning in Rome has strategically surmounted the issue of destroying monumental structures in the bid to erect new ones. Rome has managed to blend old and new buildings in the city, with most of the new constructions sited along its periphery, particularly in areas devoid of significant monuments (Council of Europe, 2003). Conversely, in Nigeria, there is no strategic plan to protect or safeguard monumental structures. For instance, some colonial court structures in Nsukka have been destroyed in the bid to erect new structures. The tunnel connecting Ojukwu bunker and Biafran underground radio station which should be a key element in dark tourism has vanished as buildings have been erected on it. Again, the famous Polo Park at the heart of Enugu City was sacrificed for the construction of Shoprite, and so on.

- **Availability of fund for heritage conservation**

There are multiple avenues of financing heritage preservation in Rome, including lottery fund, bank foundations, fundraising and contributions from non-governmental organizations/private associations, tax incentives for heritage conservation, deduction from taxable income of all donations and sponsorship for conservation, etc. This makes it easier to galvanize individuals and groups into complementing government's efforts in the preservation of heritage.

In Nigeria, quite unfortunately, funding has been a major impediment to heritage conservation and preservation. Ovuakporie and Agbakwuru (2016) reported that the Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, decried the budgetary allocation to the culture and tourism ministry in the 2016 budget, describing it as 'mere tokenism'. Equally, Okediran (2007) noted that the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism with allocation of less than 1% of Nigeria's annual budget was at the bottom of the budgetary ladder. Financial

institutions, business outfits, NGOs, and individual donors should be made to understand that heritage, for instance cultural festivals, could be used as promotional platform for the attainment of organizational goals. Again, the federal government can dedicate a certain percentage of recovered looted funds to the preservation of heritage. Tax incentives, as is practised in Rome can also be introduced so as to attract private bodies to support the management of heritage.

▪ **Basic tourism infrastructure**

Rome has a fantastic integrated public transportation system, which includes subway, buses, trams and trains. This enables visitors to access heritage sites without hitches. Many unique heritage sites in Nigeria cannot be visited or managed due to very poor accessibility. Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert, & Wanhill, (2006, p. 309) were right when they opined that “attractions offer the single most essential reason for leisure to destinations”. However, it should be noted that while attractions bring visitors to a destination, the availability of quality infrastructure makes their stay worthwhile, and will definitely influence the total experience of tourists.

▪ **Cultural festivals**

Heritage tourism in Rome is also strengthened through festivals and games. There were a lot of games that took place at spectacular edifices like the Colosseum, Circus Maximus, Circus of Maxientus, Circus Agonalis, Circus Flaminius, Circus Gai, etc.; where gladiatorial combats and performing arts were showcased. With over 250 ethnic groups, Nigeria is replete with cultural festivals (such as Eyo, Ojude Oba, Egungu, Argungu, Osun-Oshogbo, Ofala, New Yam, and Sango festivals), which can be a major strength in promoting heritage tourism. The annual Abuja, Argungu, Idoma and Calabar carnivals are worthwhile, but there is still room for more to be done.

▪ **Involvement of technocrats in souvenir production**

The Roman civilization produced advances in technology, culture, architecture, including arts and crafts as they are associated with the stylus (an instrument used in writing on clay or waxed tablets in ancient time). Today, technocrats are involved in the production of souvenirs which tourists cherish. Ernie defines ‘souvenirs’ as “material objects which serve as reminders of people, places, events or experiences of significance in a person's biography” (2000, p. 547). In Italy, craft shops (souvenir shops) are located around the heritage sites and buildings. Most tourists who visit heritage sites in Rome deem it necessary to purchase souvenirs as tangible reminders of their visit to Rome. Authenticity-seeking tourists will “tend to acquire 'real', often exotic artefacts as reminders of their encounter with the 'other' or with the 'extraordinary'” (Ernie, 2000, p.548).

With concerted efforts, Nigeria can perform creditably well in the souvenir industry as several cultural groups had well established traditional craft practices before coming in contact with western civilization. Oloidi (2014), for instance, makes reference to the Ekiti people of south-western Nigeria who had well-developed smelting, smiting, pottery, and weaving technologies before colonialism. Okpoko and Okpoko had earlier remarked that:

Awka and Nkwerre people in south-east Nigeria respectively are acknowledged masters in blacksmithery, the Annangs in Akwa-Ibom State are noted for producing amazing variety of cane and raffia crafts while in Kano, Sokoto and Borno states, high quality leather goods are produced (2002, p. 63-64).

Abuja Arts and Craft village is already a success story as many tourists (domestic and international) visit there to experience local arts and craft and equally buy some to take home. What remains is the need to set-up mechanism, which will encourage constant training of artisans, art, and craft producers to attain high level of professionalism in the production of various native crafts as tourist souvenirs (Okpoko & Okpoko, 2002).

Conclusion

It must be stressed that the existence of heritage resources in any given society is not a guarantee for a viable heritage tourism development; rather, it is the mechanism in place for the proper management and promotion of the resources that provides the competitive advantage. This is what Italy has been able to achieve as can be seen in the Roman example. Thus, while this paper advocates the need to take a cue from Rome in the management of heritage resources for an enduring heritage tourism development, the writers suggest that the lessons should be tailored to meet the Nigerian reality. This is where the concept of 'glocalization' becomes pertinent. It is also necessary to note that great caution should be exercised in the use of heritage resources for tourism promotion, because tourism is a two-edged sword. An Asian proverb has it that "Tourism is like a fire; you can cook your soup [on] it; but you can also burn down your house with it" (Moli, 2003, p. 2). Tourism, therefore, is a phenomenon which has to be systematically managed so as to minimize or mitigate negative impacts while maximizing its gain.

Summarily, as far as the political process of tourism development is concerned, government is the key actor (Bramwell, 2011; Vujko & Gajic, 2014). This implies that the institutional arrangement for tourism policy is intertwined with politics; accordingly, the Federal Government of Nigeria ought to summon the political will to reposition tourism, especially heritage tourism as a complementary effort to diversifying the economy of the country. This can begin with a concerted effort towards heritage management.

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