

Event Tourism and Economic Empowerment in Nigeria: A Case Study of Pus Kat Cultural Festival in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *Cultural events are some of the most vital aspects of human life in society because they can create and serve as a unifying factor among the people and can also transform their lives. They can also serve as sources of income and economic empowerment for the people. One of these events is the Pus Kat annual cultural festival of the Mwaghavul nation in Plateau State of Central Nigeria. The Pus Kat annual cultural festival normally brings together the Mwaghavul people and their neighbors both at home and in the diaspora. The festival normally serves as an avenue for unity, progress, and development of the Mwaghavul nation. The main aim of this paper is to appraise the economic impact of the cultural festival on the host community, the Mwaghavul nation at large as well as its neighborhood. The paper used both primary and secondary sources of data collection. However, the paper dwelled more on the primary sources and minimally on the secondary sources. The methodology employed in this paper is the survey method. Information was generated through observation and oral interviews. The secondary data were obtained from a few already documented materials such as textbooks, journal articles, and internet materials. Findings from the research revealed that the Pus Kat annual cultural festival has fared well as a vehicle for unity, progress, development, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment within the host community, the Mwaghavul nation at large. It also found that the influx of visitors from different places is true which in turn boosts the economic activities in the area. The paper recommends among others the need for more resources to be injected into the event by both the Nigerian government (particularly Mangu Local Government) and industries particularly SWAN Nigeria Ltd (a subsidiary of UAC) located within the area as part of its corporate social responsibilities as well as well-meaning spirited individuals.*

Keywords: Pus Kat, Cultural Festival, Event Tourism, Economic Empowerment, Poverty Reduction

1. Introduction

Tourism development has been an important step towards improving the economic condition of Nigeria and that of the individual citizens as well. Nigeria is a nation that is blessed with enormous tourism potentials among which is the diverse cultural heritage which dates back to ancient times. Yet, with these potentials the country is ranked among the lowest tourism destinations in the world. With this development, there is need to intensify tourism development in Nigeria by giving the desired attention to the vast tourism potential in the country.

The Mwaghavul people are found in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. They constitute the major tribe and form the bulk of the population in Mangu Local Government. The major cultural festival of the people is called Pus Kat with a number of other lesser festivals that are also celebrated in the various Districts before the Pus Kat. These includes the Pus YaghalWus (Panyam), Ryem (Pushit), Kopshu (Ampang West), Bwanzuhum (Kerang), Didiu (Kombun) and Pus Dar (Mangun).

However, these festivals provide opportunities and serve as an avenue for unity and cordial relationship among the

people of the various districts. The festivals usually take place on different dates and times before the commencement of the farming season. As such, they form an important part of the people's ways of life. According to Lohor (2011:153), "the festivals range from agricultural festivals, hunting festivals, circumcisions, religious festivals to cultural dances". These festivals therefore create another opportunity for the Mwaghavul villages to interact and cooperate with one another (Lohor, 2004, Mangvwat, 2020). As a result of the importance of the festival to unity of the people, other smaller or secondary Mwaghavul settlements and villages have been encouraged to organize their own festivals but usually before the commencement of the district festivals. The celebration of all these festivals usually precedes the Pus Kat which is referred to as the mother of all festivals in the land.

Despite their small and limited or none tourist attractiveness power, such events still have the power to attract visitors to the area (Oklobdzija, 2015:89). Pus Kat is however one of the biggest annual festivals that are celebrated in Plateau State - Nigeria. The cultural festival is usually celebrated in April of every year ushering in the beginning of a new rainy season and providing the people with the opportunity to offer prayer and thank their gods and ancestors for protecting and blessing them throughout the previous year

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and for another successful farming season. It has always served as an opportunity for the Mwaghavul people to offer prayer for another farming season (Dadiyel, 2018).

Mwaghavul sons and daughters both at home and in diaspora are expected to attend the cultural festival and participate actively which according to their beliefs give them more favour from their ancestors and gods. It is a big event which has a lot of tourist attractiveness power. Being a motivator for unity and cooperation of the entire Mwaghavul nation, Pus Kat festival also serves as a catalyst for the economic empowerment of the rural people.

The event usually features traditional dance from different groups which made up of men, women and youth. It also features exhibition of different cultural materials or artifacts which reflect the ancient crafts of the people. A tour to the various cultural and historical sites in Mwaghavul land usually precedes the event. Rituals are usually performed by the chief priests and ritual priests in different shrines and grooves in the various districts before the commencement of the event to appease the gods and their ancestors.

The cultural festival has a long history of existence and it depicts the true lifestyle of the Mwaghavul people and their history. The cultural festival is not usually attended only by the Mwaghavul people but also people from other ethnic groups within and outside Plateau State. In recent times, the event has been able to attract tourists or visitors from other parts of Africa as well as as far as Europe, Australia, parts of Asia and the Americas. Despite the bad nature of infrastructure within Mangu town and neighboring villages like Panyam, Bungu and Mangu Halle that are expected to accommodate the visitors, the event has continued to attract visitors from all over the world because of the attractions that usually characterized the period before and after the event. With the large population that usually attend the event, the festival provides an avenue for economic benefits to the people derived as a result of the festivals such as sales of food, agricultural produce, transportation, accommodation, sales of souvenirs and other services that are provided to the tourists by the people of the immediate community.

From the foregoing, the cultural festival possesses the opportunity of not only contributing to the economic empowerment of the local people but can also contribute enormously to the development of culture and tourism and serve as one of the sources of income for the government and attract foreign investment in the tourism sector if adequately harnessed.

2. Statement of the Problem and Objectives

Plateau state is endowed with enormous tourism resources ranging from scenic beauty, lush and alluring vegetation, good climate, hospitable population and above all diverse cultural heritage. These tourism potentials give credence to the acronym "the home of peace and tourism". Despite all these endowments, no tangible studies on the economic values such as poverty reduction and economic empowerment of the various cultural festivals in Plateau State particularly the Pus Kat cultural festival have been

carried out yet. Hence the need for an evaluation of its impact on the host community. This could serve as a means of igniting further research into similar events and their perceived role in economic, social and political developments in our societies.

The main objective of the study is to appraise the impact and role of event tourism such as Pus Kat cultural festival on/in the economic empowerment in particular and national development and poverty reduction in general, first in the host community, the Mwaghavul nation and then the entire Mangu Local Government, Plateau state and Nigeria at large.

3. Method and Sources of Data Collection

The research methods and sources of data collection used in the collection of data are survey methods, oral interview and consultation of textbooks, journals and other internet materials. Both primary and secondary sources were used for the collection of data. The information from the oral interview is reviewed as narrated by the respondents. The study notably found interviewing key stakeholders in the community such as the traditional rulers and community development associations very instrumental.

4. Conceptual Clarification

4.1 Festival

Festival as defined by Collins English Dictionary is a "day or period set aside for celebration of feast especially one of religious significance". Festival can also be defined as any occasion for celebration, especially one which commemorates any anniversary or other significant event. A festival in this case is not a single entity but applies to various forms of human expression which includes arts, traditions and rituals that has been prevalent for some time. It is an organized series of special events and performance usually in one place. All festivals and ceremonies are integral parts of culture and heritage of the people. Culture and heritage on the other hand form an important aspect of tourism.

4.2 Tourism

Tourism on the other hand is defined by United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (1993) as, "activities of persons travelling and staying in an environment outside their own for less than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes". People (potential/actual tourists) abound at the tourist market with different motives. Some tourists are interested in visiting places for exotic cultural values (culturally inclined tourists). This involves visiting destinations of cultural or historical importance as well as events.

4.3 Concepts Event Tourism and Economic Empowerment

Event Tourism is a section of tourism that focus on festivals and special events. Their ability to attract tourists thereby leading to certain developments is what makes them part of tourism. Events are therefore important motivators of

tourism and they contribute immensely to the development of a destination (Oklobzija, 2015:92) and also feature importantly in the destination's marketing plans as well (Getz, 2007). Event Tourism according to Getz and Wicks (1993:2) is a "systematic planning, development, and marketing of festivals and special events as tourist attractions, image makers, catalysts for infrastructure and economic growth and animators of built attraction." Getz (2008) defines event tourism as "a set of interrelations between tourism management and events management". These two definitions try to address the same thing – how the potentials of events can be best exploited in order to meet the tourism requirement of host communities. What makes event tourism to stand unique is that it "aims at full exploitation of the capabilities of events in order to achieve tourism development of host communities" (Skoulsos & Tsartas, 2009). The tourism potential of an event is fully exploited and managed from the tourism perspective by tourism planners. Like other forms of tourism, event tourism must be viewed from two sides namely, the demand and supply sides. Here, the demand and supply sides of are also crucial and must be analyzed (Getz, 2008). The demand sides deal with going through the records concerning who travel to events as well as understanding the motives for such travelers. Effective approach and management of events in order to achieve positive results of hosting an event (Skoulsos & Tsartas, 2009). Economically, events tourism can impact positively in different ways. For the host community, it can serve as revenue earner as well as a source of employment. In addition, event tourism increases the standard of living of the people, enhance local pride and community spirit, increase local interest and strengthens traditions and values of the host community (Hall, 1992, Arcodia & Witford, 2006 cited in Skoulsos & Tsartas, 2009). On the other hand, economic empowerment is the ability to make and act on decisions that involve the control over the allocation of financial resources (Gollaet'al, 2011). This often results to achievements, which are the outcomes from decision making such as jobs, poverty reduction amongst others.

In some cases, events also increase the knowledge concerning the investment potentials of an area and the type of economic activities that are found there. It will further open the area to other investment opportunities and developmental projects. Although the events may have some negative impacts, different communities on the Plateau and other local communities the world over have continue to compete against each other to host these events because of the expected economic benefits particularly the profits for local businesses and communities (Zima, 2011). Creating more awareness concerning events by advertising the destination over the media and other means helps to attract/increase tourist visits, creating more employment opportunities (especially in restaurants, hotels, transportations and retail establishments), increase local businesses through consumption of products of host communities and accommodation and the likes.

5. Tourism Development in Nigeria

Tourism development in Nigeria has undergone a gradual but progressive evaluation with each phase reflecting its

growing importance in the economy since it started in 1962 when Nigerian Tourist Association (NTA) was formed by a group of private practitioners to project tourist image in Nigeria. The effort of the association led to the admission of Nigeria as a full member of the International Union of Official Travel Organization (IUOTO) in 1964. This led to the promulgation of decree 54 of 1976, establishing the Nigerian Tourism Board (NTB) and state tourism committees at the Federal and State levels respectively to take over the functions of the Nigerian Tourism Association as a sole organ responsible for the administration and development of the country's tourism sector. Government reviewed the old policy in July 1990 and clearly defined the role of tourism in the national economy with specified objectives to achieved. The federal ministry of trade and tourism was also created along with this. This decree was amended in 1992, and was replaced by decree 81 which established the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) which was given the mandate to promote, market and coordinate tourism activities in the country (Okpoko & Okpoko, 2002).

5.1 An Overview of Event Tourism

Events are likely to have originated before the development of money, but the establishment and acceptance of the general equivalence was undoubtedly followed by their further development. Events in ancient times were meant to entertainment. They were also to celebrate important personalities, days or history in the life of the people. However, with the emergence of capitalism, new products and new social relations as well as the new way of life paved the way for more versatile development of all the different types of event's peak; and they all came close to what we now consider as an event. It was because of phenomenon of discretionary income, increase in purchasing power and standards of consumers, shifting the focus from fundamental to additional needs; and the birth of completely new consumer needs which increased the demand for a specific range of event which then stimulated the development of various contemporary events. Development of events in the economic sense help solve the problem of unemployment and had an impact on economic growth, especially in development market economies. The best example is the impact of mega sport events such as the Olympic game or World championships of popular sports on the economic growth of host community. Historical research demonstrates how the events evolved from primitive gathering of people for agricultural or religious reasons to modern type of events as well as their long history of attracting tourists and establishing host communities as tourist as destinations (Quinn, 2009).

In recent times, events are considered to contribute significantly to cultural and economic wealth of Nigeria. Events such as carnivals/festivals have major impact on the development of cultural tourism to host community. The event organizers now use the historical and cultural themes to develop the annual event to attract visitors and creating cultural image to the host cities by holding carnivals in the community setting. The desire for events and festivals is not specially designed to address the needs of any particular group. The hosting of such events is often for the tourism

and economic opportunities in addition to social and cultural benefits.

Events have the potential to generate vast amount of tourism when they cater for out-of-region visitors as well as grants or sponsorships of direct or indirect intent (Getz, 1997). Government now support and promote event as part of their strategies for economic development, nation building and cultural tourism. The event on the other hand become important tool for attracting visitors and building image within different communities. The economic impact of tourism arises principally from the consumption of tourism products in the geographical area. In the view of McDonnell et al (1999), tourism related services like travel, accommodation, restaurants and shopping are major beneficiaries of events.

As far as events tourism is concerned, the role and responsibilities of government as well as private sector and society in general have significantly changed during the last decade. The situation has changed where the state is responsible for tourism development and promotion such that the public sector is obliged to re-invent itself by relinquishing its traditional responsibilities and activities in favour of both state and local authorities. This indicates the growing influence of government in the development of events and tourism industries. It is clear from the foregoing that events impact on the host community and population in a number of ways. These can however either be negative or positive. The nature of events has changed over the years. In ancient times events were associated with key important moments linked especially to particular season and heritage sites but over the last decades, there has been changes as there is now a broad and diverse range of events taking place all over the world. According to Getz (1997), events constitutes one of the most exciting and fastest growing forms of leisure, business and tourism related phenomena.

The revolution in events has been stimulated through commercial aspect to meet the changing demand of the local community groups and increasing business opportunities for the events organization and local businesses.

5.2 Significance of Event Tourism

A nation is bound to benefit in a number of ways if it is able to tap properly its tourism resources that are related to festivities. As part of tourism itself, event tourism provide employment to the citizens. This means it has the ability to provide means in which the citizens can work to earn a living. This can be in two ways: paid employment and self-employment. By paid employment we mean a case in which an individual can work for someone else to be paid while self-employment means owning your own business (Otache, 2010). Apart from tourism being a source of income and employment, event tourism in most cases attract amenities to the resident places or places hosting such events because visitors' traffic may enjoy a higher standard of public transport, shopping and entertainment facilities than would be able to support otherwise. The provision of income, jobs and amenities for the resident population apply to a greater or lesser extent to any tourist destination.

More so, visitation of a place for the purpose of attending an event itself helps to enable the sale of the products that the host community has to offer. That is, events help to increase the level of local businesses (Oklobzija, 2015:94). It is obvious that the visitors have to stay within the period and after the event as well thereby increase the sales of the products of the area. Different aspects of sales of the host community such as local businesses, hotel accommodations, quality of life of the local people and the infrastructure will increase. Events can also help to project the good image of a destination thereby helping in promoting, positioning and rebranding it which will help in presenting a good image of it as a favourable tourist destination. This can enhance through media advertisement and other local means of publicity. Event Tourism is particularly important to developing countries and underdeveloped parts of a country because in comparison with other forms of economic development it brings about a faster improvement in living standard through income from tourist traffic and its expenditure relatively quickly.

In some locations, tourism may provide infrastructure, which in turn form the base and stimulus for the diversification of the economy and for the development of other industries. Tourism itself may be expected to create some local industries to maintain the facility, to meet the requirements for supplies and to meet the requirement of the visitors directly. In another way, tourist expenditure may therefore be said to stimulate an economy beyond the sector concerned with tourism (Otache, 2010).

To a developing country like Nigeria, tourism offers the prospects of early and substantial foreign earning. Moreover, where exports are largely dependent on only on open or few primary commodities with widely fluctuating prices in world market, tourism may provide stabilizing influence on the country's export earnings. Event Tourism also bring to light the tourism potential of an area. In this case, it increases the awareness of the area as a tourism destination. It also exposes the investment potentials as well as economic viability of an area be it rural or urban.

6. The Major Activities Performed During the Pus Kat Cultural Festival

Pus Kat is the major cultural festival of the Mwaghavul people who constitute the bulk of the population in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau state, Nigeria. Pus Kat literary means "Day of meeting". It is actually a day that bring the whole Mwaghavul people both at home and in diaspora together. It is a day usually set aside by the people to appease their gods and ancestors. The Pus Kat festival usually comes after the districts' festivals. It is centrally organized in Mangu the headquarters of Mangu Local Government Area. It is a festival showcasing different aspects of the cultural heritage of the people in music, dance, clothing, costumes, arts and crafts, folklore, royalty, traditional tools and technology, food, herbs, among others. However, the most ancient cultural festival celebrated by the people is the "LutukNzhi" which was celebrated in Mangun District. This event was usually celebrated before the commencement of a new farming season. It was purely a ritual festival of the Mangun people and usually culminated

with a festival that every person including women, children and visitors were allowed to witness and partake. This traditional festival subsequently led to the emergence or development of the first Centre of organized trade in Mwaghavul land in a place called **Kinten** in present day Mangun District of the Local Government Area (Dikam Dagal & Mwoltu, 2018). The event usually lasted for a day and was witnessed by their neighbours from different directions such as Mushere, Ron, Shakfem, Shipal, Mpang, Nkrang, Mban or Mupun and Mernyang people of present day Quanpan Local Government Area to the further south east. It was an equivalent of an international trade then. Here, goods were exchanged through barter trade or trade by barter. Usually, visitors were entertained by the people of the host community. It was an annual event and members of the host community used the opportunity to sell their goods, meet with their loved ones as well as opportunity for strengthening of relationships. This event subsequently ended with the colonial subjugation of the area by the early part of the 20th Century.

The Pus Kat in this case represents gratitude to God for protection throughout the year as well as offering prayer for a successful farming season. The festival offers its visitors the opportunity to visit the variety of historical and cultural sites in the land such as the mythical Ampidong of Ampang West, the Zughul (volcanic mountain of Kerang), Abandoned settlements of Panyam, Yillom and Mangun hills, Dungya sacred grove of Mangun as well as the ancient iron smelting sites that scattered all over the land. It also affords the tourists opportunity to meet one of the most accommodating ethnic groups in the state. Other activities that are showcased during the festival include: royal processions, exhibitions, competitions in traditional food processing, hunting expeditions and grand festival with Mwaghavul dances, traditional concerts as well as cultural performance of other ethnic groups within and outside the state. The Pus Kat cultural festival also offers a platform for business interests, researchers and a host of others to engage in mutually benefitting exchanges.

Since it normally takes place in a rural area, the event takes advantage of the people's heritage (rural heritage) and also represents a rural world. The advantage that rural festivals (including Pus Kat festival) enjoy is that unlike the overcrowded and stressful urban environment, the environment is peaceful and low-density area (Lane, 1994). Such events are usually original and look original to visitors and consequently more attractive. Apart from the peaceful nature of the rural areas and the original or authentic nature of the events, cost incurs for payments (for goods and services) in rural areas like Manguis usually low compared to urban area like Jos and Bukuru.

7. Results and Discussion

The most striking aspect of the results is that it has proven to be positive as the response from the various categories of people interviewed were of the opinion that the Pus Kat cultural festival have always impacted financially or economically on their lives. The research found out that members of the host community and other parts of the local government as well as the neighboring local government of

BarkinLadi and Pankshindo benefit so much in terms of the high sales made within the period of the festival. It also found that each time the festival is postponed for one reason or the other, there is a general outcry for the perceived losses that the people will be incurred from the obstructions. Women and youth are however the most beneficiaries because of the nature of businesses that are favoured most during the festival.

For people that own capital intensive businesses like hotels, the impact of the festival in recent times is not much felt by them because of poor nature of the roads, poor light or electricity supply and security challenges. Hence, most of the guests prefer to secure accommodation in more secured cities like Jos the state capital and Bukuru. Traders with petty businesses like transport (local achaba), food vendors, restaurants, dog meat, and the likes are the most beneficial. The reason is that since the event venue is situated far away from the state capital that usually accommodate most of the guests, they do rush back immediately the event is over because of security problem and bad roads network.

The business boom witnessed by the traders is however usually not the same each year. The research found out that there are situations in which even petty traders find it difficult to come out to sell particularly when there is fragile peace in Plateau state. This is because of the fear of the unknown. In such cases, the number of visitors will be minimal. It is obvious that despite the fact that hotels in Mangu town usually witnessed low turnout of guests, they still benefit from sales. Off-licensed operators and local beer sellers also form part of the beneficiaries of the festival. Alcohol consumption during the festival is usually high. A survey of most of these businesses shows that most of the people operating them are women and youths. The study also shows that these types of businesses have so much advantages because they require little amount to take-off and that they can even operate on temporary sheds close to the venue of the festival. Another advantage that they have is that they also operate local restaurant along with local or bottled beer which makes their businesses to thrive well. However, their products are mostly patronized by locals because they are usually cheaper than those found in organized hotels and restaurants.

From the results of the interview and survey conducted, another category of people that enjoy high sales during the festival are the craft men who usually produce traditional costumes of the Mwaghavul people like knives, local raincoat, local handbags, spears, short handle hoes, baskets and the likes. They enjoy so much patronization not because they are consumed by the people but they buy them as souvenirs and to be kept as part of their identity and for future references. They kept them as part of their cultural heritage. The study also observed that they are usually produced in low quantity. The cultural materials are often the priority of most visitors. As a result of their shortage, they are in most cases priced and paid for at the point of production by either the visitors through their agents or politicians who may share it to their supporters.

Generally, the results of the study show that the Pus Kat cultural festival have positively impacted on the people of

the host community and the Mwaghavul nation as a whole by way of empowerment particularly the small-scale businesses usually operated by women and youths and a few men.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of the study provide some evidence on the impact of the Pus Kat cultural festival on the economic empowerment of people of the immediate community. Local traders and other business operator enjoy some level of sales each time the festival is held. Women and youth operating small scale businesses are the most beneficiaries as they are providing goods and services that most visitors or tourists would not avoid like transport, restaurants and accommodations for local guests.

It is however eminent from the findings that although the people of the immediate community and traders from far and near usually benefits from the festival, governments intervention by way of financial sponsorship, publicity as well as enlightenment of the general public and the Mwaghavul people towards understanding the importance of the festival is necessary. The level of ignorance is still high among the people because most of them attend it not because of its historical and cultural relevance to them as a people but because it involves eating, drinking and enjoyment with friends. More resources should be injected into the event by the Nigerian government (particularly Mangu Local Government), industries particularly SWAN Nigerian Ltd (a subsidiary of UAC) located within the Mwaghavul land as part of its corporate social responsibilities and well-meaning spirited individuals need to support the event financially. The Mwaghavul Development Association (National) need to mobilize both human and material resources during the preparation towards the event in order to adequately provide better facilities like, the event venue, good roads, good hotels as well as adequate security for the protection of lives and property of the people and other visitors and the Plateau state government should resuscitate the Tourism Directorate Endowment Fund with its lofty objectives as this could contribute enormously to the development of cultural festivals in the state.

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