

Social and Health Dimensions in Museum's Patronage and its Implications for Sustainable Livelihood

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Lawal, Musediq Olufemi

Osun State University, Nigeria

Ajayi, O. Olugbenga

Osun State University, Nigeria

Adebayo, D. Olamilekan

Osun State University, Nigeria

Abstract

Museums have been established as a veritable instrument for a virile tourism industry because of advantages inherent in them. Their potentials for showcasing the people and their culture is also a case that cannot be ignored. For the purpose of clarity, this paper highlights the historical antecedents of museums in Nigeria with a view to helping in the understanding of museum as a concept and that it is not alien to indigenous African societies before the advent of the Europeans. It traces the development of modern museums in the colonial period, up to the present and notes the problems and associated difficulties attached to the effective management and funding of museums in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper investigates the community knowledge and attitude towards Museums and its implication on sustainable livelihood in Ile-Ife City, with particular focus on Ife National Museum. The study made use of questionnaire and in-depth interview to collect data from the study population. A total of 180 copies of questionnaire were retrieved from the respondents and analysed. The findings revealed a high level of awareness about the existence of Museums among the people and a low level of patronage for leisure and tourism purposes, which implies poor appreciation of its social and health benefits. This poor patronage was traced to poor appreciation of culture, which inherently has implication on sustainable livelihood and developmental processes. The need to address this consequently becomes apt in view of empirical declaration that existing models of sustainable development forged from economic or environmental concern are unlikely to be successful without cultural considerations.

Keywords

Museums, knowledge, attitude, sustainable livelihood

Corresponding author:

Musediq Olufemi Lawal, Department of Sociology, Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria
E-mail: flawal2005@gmail.com

Introduction

Man is always dynamic in his attempt to make living conducive. Most often, this dynamism is always a product of improvement in existing technology in the society, which at the same time set the pace for the new patterns of living also known as culture (*deitaticise culture*) (Oluwole, 2008). Such improvement is not for the sake of it, but the one that will enhance sustainable livelihood and attempts a holistic perspective in determining problems and opportunities for programme activities. Chambers and Conway (1991) proposed that a livelihood comprises of the capabilities, assets (including tangible and intangible resources) and activities required for living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both in the present and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base (Scoones, 2009). In the words of Muruviwa *et al.* (2013), the notion of a livelihood has proven to be a useful concept to explain vulnerabilities as it draws a picture of the ways in which people construct a living. However, adapting new ways of living and developing within the limit of nature remains one of the most important contemporary challenges shared by people all over the world. Attaining this feat for a sustainable society therefore requires inventing new methods of thinking and acting, which museums have the capabilities of providing as agents of individual, community and societal change. As agents of social change, museums have demonstrated their potentials to contribute towards combating issues such as poor health, high crime, low educational attainment and unemployment. Museums play a key role in the transition and promotion of sustainable development and serving as real laboratories for best practices (International Museums Day, 2015).

Museums were found to be one of the means by which people all over the world aspire to build and sustain civil society. The term 'civil society' refers to an idea of community in which citizens enjoy equal opportunities to participate in public life and culture. It is significant that in our time, museums are seen as embodying civil society values such as openness and universal access as well as trust and freedom of expression and debate. The implication of this tactical management of relative deprivation and entrenchment of *social inclusion*, which in the words of Wilkinson (1996); Kawachi and Kennedy (2002) will engender pronounced psychological effects and impact negatively on health status when left unattended to. This rarely explored reality is pointing at the fact that sustainable development offers the museums a new approach to old practices, new ways to display their collections and reach audiences for responsible consumption (Okpoko, 2006). In this way, museums can effectively provide a source of enlightenment for the community.

Brief Conceptual Exploration of Museum

A museum in its simplest form is a building housing collection of objects for inspection, study and enjoyment. The word museum is derived from the Greek word *Museion*. In its original Greek sense, it was applied to the sanctuary dedicated to the Muses of Greek mythology (Okita, 1985). According to Abun (1987), the muses were believed to be nine virginal daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne who were charged with the responsibility to protect and encourage art and science, poetry, music, dance and history of the people of Greece. It becomes associated with a place men's mind found rest and aloofness for everyday affairs as well as a sense of inspiration (Okita, 1985; Taylor, 1970). It became the custom to establish shrines in their honour in shady grooves often high on the mountain tops, where the spirits of the nine learned maidens of mythology might inspire the artist to their highest endeavours. Special cults and altars adorned with images were dedicated to them; these became the gathering places for the lovers of art (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

Museums are complex non-profit cultural organisations (Mencarelli *et al.* 2010; Alcaraz *et al.*, 2009; Rentschler and Geursen, 2004) that differ a great deal from each other in terms of funding, size, type and collections. To supplement traditional museums, in recent years new types of museums have appeared, such as interactive museums (Ambrose and Paine, 2012), ecomuseums (Donghai, 2008) and museums that do not own collections but are successful due to the cultural and educational services they offer to their visitors (Skramstad and Skramstad, 2012). The complexity of museums as organisations results from their very aims of achieving, at the same time, both socio-cultural goals in relation to the conservation and interpretation of artifacts, and commercial goals in relation to spending, associated with leisure time, tourism, and the increase of the museums' earned income (Camarero and Garrido, 2012).

Genesis (Origin) of Museums in Nigeria

For years, museums have demonstrated their public value as educational providers, community anchors and stewards of our national heritage. They have also earned a reputation for driving tourism, creating jobs, attracting businesses to the community and serving as a source of immense civic and community pride. Museums have been noted as predating the comings of the Arabs and Europeans to the present day Nigeria. Though at that period in time, they were not in form of public buildings as they were known of for today. What was obtainable then was conservation and preservation of cultural materials in temples or traditional shrines in the palaces of Kings and Chiefs because of their ritual, religious and political importance. They were sacred objects meant to command awe, and reverence from people.

In some culture, the material used in carving or moulding artifacts varies particularly within the nobility. In Benin Kingdom, bronze is used in carving heads that were kept on royal ancestral altars in the Oba's palace, while chiefs had heads of clay or wood on their ancestral altars (Eyo, 1990). These artifacts in pre-colonial Museums were useful tools in displaying the political structure and ritual significance of the kingship systems. There has been significant development in Museums in Nigeria since colonial era. The concise efforts began in 1927 with appointment of an adviser to the colonial government on the effects of colonial educational system on local arts, as well as the promulgation of Decree 77 of 1979, which established National Commission for Museum and Monuments (NCMM) to coordinate the activities of Museums in Nigeria.

Since then, Museums in Nigeria have gone beyond displaying personal collection of individual members of nobility, but now showcasing artifacts that are obtainable in the hosting communities (Folorunso, 2001). Contemporary museums are gradually changing from its old outlook of repository of antiquated items and currently including issues of nature and culture in its mandate. Its exhibition has capacity to educate people about dinosaurs, ancient history, anthropology, evolution, environmental and biodiversity (Wikipedia, 2017), thus helping in carrying the message of environmental conservation to the grassroots (Aremu, 2001). Despite its centrality in rediscovering and preserving our culture, the success of Museums lies in supports from the civil populace as well as regular patronage of both international and domestic tourists. As part of further appreciation of dynamics in interaction between the people and the museums, this study explored people's perspectives of social and health factors in museum's patronage and its implication on sustainable livelihood. The following questions thus arose as guides for this study: What is the host community's perception of museums? What is the level of patronage of the museums by the hosting communities, especially in developing societies like Nigeria where positive culture has not been developed towards tourism? To address the foregoing, *Ife National Museum*, Osun State was chosen as the focus of this study, with the following specific objectives: (a) to examine the local perception of museums as tourists attractions, (b) to find out the level of patronage to museum (especially by the people in the hosting (host) community), (c) be specific, don't generalise. To investigate the factors influencing patronage of this museum, and (d) to examine the category of the people that patronises the museum, and to understand the challenges facing the use of museums as tourists' attractions.

Methodology

The study Site: The study took place in *Ile-Ife*, Osun East Senatorial zone, Osun State, Nigeria. In Osun State, there are 30 Local Government Areas (LGA), 4 out of these (*Ife East, Ife North, Ife South, Ife Central*) are located on *Ife* land.

Sampling Instruments, Procedure and Sample Size

Instruments adopted for this study included questionnaire (Quantitative method) and in-depth interview schedule (Qualitative method). For the purpose of this study, *Ile-Ife* was stratified into the elite and indigenous (conceptualise) zones. From the elite, Zone 7 streets were randomly sampled. In each of the sampled streets, 10 buildings were selected through systematic sampling technique. The indigenous zone was divided according to the existing traditional quarters known among the Yoruba as '*Agboole*'. Out of the identified quarters, 14 were randomly sampled from each of which 10 buildings were randomly selected. A total of 210 buildings were eventually sampled out of which one household was picked per building for final participation. Both male and female adult residents of each building were given equal chance of being selected in the sampling process. At the conclusion of the sampling exercise, 210 respondents were assigned questionnaire out of which only 180 was retrieved and analysed. For the in-depth interview (IDI), 10 participants were purposively selected from among grown up visitors to the museum, while 3 senior members of staff of the museums and 3 lecturers from the Institute of African Studies, as well as Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State were also included.

Procedure for Data Analysis

Data gathered through questionnaire was analysed using simple descriptive statistics. These results were presented through frequency distribution, simple percentages, bar and pie charts. Data collected from IDI was analysed through content analysis which involved verbatim quotation of responses. These was used to support the arguments driven by quantitative data.

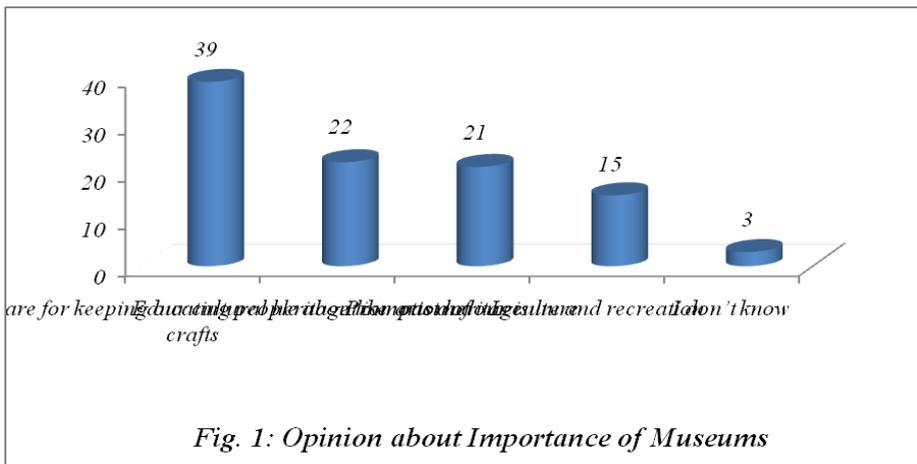
Results/Data Presentation

Socio-Demographic Data: The socio-demographic data in this study shows that the males are 69% and females 31%. Out of these categories, 63% are married and 37% single. On the age category, 23% of the respondents are less than 30 years; 58% fell between 30 and 50 years of age, while 19% are older than 50 years. Religious affiliation of the respondents show that 50% of them are Christians, 36% Muslim, while 14% are adherents of African traditional religion. Majorities (57%) of the respondents are holders of Higher National Diploma and University Degree, 11% were educated up to Postgraduate level, while 25% are holders of either National Diploma or National Certificate in Education. Only 7% are Secondary School Certificate (SSCE) holders. Substantial proportions of these respondents are from formal sector. This is not by design but circumstantial because consideration was given to willing

partakers in the course of gathering data for this study due to reluctance of some people. The breakdown of the respondents on occupational basis gave the following patterns: traders (3%), Students (28%), Civil Servants (22%) and Teachers/Lecturers (47%).

Awareness of Museums as Tourists attractions

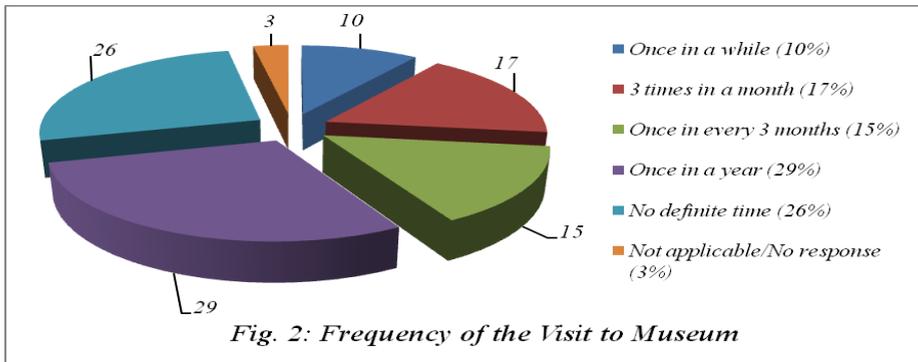
The entire respondents of this study displayed good knowledge of the existence of museums, especially those located in Southwestern Nigeria. When asked to mention any of the museums they were ever familiar with, a number of museums were mentioned. The breakdown of their responses included Lagos (National Museum, Onikan, Lagos) and Ife Museums (10%), Lagos Museum (13%); Owo National Museum (12%); and *Enuwa (Ife National) Museum* (65%). It is not surprising why majority of the respondents mentioned Ife National Museum, since *Ile-Ife* where the Museum is located is the focus of the study. It also explained why they were particular about the exact location of the Museum (*Enuwa*) within *Ife* City. The above shows that every respondent involved in this study was aware of existence of museums.



Source: Field Survey, 2017

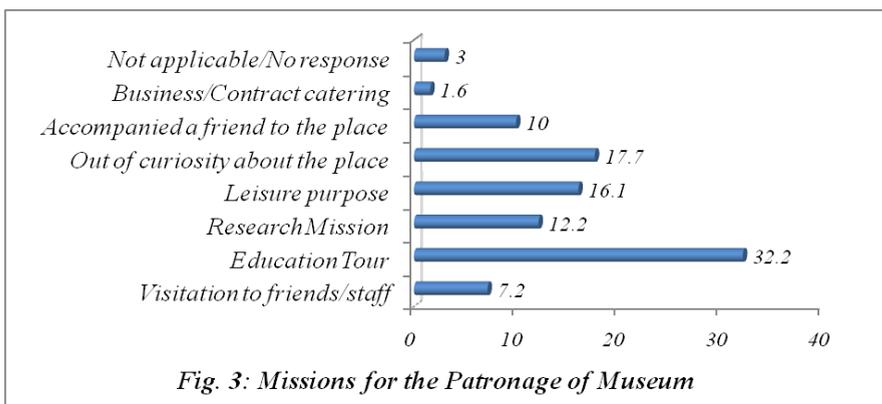
The above figure highlighted pattern of responses in relation to the question of what usages museums are meant for. The use of museums according to the respondents' submission include keeping cultural heritage like arts and crafts (39%), educating people about the past heritage (22%), promotion of our culture (21%) and for leisure and recreation (15%). Based on the observed pattern of responses, it becomes glaring that almost all the respondents have previously visited one Museum or the other. According to the data, 64% visited Ife National Museum, 12.6% Owo National Museum, 13.1% Lagos National Museum and 10.3% both Ife and Lagos National Museums. Further inquiry revealed that 12.6% of the respondents first visited museums of their interest

between 1996 and 1999, 29.7% did so between 1999 and 2003, while 57.7% started visiting museum from 2003 to date.



Source: Field Study, 2017

Data contained in *figure 2* show that respondents’ visits have not been encouraging as only 29% of them make their visit once in a year while another significant proportion (26%) have no definite time of visit. The latter category made their visits only when convenient for them. Despite this non-impressive level of museum visitation, all the respondents still consider museums as places worthy of constant visits. Various reasons were given to buttress this view. Some (18%) saw the artifacts in museums as helping people to appreciate the technology of our forefathers, and providing opportunity of appraising the past and present ways of life (27%). To the others, it is another world entirely where one can be alone with nature and opportunity to imbibe culture of creativity (32%) and an avenue to intimate the younger ones with their culture (20%).



Source: Field Study, 2017

The above chart shows that all the respondents visited their respective museums of choice for various purposes. A sizeable proportion (32.2%) of them visited the museums while on educational tour. Another fairly large number (17.7%) visited the museums out of curiosity, while 16.1% paid visits to useums for leisure purpose. Further information obtained from the data showed that those who visited museums for leisure were from the formal sector of the economy, out of which 34% are civil servants. The remaining 66% were from educational sector paired together (in this study) as teachers/lecturers.

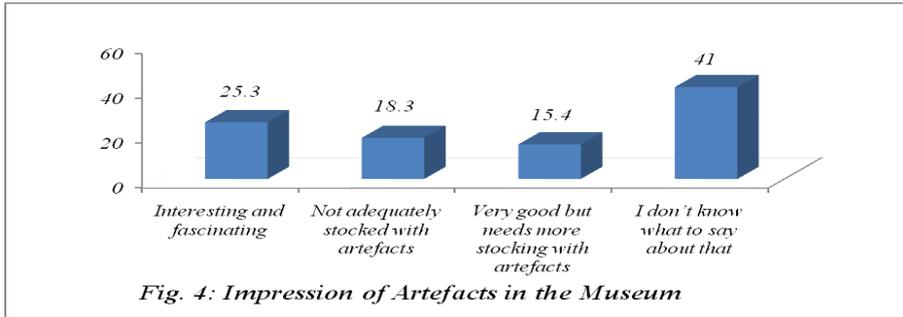


Fig. 4: Impression of Artefacts in the Museum

Source: Field Survey, 2017

All the respondents irrespective of the reasons they gave for visiting expressed their minds about the artifacts found in the museums. As shown in *figure 4*, only 25.3% of the respondents found the artifacts very interesting and fascinating, while some (18.3%) see the museum as not being adequately stocked with artifacts, some others (15.4%) acknowledged the fact that though the artifacts were very good, the museum needs be better stocked to make it more an interesting place to visit. The largest proportion (41%) of the respondents had mixed feelings, hence their inability to know what to say.

Majorities (56%) of the respondents have, at one time or another, recommended museums to their friends and acquaintances as places for relaxation; others never did. In terms of the current quality of social networking on usage of museums, 32% of those who claimed to have at one time or the other recommended museum to some others had done so to less than 5 people, 38% had recommended to between 5 and 10 people, while 29% have recommended to more than 10 people. A number of reasons were given by those who have never recommended museums as places of leisure and relaxation. Part of these includes individual differences between this category of respondents and their acquaintances. The main argument here is about having different value system and outlooks towards leisure, tourism or relaxation issues (32%). A sizeable number (45%) have friends and relatives who are religious bigots (45%). Other respondents (23%) in this category were not comfortable with the idea of asking others to visit museums as places of relaxation.

Respondents' assessment of museum staff vis-à-vis, particularly in terms of the quality of human relations they possessed showed a positive assessment of the museum staff. While the majority (60%) described the museum staff as "very good and accommodating", another good proportion (37.4%) described them as cordial and accommodating. Other respondents (2.6%) could not offer any comment on the issue at hand. Part of the problems/challenges militating against effective patronage of museums, as identified by the respondents include low level of awareness on essence of, and what is obtainable in a museum (30%), religious bigotry that makes some people classify Museums as idols houses (25%), poor attitude to leisure due to poor economic condition (17%), poor appreciation of indigenous culture (15%) and the fact that museums in Nigeria are confined to certain places and not spread across the country (13%).

Deeper appreciation of the artifacts in the museum was reflected in the responses of some participants in the in-depth interview. Apart from being appreciative of the museum materials, implications of these for development and sustainable livelihood were equally mentioned.

According to a female University lecturer:

The art works on display in this museum are marvelous. They portray the ingenuity of the people that lived in this part of the world in the past. One have a lot to learn from this, while its implication is that we in the contemporary era should strive to outdo these people in view of technological advantages we have over them. (*IDI/ Female/Lecturer on study tour/Ife Museum, Osun State*)

Another respondent commented as follows:

The technological wizardry of the people who infuse their ideas and views into these art works is commendable. There is no time I enter museum in any part of the country that I failed to marvel at the resourcefulness of the people in the past. In fact I've learnt that one has to be in tune with nature for the best in you to manifest. A paper I am writing currently evolved as a result of my first and constant contact with museums. (*IDI/ Male/Researcher from University of Ibadan*)

A postgraduate student on research, who visited the museum equally lends credence to this. According to him:

The intricacy of the mastery displayed into the artworks on display in this museum portray the level of

commitment on the part of the people whose works and activities are being showcased through the artifacts in this museum. As a student of Fine and Applied Arts, there are lots that I've learnt which I wouldn't have if I limit myself to what was being taught in the class alone. *(IDI/Male/Postgraduate Student on Research Mission/Ife Museum)*

The effects of museum visitation on individual's behavioural change was also stressed by one of the visitors who was visiting basically for leisure purpose. As the respondent reported:

My visitation to the museum is an avenue to appreciate the past ways of life, the orderliness in the ways they do their things and avenue for a reflection on the present and the past. If everybody is taking such visitation as a matter of necessity there is bound to be a positive behavioural change to our cultural past (with proper tour guide of the museums) and the need to channel new course of life for progressive living as well as sustainable livelihood. *(IDI/Male/Retiree on recreational and leisure visit/Ife Museum)*

An inquiry was made into what sustainable livelihood entails and how patronage of museums or constant interactions with it by the populace can bring about sustainable livelihood. In his reactions, one of the respondents opined that:

The sustainable livelihoods approach is a way of thinking about the objectives, scope, and priorities for development activities. It can come in the form of programmes, which seek to create long-lasting solutions to poverty by empowering their target population with knowledge, skills and a means of generating income. As a result of this, a sustainable livelihood approach employs a broader strategy to find safe, productive employment for youth by building their capabilities and providing resources and opportunities to enable them to define and pursue their goals. *(IDI/Male/ Lecturer/Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Obafemi Awolowo University/Ile Ife, Osun State)*

Similar points were mentioned by another participant who expressed as follows:

The sustainable livelihood entails the identification of practical priorities for actions that are based on the views

and interests of those concerned. It does not replace other tools, such as participatory development, sector-wide approaches, or integrated rural development. However, it makes the connection between people and the overall enabling environment that influences the outcomes of livelihood strategies. It brings attention to bear on the inherent potential of people in terms of their skills, social networks and access to physical as well as financial resources and ability to influence core institutions. (*IDI/Female/Senior Research Fellow/Institute of African Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State*)

An official from Ife National Museum was also of the view that:
The sustainable livelihoods framework helps to organise the factors that constrain or enhance livelihood opportunities and shows how they relate to one another. A central notion is that different households have different access livelihood assets, which the sustainable livelihood approach aims to expand. The impacts of museum on livelihoods of people come in the form of occupation and location, which varies with management strategies and level of individual participation. The impacts on communities increase with their closeness to museums or other tourist sites around. (*IDI/Male/Senior Official of Ife National Museum/Ile-Ife, Osun State*)

The linkage between sustainable livelihood and patronage to museum was further stressed as follows:

Manifestation of sustainable livelihood based on interactions between the people and the museum is possible when visitation to museums is frequent. It is through this that people reflected on ingenuity of the people that lived before them; understanding of their thinking, ways of life and challenges that confronted these people during their time as often reflected in their artifacts, is something that can help in the modification of their present life. It is through this that the museum can influence their life through the programmes that will enhance their capabilities and opportunities. Capabilities include skills, self-confidence and good health, while opportunities include self-employment, wage

employment, and home-based work. (*IDI/Female/Senior Official/National Museum/Ile-Ife, Osun State*)

The constraints over realisation of the benefits derivable from museums by the populace were traced to situations in which people have accepted various religious dogmas to the detriment of cultural issues. An official of the National Museum stressed as follows:

The present challenge is that people see the visit to the museum as akin to embracing idol worshipping which is not. For instance, I'm a worker in the vineyard of our Lord Jesus and my job as a member of staff in the museum has nothing to do with my faith. There are lots of Muslims colleagues that I've worked with since I joined the service of National Commission for Museum and Monuments; they still remain steadfast as Muslims till date. So it is this misinterpretation that is affecting the populace interest in the museums, while this is inherently preventing them from accessing the benefits they should have derived from this great institution. (*IDI/Male/Senior Official/ National Museum/Ile-Ife, Osun State*)

Part of what could be done to salvage the present situation was highlighted by another official of the National Museum. In his words:

Museum is doing everything possible to win over hearts and minds of the populace for better patronage. Efforts here are being made to ensure that museums and archives are accessible and develop their audiences further for other local service providers to be able to use their resources to reach out effectively to everybody in the society. The outcome of such service and after-effects of the resources they are going to deploy in this situation will enhance livelihood assets which Olivier (2008) listed as including Human capital (health, nutrition, education, knowledge and skills, capacity to work, capacity to adapt); Social capital (networks and connections (patronage, neighbourhoods, kinship), relations of trust and mutual understanding and support, formal and informal groups, shared values and behaviours, common rules and sanctions, collective representation, mechanisms for participation in decision-making, leadership); Natural capital (land and produce, water and aquatic resources, trees and forest products, wildlife, wild foods and fibers, biodiversity,

environmental services); Physical capital (infrastructure, transport, roads, vehicles, secure shelter and buildings, water supply and sanitation, energy, communications), tools and technology. (*IDI/Male/Senior Official/National Museum, Ile-Ife, Osun State*)

The Findings, the Museums and the Sustainable Livelihood

Based on the findings of this research, there is presently low level of community patronage to *Ife* Museum, which itself amounts to very low level of appreciation of its cultural and social benefits. The result further shows that most visitors to Ife National Museum who are resident in the town only went there for social cum educational reasons. This notwithstanding, some respondents in spite of their negligible number (16.1%) patronised this museum for leisure purpose. By this patronage, it means a change of location and residence by people in order to promote, stabilise and as appropriate restore physical, mental and social well-being. While their action differs slightly from what Jyothis (2016) referred to as covering a common form of vacationing and a broad spectrum of medical services, it however covered the other dimension like mixing leisure, fun and relaxation together with wellness and healthcare. Parts of the benefits inherent in such health benefits include chance to have a glimpse into cultural practices and technological ingenuity of the people in the past, as well as a chance to enjoy aesthetic endowment of the destination and relaxation during the visit which will in the long run leads to rejuvenation of the mind, body and soul.

However, attainment of holistic well-being including health may end up as a mirage with the present situation on low patronage as accentuated by this study. This is because people will continue to have poor knowledge of what museums stands for. The prevailing religious bigotry against cultural issues, poor leisure and recreation culture and almost no appreciation of cultural heritage on the part of the people in the society is likely to result to inability of the museums to effectively connect with their surrounding communities as well as difficulties towards addressing many issues and challenges that human beings faced on daily basis.

The solution towards this could be easily anchored on putting in place what was either relegated to the background or destroyed in the first instance, which is 'culture'. Plausibility of this is evident in the words of Dessein *et al.* (2015) that culture matters in sustainable development. This was illustrated further through the argument that almost all of the planet's environmental problems and certainly all of its social and economic problems have cultural activities and decisions at their roots. Museums therefore need to double their efforts towards educating the populace for cultural revival and positive behavioural change towards cultural values and related matters. It is through this that

everybody will come to the realisation that museums are not citadel of idolatory but a place for us to appreciate our indigenous intellects and to improve our lots. Museums in the country could also meet up with these challenges by repositioning itself as agents of social change through which developmental processes could be facilitated in the country. This should start right from community level where museums are expected to act as catalysts for social regeneration and empowerment. By this, communities will become self-determined and able to develop the confidence and skills needed to assume greater control over their own lives and the improvement of the neighbourhoods within which they exist. Added advantage in this regard is the atmosphere the process will provide for museums to encourage tolerance, inter-community respect and to challenge stereotypes through inclusive community representation via their collections and displays.

Conclusion

With the outcome of this study, it is obvious that museums are not strangers to the concept of change and developmental processes *vis-à-vis* preservation and promotion of culture. Deeper consideration of the findings equally affirmed that museums are important channel through which the cultural practices of the people are showcased. Museums thus have the capability to enhance sustainable livelihood through social regeneration, empowerment of communities to increase their self-determination and develop the confidence and skills to take greater control over their lives and the development of the neighbourhoods in which they live. Lastly, museums, through the representation of inclusive communities within collections and displays, have the potential to promote tolerance, inter-community respect and to challenge stereotypes. As agents of individual, community and societal change, museums have demonstrated their potential to contribute towards combating issues such as poor health, high crime, low educational attainment and unemployment.

The challenge(s) noted to have been militating against efforts at improving patronage of museum therefore underscore the need to embark on mass enlightenment of the people about the relationships existing between religion and culture in the society. This is because of the potentials inherent in the appreciation of one's culture and cultural heritage as well as the need for leisure and relaxation. Putting the economy of the country on good footing is another area that can engender improved patronage of museums. The idea here is that an improvement in individuals' economic standard will encourage leisure and relaxation activities.

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