

Diasporic culture, Cultural transformation and grass root development in Francophone Africa

Umukoro Gloria Mayen

Department of Modern Languages and Translation Studies
University of Calabar, Calabar-Nigeria
P. M. B 1115, Calabar
umukorogloria@gmail.com

Abstract

One significant aspect of the African slaves who were shipped out of Africa during the transatlantic slave trade was the retention and preservation of the African culture. These values over the years have either been watered down, compromised or have been influenced by external cultural influences. Though, these Africans now live in the diaspora, literature has been able to reveal their attitudes, experiences and cultural preoccupations in the new world. Using the cultural approach, this reading seeks through survey, participation, and interviews to contribute to the literature by analyzing the cultural preoccupations of the Francophone diasporic communities, and discusses the impact of the diasporic cultural activities as a driving force in poverty alleviation while redefining the social relations between the communities and their homeland.

Key words: Diasporic culture, Franco - diaspora, Poverty alleviation, Diasporic Communities, Cultural preoccupations

1. Introduction

Thus, the North American slave went through his servitude, not in apathetic despondency, nor in carefree cheerfulness, nor in sad longing for freedom 'in the other world". Despite its chains and whips, its great anxieties and fear, the bondsmen refused to become slaves to their environment. They created viable cultures which reflected their African aboriginal values as well as their American environment. Slavery, despite its cruelties and the assumptions of the white masters and intellectual descendants, failed to reduce the blacks to mere chattel. Through the process of surviving, black slaves developed a way of life which made an extremely difficult life livable. Though not as pronounced as in Latin America and Caribbean, the culture the slaves created was discernibly African, though expressed largely in white American forms." (Uya 2005:149)

Uya's observation above is a testimony to the fact that the diasporic cultural activities which will be referred to in this study as Carnival are some of the distinctive African values which were preserved in the new world despite the difficult and demoralizing processes of surviving which the African's were subjected to by their white masters. These values have transformed and modified the indigenous African cultural festivals and have become for most developing communities a driving force for grass roots and community development in general.

The impact of these diasporic cultural activities are numerous. As will be discussed in this study, they bring about community development and community development is born out of cultural understanding. When people share certain

things in common, they tend to reason and do things in a common way. To enable us key into this common and collective way of doing things, it is necessary at this point to consider 'culture' in the context of this study. Culture has been defined by many scholars in different ways. According to Banks, J. et al (1989)

Most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. The essence of a culture is not its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. It is the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernized societies; it is not material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies. People within a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artifacts, and behaviors in the same or in similar ways."

Diasporic carnival is considered in this study a tool to interpret, use, perceive, and depict tangible indigenous cultural elements. For instance, in a carnival presentation, the prestigious 'Ekpe' masquerade of the Efik people in Cross River State will be used to depict "Salvation", the 'Durbar' in Northern Nigeria would be used to depict "Strength and Security", a symbol of the Voodoo witchcraft' festival of the Ouidah people of the Benin republic, will be used to depict "Wonders"

1.1 Research Background

The interest of this study on diasporic cultural activities is traced back to 2005 when Carnival came into Nigeria through Cross River State. As the carnival continued to grow and stabilize its impact on the growth and development of the grass roots cannot be ignored. This development did not just come to be. It is worthy to note here that initially, this diasporic activity was not accepted by Cross Riverians in particular and Nigerians in general. It was considered by the people as strange, foreign and to some extent indecent. However, the story is different in recent times as this study reveals the emergence of more carnivals in more states of Nigeria after Cross River State and its impact on the development of the grass roots.

Today, cultural tourism is identified by (WTO, 2001) as one of the most rapidly growing areas of global tourism demand, with an increase of 15% in the last decade, and presently accounts for about 10% of the tourism arrivals worldwide. Interestingly thus, with the world progressing and people attracted to tourism and tourism activities, it is pertinent for developing communities to introduce cultural activities that will enable them attract, retain and entertain the kind of tourists and tourism products that will contribute to the development of the grassroots and the community at large

1.2 Problem statement

This paper is going to look at diasporic cultural festivals as an instrument for grassroots development in Francophone Africa

1.3 Research objectives

- i. A survey of the development of cultural tourism and multi- cultural festivals celebrated in selected developing African communities using the observation, interview and questionnaire methods to further and strengthen the objective of the study. Focus is however on the Nigeria and Francophone African Communities.
- ii. An economic impact assessment, which involves an evaluation of the direct contribution of diasporic cultural activities on the grass roots. The analysis will

specifically look at participation, satisfaction and Government commitment to ensure grass roots development.

iii. The role of these diasporic cultural festivals in redefining and solidifying community relations between the communities and the homeland

iv.

2. Carnival and Festival, two distinctive concepts

Before we go further into this study, we would like to discuss the concepts, Carnival and Festival. Carnival and Festival have been used interchangeably by most authors, some authors do not seem to see any difference or just ignore the difference between the two. Though, the two describe cultural events, they are two varying activities. Many authors have attempted to define Carnival in various ways, as cited in the Webster's New World College Dictionary (2010), Carnival is "the period of feasting and revelry just before Lent", "a reveling or time of revelry; festivity; merrymaking", "a time or place of excess, vitality, chaos, etc.", "a traveling commercial entertainment with sideshows, rides, games, etc.", "an organized program of festivities, contests, etc."

According to a post on the <http://smallislandent.com/mbo> web, Traditional Carnival as typically celebrated in Trinidad and Brazil, is a festive season which occurs immediately before Lent, usually in February or March. Here in South Florida, Miami Broward One Carnival (MBOC) celebrations begin the week before Columbus Day in October. It kicks off with the MBOC Junior Carnival on the Sunday before Carnival Sunday, followed by the Kings, Queens and Individuals Show and Competition and the Steelband Panorama competition on Friday of Columbus Day weekend. The official MBOC J'Ouvert is held on Saturday morning of Columbus Day weekend and the carnival celebrations peak with the parade and concert on Carnival Sunday, the day before the 2nd Monday of October.

In another article titled 'History of Carnival' posted on the Rio.com web. According to some, the carnival was originally a Greek spring festival in honor of the god of wine, Dionysus. The Romans adopted the same tradition with a feast in honor of Bacchus, the Roman god of wine, and Saturnalia. On this day master and slaves exchanged clothes amidst a day full of drunken revelry. The Roman Catholic Church later modified the feast of Saturnalia into a festival preceding the beginning of Lent. However, what evolved is a mass celebration of indulgences in music, dance, food, and drink, something which the Church did not have in mind.

Furthermore, the carnivalineducation.com web sees carnival thus; Carnival originated as a pagan festival in ancient Egypt which was subsequently celebrated by the Greeks and then the Romans. The popular festival was adopted by the Roman Catholic Christian church in Europe as the festival of Carne Vale. The Carnival festival was transported to the Caribbean by the European slave traders. They excluded the African slaves from the festival and had lavish masquerade balls. On emancipation the freed African slaves of the Caribbean transformed the European festival forever into a celebration of the end of slavery. The Carnival festival had a new cultural form derived from their own African heritage and the new Creole artistic cultures developed in the Caribbean. It is the Caribbean Carnival that is exported to large cities all over the world.

From the above it is deduced in this study that Carnival is a combination of various festival celebrations. Thus, it is observed that in one Carnival, various festivals are

celebrated. For instance, the Trinidad and Tobago festival which happens to be one of the diasporic cultural activities referred to in this study comprises a collection of various festival celebrations, ranging from the mardi gras, the dirty carnival, etc. Also notable is the Carnival Calabar which is also a product of the diasporic cultural festival. The themes celebrated in the Carnival Calabar are a combination of various indigenous cultural festivals. In 2002, one of the Carnival bands in the Calabar carnival played a theme that interpreted more than two cultural festivals of different ethnic groups, the band in their interpretation and display played the 'Atilogu' from eastern Nigeria, the 'Durba' from the North, and the South African 'Zulu'. These are three distinctive cultural displays from three different ethnic groups in Africa.

The display of these cultural festivals in one carnival creates a cultural image that attracts a vast number of foreign tourists and brings about a social and economic transformation for the festivals and the people of that community. The diasporic cultural activity is thus considered in this study to contribute significantly to the cultural and economic development of the developing communities where they are practiced. However, we will in this study use diasporic cultural festival interchangeably with Carnival.

3. Concept of development

Before we go further into this study, it is pertinent to look at the concept 'Development' in the context of this study. According to Effah-Attoe (2006), "the term development could be variously defined. It could be defined from a political, social or economic perspective" (155). Thus bearing in mind that this study examines the political, social and economic status of a people, we would look at the definitions of the concept development bearing in mind these factors. According to Northrup (1978), Economic development is not distinct from economic growth, but rather is a special type of growth which sets off a more general expansion in the economy, stimulating diversification and specialization of labor outside the subsistence sphere and implies an ability to deal with the world market from the position of strength not dependence (147).

In this study, we will look at a special type of growth derived from the diasporic cultural activities. The growth that affects the grassroots and brings about what Northrup refers to as a stimulating diversification and specialization of labor. That's to say labor outside the usual day to day activities of the people. The diasporic cultural activities which has come to stay in the River state, Rivers and some parts of the northern states in Nigeria for instance, the emergence of the Trinidad and Tobago carnivals has become an annual traditional festival celebrated and appreciated by the indigenes of these areas. There is no gain to say that there has been a visible economic growth in these areas due to the presence of these festivals. In another perspective, the concept of development is defined with reference to growth, increase and expansion in the community. According to a post on peernetbc web, Frank and Smith define as follows:

Community development is a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. Community wellbeing (economic, social, environmental and cultural) often evolves from this type of collective action being taken at a grassroots level. Community development ranges from small initiatives within a small group to large initiatives that involve the broader community. The issue of community development, collective action,

community wellbeing are very relevant issues to this study. On the basis of the above, this study examines the diasporic cultural festivals in developing communities and their impact on community development. One can say that a reasonable level of economic, social, cultural and environmental growth has been reached by the communities who have collectively taken advantage of these diasporic cultural festivals. Collective effort, communal effort has also encouraged growth and development of the grassroots. As described by writers like Aboyade (1980), collaborative tendencies:

Elevate the human factor of production to the level of participation in the development process by viewing production as an inseparable part of distributive relations. It seeks to achieve egalitarianism through a deep sense of man's responsibility to his community' (84). "And the writer remarks further that: Through the holistic approach to economic and social relations, it attempts to blend individual and social morality as a basis for social consensus and social action".

Effective community development should thus be such that is holistic and of benefit to every member of the society. The diasporic cultural festivals are well planned, initiated and are supported by community members. In Nigeria where diasporic carnivals like the 'Carnival Calabar', 'Rivers Carnival', Abuja carnival are being celebrated, these events are well planned by the communities involved in the celebration. The planning process takes a period of 8 to 10 months. Respondents who are also members of some of the carnival bands attest to the fact that the Carnivals are highly supported in terms of community participation and very competitive too. The carnival from findings though is an imported culture is now accepted as a traditional cultural activity. Many reveal that the period is a season community members await. A good number of respondents also testify to the fact that they wouldn't see it a spectacular activity but for the fact that it attracts foreigners and gives them the opportunity to interact with other cultures and also to showcase their locally made products. According to Nkoyo who sells traditional souvenirs e.g. wooden jewelries made from indigenous materials like woods, raffia, cowries, beads, 'carnival season is the best season for her business as the large number of foreign tourists who visit appreciate the 'traditionalness' of the souvenirs. Over the years, she has made a good living for herself and her family from the sales of these souvenirs. She also observes that her highest turnover is realized during this season.

4. Cultural preoccupations of African diasporic communities

Probably, no people have been so completely the bearers of tradition as the African slave immigrants. They carried in their minds and heart a treasure of complete musical forms, dramatic speech, and imaginative stories, which they perpetuated through vital acts of self-expression. Wherever the slaves were ultimately placed, they established an enclave of African culture that flourished in spite of environmental disadvantages (Mason Brewer, 11). It is worthy to note here that, the Africans who were either forcefully or voluntarily displaced from their homeland never forgot their roots and as such their African cultural heritage was naturally reflected in everything they did and the diasporic festival referred to in this study is a sum total of their preoccupations. And according to Michael La Rose, "Caribbean Carnival is the creative and artistic expression of dispossessed people".

The author also notes that these diasporic cultural festival has found its way into the developed communities and have become for these communities a significant tourism product. La Rose, underlines thus; the Caribbean Carnival has been transported to North America and Europe through the migration of Caribbean peoples. This is how the Notting Hill Carnival in Ladbroke Grove, London” came to be. The diasporic carnivals are not just a means for social entertainments, but rather, each carnival theme tells a story, it reveals to the world the history and preoccupations of the people. This aspect of historical display of the diasporic festivals/ carnivals is what has brought about tremendous transformation of indigenous cultural festivals today

As already observed in this study, African culture has gained prominence in the Caribbean festivals which in this study is seen as a strong diasporic cultural activity. Aspects of some diasporic festivals have contributed largely to the growth and development of the grass roots. In this study, a few of this festivals will be highlighted. In Cross River state apart from the Carnival a diasporic cultural festival which has gained prominence within and outside Nigeria, there are also other cultural activities like the Calabar Annual International Jazz Festival which began in 2013. It is worthy to note here that the Jazz festival has its origin from the diasporic St. Lucia Jazz Festival, this festival has created a demand pull as it attracts a large number of both Indigenous and Foreign tourists into Calabar during the Easter season. There is also the Ikom Highlife festival in Ikom town. Ikom is also seen as one of the fast growing tourism destinations where the Alok and Nkarasi Monoliths are sited. The Ikom highlife festival draws its semblance from the Caribbean St. Kitts Music Festival formerly called the Shak Shak Festival. This diasporic festival features multiple genres of music. Though for hundreds of years, St. Kitts operated as a sugar monoculture which was a main source of revenue for the island, the Shak Shak festival of the Kititians is seen as a diasporic cultural festival that has contributed to the growth and development of the tourism sector of the people, since the ban on the sugar industry sometime between 2004 and 2005, as revealed by a Kititian. It is worthy to note that the Ikom highlife festival and others were government initiative to create carnival products which would bring about a demand-pull of tourists during low tourist seasons. The preoccupation of African diasporic communities in the diaspora has played a significant role in keeping African culture alive. Diasporic festivals/Carnivals are thus seen as a means of singing the song of a new dawn in for Africans in diaspora.

5. Impact of diasporic cultural festivals

As Jonathan Culler, (1977) states; We have come to think of our social and cultural world as a series of sign systems, comparable to languages. What we live among and relate to are not physical objects and events; they are objects and events with meaning; not just complicated wooden constructions but chairs and tables; not just physical gestures but acts of courtesy or hostility. If we are able to understand our social and cultural world, we must think not of independent objects but of symbolic structures, systems of relations which by enabling objects and actions to have meaning, create a human universe (112)

Tourism has become for developing African communities a mainstay in recent times. And according to Culler, our understanding of our social and cultural world will go a long way to create for us and for the developing African communities a meaningful universe. The increase in the number of both national and international tourists who visit developing African communities during cultural festivals has

brought about competitiveness and new demands on tourism activities and indigenous products. Festival tourism which is carved out of diasporic cultural activities has experienced a high level of demand pull as tourists who attend these activities desire and appreciate more of the culturally based products. According to Stiernstrand (1996), the economic impact of tourism arises principally from the consumption of tourism products in a geographical area. And McDonnell, Allen and O' Toole (1999), confirm that "tourism related services, which include travel, accommodation, restaurants, shopping are the major beneficiaries of the event" (). It is worthy to note here that the impact of this tourism activities are directly felt by the grass roots as they are the major providers of such services.

Today, the most prominent cultural festival celebrated in African communities is the Caribbean carnival which is considered in this study as one of the preserved African values though over time influenced by external culture. These festivals have contributed significantly to the social, cultural and economic development of the developing communities as they are seen to have modified, transformed and marketed our locally based cultural festivals. The rate of youth participation in these diasporic festivals have impacted positively on the development of cultural tourism and the grassroots.

In Nigeria today, the diasporic festival / carnival has played a major role in transforming our indigenous festivals in many ways. For instance, the 'Carnival Calabar' (Cross River State), the 'Carni Riv' (Rivers State) are two major carnivals that have been economically, culturally and socially transformed by the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival (diasporic cultural festival). It is worthy to note here that, these diasporic cultural festival were initially generally rejected by Nigerians, they saw the Caribbean carnival as foreign, abominable, indecent etc. and should not be encouraged. To the common Nigerian, the Caribbean costumes were demonic and indecent, the dance was unholy, unafican and the whole idea of Carnival was seen as strange and should not be encouraged especially amongst our youths. A group of spectators interviewed during one of the editions of the Carnival calabar, saw the carnival as not portraying the true cultural values of Africa.

Mr. Etim one of the spectators during one of the editions of the Carnival calabar, when interviewed had this to say: "Oh no! this is unafican, women and men dancing almost naked on the streets, we don't want this thing called carnival". A trader at the watt market who saw carnival as a compromise of our indigenous culture had this to say "this oyibo people wan spoil our culture, we don't practice culture like this. Carnival is not our culture, they are just spoiling our culture, I don't like it and I will not allow my children to practice it, no". Despite these reactions and many more, the impact of diasporic cultural festivals on the homeland cannot be overemphasized. Today, the historical and cultural themes celebrated in the carnivals are designed to cater for the needs of both the national and foreign tourists. The events are organized in a way to address the cultural, social, and economic and tourism needs of the people. The benefits are enormous but this study, will concentrate on three; Individual and Social impact, Economic, and Global impacts and benefits. Our case study of some diasporic festivals in Nigeria like the 'Carnival Calabar', 'Carni Riv', Abuja Carnival' shows a considerable level of development of cultural tourism and multi-cultural festivals. It further examines the positive roles that these diasporic cultural activities play as a driving force in

redefining community relations, encouraging cultural tourism and alleviating poverty in the grass roots.

a. Individual and Social Impact

In Richard Robbins' 'Cultural Anthropology' (2013), the author takes us through a process of change experienced by all humans in different societies. According to the author: We live in an era in which we will witness (if we have not already) the extinction of a way of life that is more than 100,000 years old. We know that 10,000 years ago, virtually all human beings lived in small – scale nomadic groups of 30 to 100 people, gathering wild vegetable foods and hunting large and small game as they had for hundreds of years. He continues. Today, virtually no human beings anywhere in the world live by hunting and gathering, although every society in existence is descended from such people. Hunters and gatherers are the common ancestors of us all. (40)

From Robbins' approach to change in what he titles 'The Death of a Way of Life', our research witnesses a Socio-cultural impact result from the interaction between 'community dwellers' and 'tourists' during diasporic cultural festivals. The study observes that the transitory nature of a visit to a historic site allows for interactions and understanding to be established between the tourists and the locals. In an oral interview with some of the tourists during the 2014 Carnival Calabar tagged 'Celebration time', some of the respondents revealed that they have attended at least three editions carnival in Calabar. According to Watson, the people of Calabar were very welcoming and accommodating and he observes that his visit became more and more interesting and promising and he felt relaxed because he now has a family in Cross River state as a result of his participation in Carnival Calabar.

In another interview, a local trader who makes beaded carnival souvenirs for tourists and carnival lovers who visit the city during the season attests to the fact that his continuous interaction with foreigners during carnival activities has transformed his life tremendously. He observes that his perception of carnival has changed with each carnival due to his constant interactions with foreign visitors. He also noticed a transformation of the quality of life of the people in his area. Those who are involved in carnival activities tend to be busier during the period and have become suppliers of carnival products for various carnivals. "It has helped my family in so many ways, I design costumes for many carnivals, Abuja etc, I don't rest, I now have a big designing shop and I also have many workers working for me to ensure that we deliver the costumes perfectly and on time. I also discover that my costumes get better and better as I also contact other international carnivals for ideas, I love the celebration, and it has changed my life and that of the people around me", (a local designer in Calabar).

Fig. 1 below shows a display of Carnival costumes made by Okpoke a carnival costume designer for one of the famous bands in the Carnival Calabar. According to Okpoke who is a theater arts graduate, designing elaborate carnival costumes have transformed his career and has given him an edge over his contemporaries. The designer looks forward to the carnival season and is grateful for the Carnival for transforming his career and giving him an opportunity to touch the lives of many young people whom he trains and employs for carnival costumes production. This transformation of self and individual life styles as a result of the carnivals is also observed among young female participants who play very significant roles in individual band presentations. And as Robins states further,:

When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed. They will be interested in his general socioeconomic status, his conception of self, his attitude towards them, his competence, his trustworthiness, etc. Although some of this information seems to be sought almost as an end in itself, there are usually quite practical reasons for acquiring it. Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him. Informed in these ways, the others will know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response from him. (218)

During the carnivals, young women are invited by carnival bands to play very major and significant roles in the interpretation of the carnival themes. These participants notice a considerable change in their modelling careers as they continue to play roles in the carnival. Mercy, a Lagos based model observed that her modelling career has improved tremendously, and the demand for her services has also increased, and this has in turn shaped her way of life and her dress sense. Whenever she is called for a job, she works hard and ensures that her personal appearance meets the needs of her employers. Catherine, remarks that her involvement in carnival has shaped her life, she now has a modelling agency where she trains young ladies on carnival performances, she also testified that the money she now makes from carnival helps her to pay her fees and that of her siblings.

b. Economic Impact

This paper initially reviews literature related to the diasporic cultural activities and its role in modifying and developing national festivals in developing African communities with particular attention to the festivals in francophone Africa. The national festivals play a vital role in the promotion and sustenance of cultural tourism in developing communities. They are seen as an avenue for the creation of opportunities for the grass roots and the community at large. Diasporic cultural festivals in turn create opportunities for community oriented festivals as they are seen as a driving force for the modification and projection of indigenous traditional festivals.

Fig. 1 : Locally made Carnival Calabar costumes depicting various themes



Source : Cross River State Carnival Commission

According to Arturo Escobar, (1995)

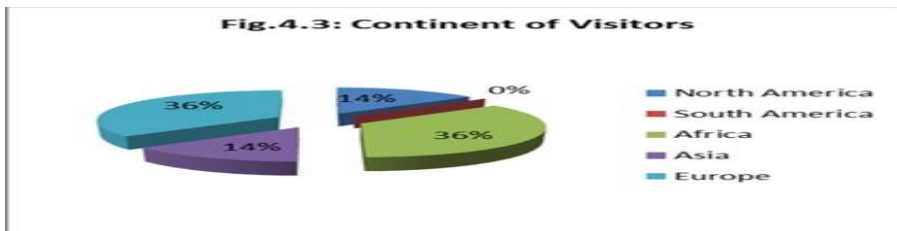
Development fostered a way of conceiving of social life as a technical problem, as a matter of rational decision and management to be entrusted to that group of people- the development professionals- whose specialized knowledge allegedly qualified them for the task. Instead of seeing change as a process routes in the interpretation of each society’s history and cultural tradition... these professionals sought to devise mechanisms and procedures to make societies fit a preexisting model that embodied the structures and functions of modernity.

Like sorcerers, ‘n apprentices, the development professionals awakened once again the dream of reason that, in their hands, as in earlier instances, produced a troubling reality (40).

Culture plays a significant role in tourism development. Cultural and multi-cultural festivals and events stimulate the economy of every society. According to Medlik (2003), “cultural tourism is seen as “special interest holidays (vacations) essentially motivated by cultural interests, such as trips and visits to historical sites and monuments, museums and galleries, artistic performances and festivals, as well as lifestyles of communities”, he goes further as he describes the term thus, “activities with a cultural content as parts of trips and visits with a combination of pursuits” (48) . This special interest is further motivated by carnivals as the product causes a demand pull and attracts a large flow of tourists from various continents of the world and offers new opportunities for both the rural and urban dwellers. Figure 2 below, represents a percentage of international tourists during the Calabar Christmas Festival which the Carnival is the most lucrative cultural activity. For instance, a tourist who visits Nigeria for the Rivers carnival (Carni Riv) will always be attracted to the Cross River Carnival (Carnival Calabar) as the two diasporic festivals are celebrated within the same period of time. Furthermore, this tourist who participates in these two carnivals will equally plan to visit some notable historical sites in the state before concluding his holiday, this visits will bring about interactions and exchange which will result in economic transformation and development.

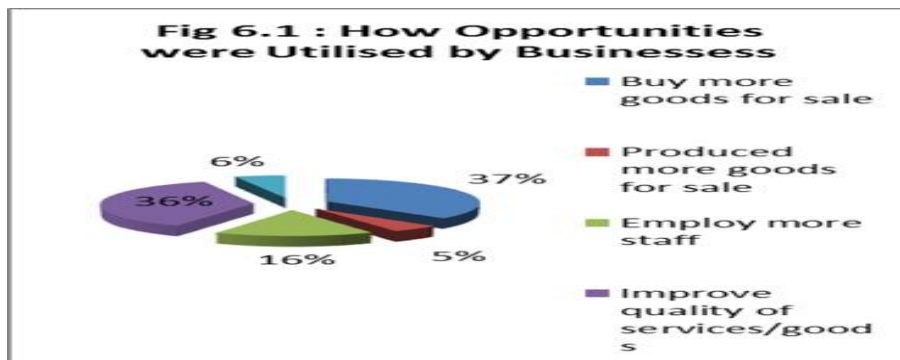
As indicated in fig. (2 & 3), the festival and its cultural activities attract a large number of foreign tourists and the presence of these visitors has a considerable impact on the growth and development of the grassroots. Fig. (3), shows business opportunities during the festival and observes that the festival season recorded a high level of business opportunities. Some traders interviewed at selected spots during the season also observed that the cultural activities attracted more visitors and as a result caused a demand pull of goods and services. A shoe trader at the Carnival Village at the cultural center noted that he closed five hours later throughout the festival season than non-festival seasons. This was as a result of increase in the number of buyers.

Fig. 2 : Statistics of tourists



.Source: Cross River State Tourism Bureau, Continent of Visitors 2012

Fig. 3: Business opportunities during festival



Source: Cross River State Tourism Bureau, 2012

Furthermore, restaurants and fast food joints are on the rise especially on carnival routes. These outfits see the festival season as a boost to their business. A staff of the Crunchies fast food, one of the fast growing restaurants that has keyed into the needs of tourists, revealed that the company is planning to open yet another branch on a strategic route. The respondent noted that the festival period records the highest sales period for the company and though he does not know the exact location for the proposed branch but he is sure it will not be off the carnival route. When asked why take advantage of the carnival route? A Staff of the Good luck food on Marian road observes that the company made more than 75% sales during and immediately after the carnival season.

Fig. 3: Bolé and fish seller



Source: nairaland.com

Furthermore, a home-based seller of the popular bolé and fish at the calabarwood junction remarks as follows, “ unek mmo emi awam eti eti, akpa mesi fop etak ukom ition mma ye carton iyak kiet, edi mokut nte ke ini carnival mfofop etak ukom edip ye carton iyak duop ke usen”. “ this festival has helped a lot, initially I was satisfied roasting 5 bunches of plantain and at least a carton of fish, but I have noticed that during the carnival, I roast not less than 20 bunches of plantain and about 10 cartons of fish”. (our translation).

The above is a local delicacy that has become not only a national attraction for Nigerians but has been transformed to a readymade snack for tourists during the carnival season. Both local and foreign tourists cluster around the local barbecues on the carnival routes while awaiting performances from the various carnival bands. This indicates that tourists today are more attracted to the type and quality of products and services available to them at the destinations, thus as Lawson

(1995) maintains, “the emphasis is shifting from competition between (destinations) on the basis of price to the management of destinations in order to present a consistent range of services intended to satisfy particular types of tourists” (26)

c. Global Impact

The case studies here explore the development of cultural tourism and multi-cultural festivals, and the positive roles they play in solidifying community relations with development of ¹the cultural tourism. They further highlight the global impact of diasporic cultural festivals/ carnivals on indigenous traditional festivals. The aesthetic presentation and depiction of cultural themes have a positive effect and on indigenous festivals. In diasporic carnivals, elaborate props are used in an artistic manner to depict cultural themes. This gives a different and spectacular effect to the meaning and the cultural value presented. In fig. (4) below a combination of the famous indigenous monolith of the Nkarasi people of Ikom in Cross river state and other elaborate props being used by one of the competing bands to depict wealth, power and royalty respectively. In this presentation, the Monolith which is a symbolic traditional artifact of the Nkarasi people is a tourist attraction in Cross river state. The creativity involved in the production of this carnivalized traditional artifact is made possible by youths of Cross river state trained during a workshop organized by the Cross river state government in collaboration with the Trinidad and carnival commission. This workshop was a strategy to attract a specific tourist market, manage the demand for the tourism product and subsequently bring about sustainable tourism development.

This is what researchers like Guiltinan & Paul (1994) reveal when they explain that, “firms may find some segments more attractive than others because of variations in segment size, growth potential, or competition” (71). And in the case of this study, there is need to consider Kastenholz, (2002) postulation that, “because of the existence of certain features of the destination, best fitting the needs of specific segments and because of overall destination development concerns”(79). Thus, destinations should see this as an opportunity to enhance the growth of their destinations. This can further be backed up by Getz (1997) as he sees cultural festivals as events which “constitute one of the most exciting and fastest growing forms of leisure, business, and tourism-related phenomena.”(1), thus investing on this form of tourism product will enhance the growth and development of the grassroots

Fig. 4 : Elaborate props depicting themes of wealth, power and royalty



Source : Cross River State Carnival Commission 2013

6. Cultural festivals in Francophone Africa

There are a good number of cultural festivals in francophone communities which attract a large number of foreign visitors. These festivals are historical and contribute positively to the cultural tourism of the various communities. As recorded in the [africaguide.com](http://www.africaguide.com) web:

The Fêtes des Masques, (Festival of Masks) held in November in the region of Man is one of Ivory Coast's biggest and best-known festivals. Competitions between villages are held in order to find the best dancers, and to pay homage to the forest spirits embodied in the intricate masks. Another important event is the week long carnival in Bouaké each March. (<http://www.africaguide.com>)

Notable amongst these cultural festivals is the Carnival in Bouaké. This carnival is considered in this study as one of the diasporic traditions imported into Ivory Coast by franco-diasporic communities. The festivals have a high cultural benefit to the people of Ivory Coast. The committees responsible for the organization of the Carnival use historical and cultural themes and symbols to attract a large inflow of foreign carnival lovers. For instance, the crafts, the masks are very symbolic to the Boualés and the history attached to these masks are of great value to the culture of the people. According to findings, 'Fetes des masques' as described by some respondents is a very significant and a highly traditional feast which symbolizes a period of honor and reverence to the spirits who are believed to be the custodians of the peace and security in the town called 'Man'.

Another significant annual festival is the Ngongo of the Sawa people of Cameroun. In an interview with some of the natives of the community, the study observes that the festival is very symbolic. It symbolizes the unity of the people as it was the traditional festival that brought together the coastal people of Douala, Yabassi, Bakoko, Bassa and Batanga. It was also revealed that the name 'Sawa' symbolized this coming together.

According to respondents Mr Etim a born and bred son of Bakoko, during the festival, all the traditional leaders of the various communities that make up the 'Sawa' community would be present to receive the goodwill message for their communities. Mami Marseille claimed that her family had benefitted a great deal from the messages of hope and that even though most of them (her children and grandchildren) now live in diaspora, that the Ngongo festival is a festival they can never miss as a family as that symbol of togetherness connects the diaspora to their homeland. For her, the Ngongo is a homecoming for Francophone living in diaspora, some even send representatives just so as not to miss whatever goodwill the gods have for the year.

It is worthy to note also that the presence of the diaspora culture has influenced the festival in a positive way. For instance, certain traditional attires and costumes worn by the masqueraders have been modernized. One of the natives observed that the masks which is an important material for this celebration has in recent times been 'carnivalised' and looks more like the masks used in Caribbean carnivals with paints and shines. This cultural activity, has become for the grass roots a means of economic development and a boost to the tourism industry of the Sawa people in particular and Cameroun in general.

Another notable festival is the Vaudou festival of the Ouidah people in Benin republic of West Africa. It is worthy to note here that Margic is a way of life for the Beninese, and according to a trader at the Marché Dantopa, “le Vaudou chez nous c’est la fete, la celebration et en generale, la maniere de vivre. Le Vaudou montre notre richesse et aussi cela signale qu’il existe la paix parmi nous”. “To us, Voudou is a festival, celebration and in general, a way of life. Voudous shows our wealth and also this indicates the existence of peace amongst us”. Thus, contrary to popular belief that le vaudou is evil and fetish, the religion or practice depicts peace to the Ouida people.

In a post on the white-magic-help-net.com on the topic, “Voodoo: Principles, History and Gods”, it is believed that voodoo started in Africa, and was transported by slavery to other parts of the world. However, this study sees the voodoo festival as cultural activity that needs to be transformed to encourage development in the tourism sector as well as development of the grass root. This transformation can be made possible by the diasporic festival. In a carnival parade for instance, the Voudou culture can be used to depict peace, wealth in a story line. This depiction will expose to the spectators and other cultures of the world the positive symbolism of voodoo practice as well as project the voodoo culture. Though this study observes that le vaudou to different people is interpreted in different ways, the presentation in a carnival theme will be in context with the carnival need at the time.

The objective of this study thus, is to introduce the diasporic cultural festival to the people of Sawa and other francophone communities to enhance transformation of their cultural practices and community development which will in the long run build community capacity and address issues for grass root development. This objective is in line with the declaration and call by the Mr. Perez President of the UNESCO in the report of the commission on culture and development in 1995 thus, “The challenge to humanity is to adopt new ways of thinking, new ways of acting, new ways of organizing itself in society, in short, new ways of living. The challenge is also to promote different paths of development, informed by a recognition of how cultural factors shape the way in which societies conceive their own futures and choose the means to attain these futures (11).

However, the introduction of carnival will ensure the parade of not only specific cultural display but will make available an attractive tourism product that comprises various indigenous francophone and other foreign festivals in one package depicting a theme. This in turn will create a tourism market and attract a larger number of both national and foreign tourists and will help build up the festival celebration and create a marketable image for the sector.

7. Government commitment

Fig. 5: Carnival Calabar dry run flg off



Source: www.CrossRiverWatch.com, 2014 2nd Carnival dry run

Diasporic festivals have great potentials of generating revenue and empowering the grassroots since they are meant to cater for out of region or foreign visitors. As cited by Razaq Raj in “the impact of festivals on cultural tourism” Getz (1997) underlines, “events have the potential to generate a vast amount of tourism when they cater to out-of-region visitors, grants, or sponsorships, of direct or indirect intent”. Thus, to encourage economic development, government commitments to support, encourage and promote these tourism events becomes pertinent. In most developing African communities today, diasporic cultural festivals have come to stay and individuals support and participation has gone a long way to encourage grass roots development of the regions while seeking to improve the quality of life and ensuring mutual benefit and shared responsibilities among the members of the communities involved.

In a post of 21st December 2014 by Archibong Jeremiah, on the CrossRiverWatch web the Chairman of the Cross River State Carnival Commission, Mr. Gab Onah has expressed high hope that soonest; Cross Riverians will see that the privatization of the carnival is the right choice. The Chairman Onah made the assertion while flagging off the 2014 carnival dry run in Calabar (see fig. (5)). The Chairman and many Cross riverians see the carnival as a tool for grass root transformation and development. Onah thus states that, “The carnival is a community event, designed to save the people through their livelihood, the carnival is a life changer”.

The Government of Cross river state has not relented in its effort to sustain the diasporic cultural activity as it is seen as a tourism product that has generated and improved the internally generated revenue of the state. According to the CrossRiverWatch web “the state governor, Senator Liyel Imoke had while addressing members of the Air Transport Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (ATSSAN), who visited him in his office in October disclosed that the carnival has been growing the IGR of the state by 50 percent”. The Governor maintains that: “We are positioning Cross River State as an economy that is service driven and has traffic all year round. The Calabar Festival alone helps us grow our Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) up to 50 percent, so we need to sustain this with world class infrastructure at the airport and other major entrances to the state”.

Thus, Government needs to support and promote events as part of their strategies for economic development, nation building and cultural tourism. These events in turn are seen as important tool for attracting visitors and building image within different communities. For instance, Government effort in transforming and

rebranding the Lebokun festival of the Ugep people of Cross river state with awards to Mr and Miss Lebokun and other motivational packages is an effort to promote and maintain the cultural heritage of the Ugep people and to make the festival a marketable tourism product. According to Stiernstrand (1996), "the economic impact of tourism arises principally from the consumption of tourism products in a geographical area". For McDonnell, Allen and O' Toole (1999), "tourism related services, which include travel, accommodation, restaurants, shopping are the major beneficiaries of the event". All these as observed in this study yields grass roots development. Today in Calabar and other major cities of Nigeria, where carnivals have become a major tourism product, Carnival business has contributed greatly to the growth and development of the grass roots. A good number of carnival costume designers have sprang up in these cities, most of the inhabitants who come from poor family backgrounds can comfortably provide for their families today as a result of their involvement in carnival costume productions and other artifacts.

In an oral interview with a designer of one of the biggest carnival band in the State, Blessing testifies that carnival has touched her life and that of her family in a positive manner. The respondent is one of the beneficiaries of the Carnival training for skills and acquisition in Carnival production organized by the Cross River State government in collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival Band's Association for communities and community members. This was one of government's effort in ensuring community participation, skills acquisition, poverty alleviation and grass roots development through diasporic cultural festival.

The designer asserts to the fact that the training had added more value to her profession. She has become more creative and since the carnival is a highly competitive festival, she has to think outside the box, dig into many cultures of the world to enable her come out with very spectacular and competitive carnival costumes that equally depicts the carnival theme. In other states diasporic cultural festival has also made remarkable impact. Though as already observed, carnival is still not totally accepted by Nigerians but Government effort and commitment through policy formulations has served as an orientation. In a post of May 8th, 2015 on the vanguard.com, Mr Adeogun Adeola, the Chief Organiser of 2015 Lagos State Carnival, remarked that :

N1 billion would be generated from sales of handcraft and cultural memorabilia. "Most of the items that will be sold there are made by the special skill acquisition centres established by the state government. "We have invested so much in this year's carnival and we look forward to great harvest and satisfaction of tourists. "We have many products to be sold to most of the attendees and lovers of traditional attires. "Students from the state's special skill acquisition centers will have an exhibition of their product. Lagos state which began its carnival celebrations in 2010 sees carnival as "aimed at celebrating the state's ancestry and her economic growth". Lagos state being the first capital of Nigeria, is today seen as a center for both local and international commerce. The state has experienced substantial growth in every sector of its economy and the carnival is welcomed and seen as another way of encouraging growth in the tourism sector through its rich cultural dispositions.

Fig. 6 : Durbar festival in Abuja Carnival parade



Source: vietnamnews.vn, Abuja Carnival

The Abuja Carnival is another remarkable diasporic cultural event in Nigeria. According to a post on the 29th of May 2015, by the nigerianbulletin.com :

The Abuja carnival has come to stay. It is an annual event that showcases the rich cultural values of the Nigerian nation, and reflects the diversity of ethnic expressions in Nigeria. It is a city carnival that is supported by the Nigerian Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and usually organized by the Carnival Roadshow Company. It is advised by the Abuja Carnival Management Committee and promises to be one of the best cultural events in the country. It is worthy to note here that the carnival is still not accepted by many in the Capital city as they still consider it as against the Nigerian culture. In another post titled ‘Some Organizations jettison attending the Abuja Carnival, posted on the 29th of May by the nigerianbulletin : “It is surprising to note that some organizations jettison attending the Abuja carnival despite the promotions and the culture it promotes. Several news organizations like the News247 shunned the event in 2014, and Leadership newspaper also chose to stay away last year. Some prominent persons and organizations regard it a show of shame, but that does not stop the show from getting larger with more sponsors every year. The rejection of the diasporic cultural activity by some renowned organizations in the country has not altered Government’s commitment to the project as it is seen as a tool for transforming and developing the grass root.

The Abuja carnival draws participants from around the world. In Fig. (7) below shows Carnival lovers from neighboring African countries and abroad costume to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the country in the carnival parade. In Fig. (6) above the indigenous Durbar festival is featured in the carnival parade. This display is a section in the carnival parade that depicts the storyline presented by the carnival group.

Social relationship between Diasporas and the homeland

Cultural tourism as defined by Silberberg (1995), is “visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, and scientific or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a community, region, group or institution” , (361). Africans in diaspora are drawn partly by the historical content of the diasporic festivals and partly by the desire to trace their homeland.

Smith (2009) on another hand sees these festivals as “passive, active and interactive engagement with culture(s) and communities...” (17).

The Caribbean carnival which is considered in this study as one of the preserved African values though influenced by external culture is one prominent tourism product which attracts a large number of both local and foreign tourists into the major cities of developing communities in Africa and is significantly seen as a ‘Home coming’ for Africans living in diaspora. During these carnival/ festival seasons, a good number of Africans living in diaspora seize the opportunity to return home....

The Lagos carnival which gets its root from the Brazilian carnival is seen every Easter as a homecoming for Africans in diaspora. Lagos celebrates her life, her culture, and her people in. The themes of her carnival attracts display of various cultural festivals in one carnival parade. In Fig. (8) below, masqueraders are seen celebrating what is described by one of the spectators as welcoming home my lost friends. A woman in her early 60’s looks forward to the annual Lagos carnival. Her interest in carnival was ignited in 2012 when she received a call from a lost friend who said he was in Nigeria for the Lagos carnival, she thus sees the festival as “ inu mi dun pupo nitoripe ariye yi ti jeki awon ore ati ebi mi pelu awon omo Africa tin won owale tip e kiwon wale”. “I am happy; this festival makes me happy. It has brought home my friends and relatives and has created opportunity for other African people who were lost to come back home”. (Our translation). To Mama, the dances and gorgeous costumes of the beautiful African women is an indication of welcome, hospitality, love, peace and unity for Africans in diaspora.

Fig. 8: Costumed women during the Lagos Carnival 2013



Source: Getty Image, Lagos Carnival 201

Fig. 9: “Carnivalized” African at Lagos carnival depicting the carnival theme
Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing discussions, it can safely be stated that diasporic Carnival was not birthed in Africa, but it came into Africa through the diasporic communities. The presence of this diasporic carnival has modified, transformed and preserved African cultural festivals e.g. Carnival Calabar, Abuja Carnival, Lagos carnival just to mention but a few. This diasporic cultural activity that has found its way into Africa, and Nigeria in particular has transformed the image and content of the traditional and cultural festivals, for instance, a typical carnival parade is a display of various indigenous festivals and the use of certain prestigious artifacts to depict and interpret carnival themes. From this study, we discover that most of these cultural festivals and artifacts were either on the verge of extinction or not well known but their presence in the carnival presentations of the various bands and

carnival groups, have added more value to these festivals, projected the culture of the people and made the festival a marketable tourism product. According to Getz, (1997), "Events have the potential to generate a vast amount of tourism when they cater to out-of-region visitors, grants, or sponsorships".

Diasporic carnival accords indigenous cultural festivals the potentials since each carnival parade displays a combination of various indigenous festivals. This embodiment of festivals in a 'carnivalized' form attracts not only national tourists but also a large number of foreign tourists into the francophone communities. For instance, Voodoo which signifies peace and wealth to the Ouidah people as already revealed in this study can be displayed to depict the themes of wealth and peace in a carnival parade. This depiction will not only display the beauty and culture of the Ouidah people but it will as well popularize and transform the festival and give it a positive tourism image and a marketable tourism product. This transformation will in turn bring about economic, social and individual development for the grass roots

The role of government in supporting and promoting diasporic cultural events as part of their strategies for economic development has also been emphasized. The study has also presented diasporic cultural festivals as an important tool for attracting visitors and building image within different communities. Government has played a dedicated role in the promotion of this tourism product in Nigeria, the presence of Government support and commitment has helped in the promotion and transformation of the grass roots and brought about development in the tourism sector of the states involved. In francophone communities like the Cameroun, Cote d'Ivoire, Repubilque du Benin, Senegal etc where there is the existence of multi-cultural activities, to ensure that these festivals are groomed to standards for promoting cultural tourism, government and community leaders should introduce and encourage the celebrations of diasporic cultural festivals and carnivals, this will in turn ensure that the celebration of their gods, traditional beliefs, origins, culture as well as their ancestors are done in such a way that such celebrations become a marketable tourism product for economic growth and development. This will further bring about Social mobilization and grassroots development and as a result help to promote the cultural heritage of the people and add more value to their cultural celebrations. Finally, this study argues that diasporic cultural activities and carnivals provide an opportunity for the celebration of local identity in a modern and carnivalised way, promotes community empowerment and creates tourism for the host community.

Reference

- Aboyade, O. Nigerian Public Enterprises as an organizational Dilemma. Administration for development in Nigeria. Cotins, Lagos: African Educatin Press. (1981) : 84
- Adeola, Adeogun. LASG to generate N1b from 2015 Lagos State Carnival - <http://www.vanguardngr.com> retrieved on 30th May, 2015
- Banks, J.A., Banks, & McGee, C. A). Multicultural education. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon. . (1989)
- Brewer Mason J. American Negro Folklore, quoted by Hoyt Fuller. The Forms and Focus of Black Literature: 1746-1860. Black Books Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 11.

Diasporic culture, Cultural transformation.....

- Effa-Attoe Stella A. Women and Economic Development in Nigeria. Calabar Journal of Liberal Studies; An interdisciplinary Journal. Vol ix No. 1 (2006):155
- Culler, Jonathan. "In Pursuit of Signs." *Daedalus*. (1977) 106, 95-112
- Escobar, Arturo. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (1995)
- Getz, D. *Event Management and Event Tourism*. New York, Cognizant Communications Corporation. (1997), 1
- Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday. (1959)
- Kastenholz, E., 2002, "The role and marketing implications of destination images on tourist behavior: The case of northern Portugal." phd dissertation, Universidade de Aveiro. UMI dissertation Services. 79
- Lawson, R. "Demographic Segmentation." In *Tourism Marketing and Management Handbook*. Eds. Witt, S. and L. Moutinho. London: Prentice Hall,. (1995), 306-315.
- Medlik, S. *Dictionary of Travel Tourism & Hospitality*. Third edition. Butterworth Heinemann, Oxford. (2003), 48
- Northrup, D. *Trade without rulers: pre-colonial economic development in South-Eastern Nigeria*. London: OUP. (1978): 147
- Onah, Gab. *Calabar Carnival Is A Life Changer*. www.CrossRiverWatch.com retrieved on 22nd May 2015
- Perez, Javier. *Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development*. France: EGOPRIM. 1995
- Raj, Razaq. In "The impact of festivals on cultural tourism" <http://www.nitingham.ac> retrieved on the 17 of September, 2015
- Robinsons, Richard. *Cultural Anthropology: A Problem – Based Approach*. Canada, Wadsworth. 6th Ed. (2013)
- Silberberg, T. Cultural tourism and business opportunities for museums and heritage sites. *Tourism Management*, 16(5), (1995), 361-365.
- Smith, M. K. *Issues in cultural tourism studies*. Oxon: Routledge. (2009), 17
- Webster's New World College Dictionary. Wiley Publishing, Inc., Cleveland, Ohio. 2010
- WTO. 2001a. *Cultural Heritage Tourism Development – A Report on the International Conference on Cultural Tourism*. World Tourism Organization Conference Proceedings. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.
- WTO. 2001b. *Global Forecasts and Profiles of Market Segments. Tourism 2020 Vision*. Volume 7. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.
- Uya, Edet O. *African Diaspora and the Black Experience in New World Slavery*. Calabar: Clear lines printers. 3rd Ed. (2005)