Assessing Cultural Management of Abuja Carnival

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Culture is a major instrument for identifying a people. Over time, Nigeria’s diverse cultures have been celebrated with fun-fare and pageantry for tourism carnivals. The management process of such cultural celebrations becomes worthy of study. The concept of Cultural management is basically out to examine the influence of administration on a culturally-based festival like the Abuja carnival. The idea is to examine the past visions of the Carnival in comparison with the present challenges with the view of clearly solving such problems to ensure a more globally accepted product. The study employs the deductive and analytical methods of research to investigate the concept of Cultural management in Abuja Carnival. In the deductive method, we derive some vital information relevant to the study through interviews with some Artistic directors of the Abuja carnival. For the analytical method, we assess the cultural management through the review of related literatures, magazines and performance brochures. Among others, the study reveals that Abuja Carnival suffers serious funding challenge from its major sponsor which is the federal government of Nigeria. Also, despite having the same preparatory process, the approaches of the studied directors vary according to their perception of what a carnival should be which does not maintain the overall vision of the carnival. It also came to the fore that certain external factors such as national security challenge contribute to the factors militating against the targeted increase in foreign troupe participation in the Carnival. The study concludes that Abuja carnival have increased private sector sponsorship which will lessen the bureaucratic challenge from the major sponsor. Furthermore, private-sector driven sponsorship will accommodate healthy competition and encourage better result in revenue generation among others.

INTRODUCTION

The development process of every country is basically anchored on the management process of her resources. Therefore, the status of cultural heritage as resource can never be overemphasized thereby upholding the views of Eskamp that Nowadays, culture is a resource (26). Consequently, several attempts should be geared towards projecting each country’s culture alongside global ideals to achieve the desired international relevance. The success of cultural projection is largely dependent on its management process.

Reconciling the nature of the Abuja Carnival and cultural management within the Carnival milieu would be assessed against the idea of culture as a resource. The essence is to briefly review the past success, tackle the present challenges facing the carnival with the view of proffering feasible cost-effective means of promoting the sustenance of the carnival.
This is with the intent of locating and celebrating the fusion in the seemingly polarized culture diversity, thereby promoting the cultural image of the country.

The socio-economic potentials of such effective cultural management process would reposition the consumptive image of the country from a consumptive economy to a productive one thereby increasing the chances of further development courtesy of just proper cultural management of existing cultural resources.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded on systems of theory. It is a theory that dwells extensively on the wholistic assessment of an organization to ascertain the impact of organic relationship between the diverse units on the main organization viewed as a system comprising several units. Proponents of this theory include Alexander Laszlo (1997), Stanley Krippner (1997), Robert Lussier (1994), etc. Basically, this paper adopts the system theory because Abuja carnival is envisaged as an organically functioning entity with obvious challenges in terms of mode of operations and the targeted results. System theory is adopted stressing that an organic enterprise such as Abuja carnival despite its numerous departments and sub-departments should firstly be assessed as a whole before any attempt to understand the functioning of its diverse units.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE AND MANAGEMENT

The nature of the concept of culture can best be understood through a brief review of existing scholarly literatures on it. Considering the vast nature of the concept, this study would limit itself to the tangible aspect of culture. Culture according to Waffie:

... is a concept which came in vogue in the 20th century. It is derived from the German word “kulture” which was commonly used in the natural sciences. However, it is used, in the sociological sense to mean the process of bringing up individuals, groups and institutions along a predetermined line of values, norms and meaning pattern in a given society. Some scholars use it in reference to distinctive features characterizing particular societies. Others recognize it as a pattern of thinking and doing that runs through the activities of the people making them distinct from all others. It is also used to mean the learned way of adapting to the changes in environment. It incorporates ideas, sentiments, values, objects, actions and tendencies (54).

The above definition is an attempt to summarize the concept of culture. This bears in mind the peculiarities of culture within a specific place and time which must be inter-generational. Further upholding this view, Henslin avers that culture involves the language, beliefs, values, norms, behaviours and even material objects that are passed from one generation to the next (39). The researcher slightly contends with the view since it does not encompass specifically the arts of a people. Notwithstanding, the view shows that culture as a process seldom ends but constantly transforms. This justifies why Ayakoroma further asserts that culture is:

... the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours (5).
This view is much more detailed since it takes cognizance of both material and immaterial aspects. Besides, the perception of culture as a meaning-making process incorporates the arts both performing and literary. This is encapsulated by Olanrewaju’s further reaffirmation thus:

Culture comprises material, institutional, philosophical and creative aspects. The material aspect has to do with artifacts in its broadcast form (namely: tools, clothing, food, utensils, housing e.t.c.); the institutional deals with the political, social, legal and economic structures erected to help achieve material and spiritual objectives; while the philosphical is concerned with ideas, beliefs and values; the creative concerns of a people’s literature (oral, written as well as their visual and performing arts) which are normally moulded by a well to mould other aspects of culture (71).

In the light of the foregoing definitions, a vital aspect of culture which is the sense of judgement should be considered especially from the aesthetic point of view. Since Nigeria is culturally heterogenous, each cultural performance should be assessed based on the peculiarities of its host culture. This is because a central yardstick for assessing aesthetics would be difficult. This is further corroborated by Anigala that:

The accepted cultural values and aesthetic sensibilities are bound to be reflected in such … performances. It is therefore reasonable to advocate that any evaluation or analysis and appreciation of (such) traditional African performance should be based on the cultural values and aesthetics of the people from which its originates (25).

This simply implies that the criteria for assessing the aesthetic essence of any cultural fiesta in a country like Nigeria should be one that is conversant with the intricacies of the country’s heterogenous cultural heritage(s). From the ongoing, one easily deciphers that the nature, content and modus operandi of what constitutes culture, varies from place to place and that the judgement of such is subject to the knowledge of the host community or state.

The success or failure of virtually every human transaction is anchored on the concept of management. The concept of management tasks according to Boddy entails…those of planning, organizing, leading and controlling the use of resources to add value to them (13). Since management is the process of utilizing limited resources to optimally achieve the best set target through cost-effective mode in planning, organizing, leading and controlling of all channels involved; the determinant factor of success or failure of every human transaction is anchored in managerial effectiveness and efficiency. Corroborating this view, Certo summarizes managerial effectiveness as,

… use or organizational resources in meeting organizational goals. If organizations are using their resources to attain their goals, the managers are said to be effective … (while) managerial efficiency is defined in terms of the proportion of total organizational resources that contribute to productivity during the manufacturing/production process (9).

From the foregoing, it is important to observe that the level of resources allocated to overt organizational task and the process of utilizing such can never be underestimated in management of any organization or process. But when an organizational goal receives limited resources for a task, can managerial
effectiveness and efficiency be optimally achieved? The implication of this question would be subsequently revisited in this study.

**Exemplifying the concept of Cultural Management**

The successful sustenance of every culture is anchored on the managerial abilities of the experts and the processes therein; hence, the realization of one is anchored on the other. This entails re-interpreting previously existing heritages to fit into the modern trend of globalization. While justifying this opinion, Eskamp opines that:

The past has to make sense in an ever-changing Present. This generates a continuous ‘identity crisis’ as a chronic condition, afflicting nations as well as individuals. A permanent area of tension is created between the danger of losing, distorting and expropriating traditional forms of cultural expression and the need to create new forms (31).

From the above, it is pertinent to observe that any attempt to recreate an existing cultural heritage in a more trendy manner suitable for global consumption without losing the peculiar originalities of such culture of displacing their identify, is the crux of cultural management. This is because when the rich cultural heritage of the past is not properly managed, it does not just get obsolete but is gradually lost. This view justifies why Awodiya reiterates that the cultural manager is a man of versatility with organizational ability who designs an environment in which people can best perform and accomplish their objectives (43). This explains why in a personal interview, Yerima states that:

Cultural management is the understanding of the position of a culture within the challenges of modernity. It entails how culture can be used to develop a particular group of people or what a particular group of people are and the cultural strength of a country. It entails the commercialization of a culture.(NP)

The researcher does not totally agree with his view on commercialization of culture. This is because management takes place in non-commercial ventures as well. While attempting to further exemplify the concept in a personal interview, Bakare avers:

The management of all the dimensions of our culture as a people in such a way that those dimensions and the culture itself serves us a people socially, diplomatically, morally, economically, e.t.c. without losing the crux of originality peculiar to us the owners of the culture. It is an attempt to make sure that our culture is positively responsive to changes around our community.

While exemplifying the concept, it should be noted that the central essence is to speed up culture and development. Summarising this cultural management task of development, Eskamp sees it as … a means to an end (in) developing and transition countries (aimed at) contributing culture to a sustainable development (33). This implies that the major function of cultural management is to reconstruct the modus operandi of each chosen culture, as to project the positive strength of such culture while relegating any negative feature of such culture since its consumption – both locally and internationally, is targeted towards cultural development. Supporting this view, Oyewo submits that arts and culture have grown in importance in global reckoning thus increasing the awareness that their preservation and promotion are vital to human development and harmony in all
facets of human endeavour (4). Therefore, Cultural management best summarizes any cost-effective artistic mechanism that is employed in the preservation and projection of cultural essence of a people in the most positive manner.

Analyzing the concept of Carnival

This is a glamorous fiesta that celebrates colours, forms and life on the streets. In a personal interview Bakare summarizes it as a street party. It is the theatre of the streets; show of glamour and glitz, mind-bugging exhibition of colours/music and dances on the streets(NP). A carnival can pass for a colour exhibition, characterized by orchestration that celebrates glamorous forms amidst sequences within a specific time and place. It could be for entertainment, tourism or ritual purpose. This view explains the diverse functions a carnival performs despite its location and organizers. Upholding this view, Cremona opines that the organizers’ intention can vary widely from a purely commercial scope to more social perspective such as that allowing a community to reflect its identity, to attain recognition, or even to juxtapose itself to the prevailing culture in order to strengthen or confront it (8). The nature of a Carnival dwells extensively on creative re-interpretation of existing art or the creation of entirely new ones.

Having reviewed relevant literature, it is obvious that the position of systems theory within the context of studying the cultural management of Abuja Carnival cannot be overemphasized. This stems from the fact that the system theory recognizes that the organization is an open system because it interacts with and is affected by the external environment. This justifies Laszlo and Krippner’s opinion that systems approach have much to offer for the construction of a holistic methodology for perceptual inquiry (6). Its role in wholistic research such as Abuja carnival justifies why amongst the features of the system theory according to Lussier is the need for conceptual skills in order to understand how the subsystem interrelates and contributes to the organization as a whole e.g. the marketing, operations, financial departments, (subsystems’) actions effect each other (22). Amongst the major contributors to the theory are Alfred North Whitehead, Ludwig Von Beralanfy, Anatol Rapprot, etc. According to Lussier, the theory recognizes that the organization is an open system because it interacts with, and is affected by the external environment (22). For example, government law affect what the organization can and cannot do. The impact of this theory would be further exemplified in the course of this work.

The Abuja carnival is a festival of national unity targeted towards the celebration of the rich Nigerian cultural heritage. Its preparatory process was established in the year 2004 but officially celebrated first in 2005 by the President Olusegun Obasanjo-led administration. The Carnival is an attempt to replicate the Brazilian Carnival experience which the president had witnessed. It was designed to showcase the unity embedded in the seemingly polarized cultural heritage of Nigeria as a veritable income earner for the government. Corroborating this view, Asigbo says that It was designed to be an avenue for the showcasing of the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Nigeria, serve the much needed function of pulling in foreign exchange through promoting cultural tourism and promote unity through cultural integration (6). This target was to enliven all aspects of Nigerian culture within a Carnival milieu. The main thrust was to adapt the Carnival culture but from a Nigerian perspective devoid of the seeming nudity characterizing the Brazilian and Trinidadian experiences. This led to the appointment of Carnival Consultants. The Road Show Company of London team comprised the following persons:
The result of the activities of this team led to the inauguration of the Carnival Management Committee (CMC), under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo. The Carnival Management Committee swung into action to decide the best way to achieving the Nigeria Carnival Experience. The constituents of the carnival as resolved by the Carnival Management Committee according to Ben-Iheanacho includes:

- Street procession of Motorized Floats, each representing a particular state of the Federation/Participating Agencies/Corporate organizations/Foreign countries distinguished by unique cultural motifs.
- Carnival Grand Royal Durbar which is an assemblage of beautifully adorned horses and horsemen in artistic formations and displaying readiness to defend their lineage as well as loyalty to the ruling houses of traditional Emirates of Northern Nigeria.
- Masquerade Fiesta which offers spectacular forms, sizes, designs and shapes of one of Nigeria’s cultural heritage that has survived Western influence.
- Boat Regatta which is a breathtaking display of wealthy, artistic splendour, warfare and the sea faring heritage of the riverine parts of Nigeria.
- Traditional Music and Dance which is one of the greatest spectacles of

Nigeria’s cultural grandeur featuring a plethora of intricate, vigorous, delicate and acrobatic steps. Various side attractions including:

- Night of contemporary musical jamboree showcasing Nigeria’s award winning hip-hop, R&B superstars.
- Poetry reading, recitations and performances.
- Food fair of traditional cuisine and culinary arts
- Arts and crafts expo and fashion extravaganza
- Command performances
- Children/youth programmes (26).

The Carnival Management Committee further went ahead to set the criteria for assessing the artistry embedded in the Abuja Carnival and came up with the award system for all the activities thus:

Best costumed contingent
Best costumed masquerade
Best decorated boat
Best masquerade accompaniment
Best costumed regatta contingent
Best masquerade display
Best regatta display
Best costumed Durbars
Best Carnival street performance
Best Horsemanship Display
Best decorated float
Best Durbars accompaniment
Carnival King and Queen
Best costumed Durbars

At the end of the adoption of these criteria, Professor Ahmed was appointed the premier Director-General. He was to head other unit-heads while liaising closely with the hot Ministry of Culture and Tourism to ensure the success of the carnival experience. The carnival has been successfully held between 2005 and 2014.
under the following as Director-General and Artistic Directors.

**Directors**  
**Years**  
Professor Ahmed Yerima  
2005  
Otunba Segun Runwese  
2006  
Professor Ahmed Yerima  
2007, 2008  
Biodun Abe  
2014-present

Within the specified time interval, the Abuja Carnival has operated with the following themes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Unity in Cultural Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Theme not accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Experience culture, celebrate life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Packaging Carnival for Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Celebrate Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>The Jubilee Carnival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Carnival of Reconciliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Carnival of Peace and Harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>A people for a Century, a people forever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Building an Enduring Creative Nation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The precise dates of the Carnival since inception are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Opening and Closing Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Thursday 24th – Sunday 27th November, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Thursday 23rd – Sunday 26th November, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Monday 23rd – Thursday 26th November, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Saturday 27th – Tuesday 30th November, 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Carnival boasts of both local and international participation and/or patronage at varying degrees. The gains of the carnival includes sustaining the Carnival as a tourism product, celebrating Nigeria’s unity in diversity and promoting Abuja as the centre of Unity.

**Organizational Structure of Abuja Carnival**

The aim of establishing Abuja Carnival was to operate on a commercial basis though no verifiable fact has shown any financial status to establish either profit or loss. It enjoys strong financial support from the federal government of Nigeria with little from the private sector. It has permanent production structure with slight variation in terms of annual content and deciding personnel usually subject to availability of sponsorship. The inclusion or exclusion of each of the activities of the carnival is subject to available sponsorship. The executive structure of the carnival has the Minister of Culture and Tourism alongside his permanent secretary, as the chairman and alternate chairman respectively with the Artistic director as the CEO. The Carnival secretariat oversees technical and managerial operations via their Directors assisted by Zonal Coordinators.

The production organizational structure is chaired by the Artistic Director overseeing all logistics details such as supplies, adjudicators, transporters, awards, sponsorship. For the purpose of this study, the researcher articulates the Executive and Production organizational structures of the
Abuja Carnival diagrammatically on the next page thus:

**Diagram 1: Executive Organizational Structure of Abuja Carnival**

- Minister of Culture and Tourism (Chairman)
- Permanent Secretary (Alternate Chairman)
- Artistic Director (CEO)
- Carnival Secretariat
  - Manager (Technical)
  - Zonal Coordinator
  - Ad-hoc staff
- Manager (Marketing)
  - Zonal Coordinator
  (one for each geopolitical zone)

**Diagram 2: Production Organizational Chart**

- Artistic Director
  - Tentative Manager
  - Fleet vehicle supplier
  - Sanitation material supplier
- Artistic Director
  - Manager Operations
  - Zonal Coordinators
  - Transports
  - Cultural Media Exhibitors
  - Press Awards

**MANAGERIAL FUNCTIONS IN THE ABUJA CARNIVAL**

**Planning**

While explaining this stage of management, Conte and Langley declare that it requires setting priorities, establishing major deadlines and creating and budget. These actions mark the real beginning of how an idea turned into reality plan (5). This is the success and or failure decider of every activity. The annual planning of the Abuja Carnival is done by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism alongside the Federal Capital Territory authorities as the host city. It is at this stage of the programme that the prevalent idea or thematic framework for the year’s carnival is adopted. This forms and guides every other idea in the organic process of Abuja Carnival. Usually all the activities that comprise each year’s programme of events are fixed at this stage. The thematic preoccupation of each year decides how it is generally packaged. The planning of the Abuja carnival starts with the choice of the Carnival Management Committee. The Committee is tasked with the responsibility of supporting all mechanisms that guarantee the success of the carnival. Summarising these mechanisms Maidugu states that they include:

(a) Delimiting the cultural content of the Carnival to indicate the form, colours, numbers, etc, characterizing the event and the format of rendering these to the audience.

(b) Liaising with FCT on Logistics: The Carnival Management negotiates with the Federal Capital Territory on how best to ensure the safety, comfort and beauty of the Carnival, participants and the audience.

(c) Liaising with States on Carnival Content: The Carnival management works closely with the states through the Chief Executives of their Arts councils to update them on every latest evolution concerning the content and their mode of presentation during the Carnival. At this stage, zonal training workshops are organized for the Directors, technicians, costumiers, makeup artists across the six geo-political zones of the country.

(d) Having trained the states at the regional levels, activities are structured according to regions of predominance. Masquerading is predominantly for the South-East, South-West from the South-South and a little from North; Durbar is for the Northern region and Boat Regatta is strictly for the people of the Coastal region. All other activities lined up for the Carnival are finalized at this stage with each state’s troupe having precise information on when and what to present during the Carnival. The
different cadre of awards are sorted out before dates are fixed.  

(e) Having worked out all the modalities necessary for facilitating the Carnival, dates are fixed and publicity starts. The various committees tasked with their different assignments report to the crew heads who in turn report to the Artistic Director. The Artistic Director has the sole responsibility of declaring the planning of the Carnival adequate when compared to the set theme (31-36).

Organizing

At this stage of the carnival, management arrangements are made to ensure that every form of artistry is totally extricated of all forms of ritualistic affiliations thus rendered absolutely secular through the zonal training workshops. The actualization of all plans for the carnival is practically initiated at this stage, this delicate stage ensures smooth operations for the logistics details are generated here. All the different responsibilities usually shared into committees and presented for final ratification at this stage. Subject to the perceived challenges, offices are either merged or scrapped to reduce cost. This entails detailed articulation to ensure professionalism hence division of labour. Some key issues rectified at this state include foreign and local troupe’s performance modalities; meeting between the Artistic director; organizing Ministry of Culture and Tourism, ministry Federal Capital Territory, and the Press. The criteria for cost reduction in all spheres of the carnival, is set at this stage. The most detailed information required to enhance the success of the carnival is taken cognizance of at this stage hence the essence of sub-dividing all units into committees accountable to the artistic directors.

Staffing

It should be noted that beyond the staff of the host ministry, every staff member of the carnival is on ad-hoc appointment hereby discouraging the culture of continuity. Once the Artistic Director is chosen by the coordinating ministry of Tourism, National orientation and Culture, he recommends all other units at the national and regional levels respectively. The choice of other unit heads could be done by the host ministry; in such situations, the artistic director has no option than to co-ordinate the choice of the Ministry as expected of him the different committees, initially established during planning, are aptly staffed with ad-hoc workers from all relevant units consisting professionals from diverse backgrounds. All the process of hiring and firing of appropriate staff, as the case may be, are subject to the ratification and approval of the Organizing Ministry. There is a top-down model of command flow that ensures smooth functioning of the entire experience. From all indications, the staffing process of the carnival has seen little or no changes from inception since the exact pattern of assembling the workforce from inception still persists.

Supervising

The major supervisory role of management in Abuja Carnival rests extensively in the hands of Unit-heads or any external body empowered to do so. The major responsibility of supervising stars with the office of the Minister of Culture and Tourism and occasionally his Permanent Secretary who doubles as the alternate Chairman of the Abuja Carnival. The usual routine supervisory roles are performed by all Unit-heads especially during the preliminary, training and performance intervals. These Unit heads could be at the national or regional levels. All other directors under the Artistic Director carry out their supervisory roles which he
ratifies. At the end, the Artistic director is usually the last link between other Unitheads and the hose Ministry. Having briefly attempted a recapitulation of the basic management principles of the pre-carnival perspective, it would be worthwhile to assess the proper carnival aesthetics alongside artistry, Nigerian states participation, foreign troupe involvement and sponsorship.

Approaches of Artist Directors of the Abuja Carnival

The cultural management of the carnival is subject to the perception of the artistic director and available resources and this informs how possible problems are solved. This could be better exemplified via a brief chronological assessment of the artistic approaches of three selected artist directors under study.


Ahmed Yerima is an accomplished Playwright and Cultural Scholar. His major attention therefore tilts more towards highlighting the cultural content of the Abuja Carnival. He believes in projecting a positive image of the rich Nigerian cultural heritage in a form devoid of all alterations. He had a custodian’s approach towards managing the Nigerian culture within a Civilian milieu.

In a personal interview, Yerima submits that:

Since each state had its own reluctant and controlled thoughts on what culture should be (in the carnival), we now had to involve them. What we wanted was that each state should celebrate the strength of its cultural existence, its cultural history and its cultural future, (This is because) if you are able to get to the history of your past, you would be able to understand now and be able to plan, also see the process of cultural hegemony (fusion) of different cultures. We wanted to see that … subsequently we saw this in masquerades for instance. In the “Wonder” masquerade where you see the Edo types, Enugu types, Yoruba types; yet they all had different names but the whole idea of piece of cloth rising from the magical process was there. Sometimes, the names like Idi, Ida, Ide e.t.c. Also when the Ekpe of Calabar, Okpe-Ekpe of Afikpo in Ebonyi state thereby showing the history of the Ekpe cult that gives just one step to whoever wants to learn so you cannot dance it if you are not Ekpe as seen in Ibibio, Afikpo, Ekpe masks. These were some of the semblances we saw in my tenure. (NP)

The influence of this approach led to the manifestation of virtually all Nigerian culture paraphernalia from all the six geo-political zones in their original forms during his tenure. The era witnessed great celebration of variety of Nigerian culture. All the pivotal symbols of Nigerian culture were colourfully assembled and celebrated without necessarily modifying the costumes to suit any foreign standard.

NB: The inability to locate Otunba Segun Runsewe at the time of this Research impedes accessing any definite information relevant for analysis of his approach to coordinating the Carnival in 2006.

Rasaka Ojo Bakare (2009-2013)

As a consultant choreographer and an accomplished theatre director, his attention focused extensively on global perspective to aesthetics of carnivals. He had more interest in globally accentuating the aesthetic prospects of the Abuja carnival. For him, the idea of the carnival must have
to be on the realm of internationally accepted mode in terms of the general packaging. He did not discard the core of the cultural heritage of the Nigerian states rather he repackaged them. Upholding this view in a personal interview, Bakare avers that:

… the Carnival has at least been able to achieve the government’s desired aim…the major intention of the government to use Abuja carnival to bring different aspects of our culture together to encourage tourism thereby showing good image of Nigeria. (But) when I got there, I made sure I reformed what I met. What I met there was just traditional cultures coming raw. We refined it to make it Carnival culture within the context of Nigerian environment. We domesticated the international Carnival here. What you see is no longer purely traditional again. But it is contemporary in the Nigerian setting (NP).

This brought about the reconsideration of the Abuja Carnival costumes and props to suit the seeming global trend. It led to the attempt to project the carnival within the realm of best global costumes practices. This is because it is a national carnival; it deserves a vital position on the image-building efforts of the country amidst other culturally advancing countries of the world.

Biodun Abe (2014 – date)

He is an accomplished Scenographer and Technical Director. This shaped the focus of his coordination to dwell on the technical perspective to redefine the Abuja Carnival amidst the worst financial challenge since the inception of the event. This is exemplified in his target to technically overhaul the system for better service delivery. Corroborating this view in a personal interview, Abe submits that while sustaining the efforts of my predecessors, I intend engaging in a systemic negotiation with Philips electronics to create sculpted images of drummers, dancers and other sculptural pieces that could be electronically lit at nights in strategic places to ensure a much more colourful participation (NP).

The manifestation of this technical knowledge and drive prompted the evolution of unique artistry in the 2014 edition where carnival floats were mounted of rickshaws popularly called Keke NAPEP. From the brief analysis above, one can easily deduce that despite the general drive of the artistic directors to sustain the vision of commercializing the Abuja Carnival, the impact of their professional careers invariably influences their co-ordinating approach.

Assessing the Influence of Cultural Management on the Carnival

For this study, the influence of cultural management on the carnival will be assessed using Nigerian state participation and foreign troupe involvement.

Nigerian State(s) participation

The Carnival experience is firstly for the Nigerian states competitive participation. Without adequate state participation, there would be little to qualify Abuja Carnival as a national carnival. It is pertinent to observe that since inception, the carnival has limited documented evidence of states participation. Few surviving ones are subject to conjectural analysis. Despite that, the fun never lessened during its early days. Ajimokotan cited by Isijola avers that Abuja Carnival reinforced the spirit of unity and high expectations as people came out singing and festooned in colourful costume. They partied on the streets of Abuja from dawn to dusk regardless of social status and age difference (685). Therefore, the management of the diverse
cultural backgrounds in Nigeria would be impossible if the states fail to participate. The fun was in the number of participating states and the colourful activities therein. The early days of the Carnival saw the total involvement of almost all the states in a highly competitive manner of the manifest their diverse and rich cultural strength. Sustaining this view in a personal interview, Yerima avers that:

We wanted the people to be celebrated. Our major things was semblance … looking for issues where we could find ourselves and locating unity in diversity … (so) my work relationship with the state as head of the National Troupe where all the state’s artistes came in, gave me an opportunity to inspire them to come in actually which made them pump in millions of naira. I was interested in the participation (NP).

There could be no better truth since the Federal Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation 2013 brochure cited by Isijola (2014, p. 687) states that The Carnival involves the thirty-six (36) states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Though all the states might not be in attendance but majority of the states attended.(687) But over time, a sharp decline in the number of participating states became very obvious. This experience has its worst documentation in the 2014 edition of the carnival as reported by Ayansina thus:

…the carnival has continued to witness dwindling interests form the states that take part in the events and this invariably has led to the low turnout of Abuja residents … this year’s edition with the theme “Building Creative Nation” was marred with poor participation of state contingent, as about 30 states out of the 36 states of the federation shunned the event (32).

This low level of state participation which could be possible reflection of the morale of the nation prompts Minister of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation, Duke cited by Ayansina to opine that we have twelve states registered to participate and not all twelve states may necessarily be in parade because the Carnival has different segments of participation.(9) The question now arises whether different segments were not in the carnival when virtually all states were actively involved in the parade? Despite poor documentation characterizing the carnival, available record shows that downward trend characterizing the Carnival thus: 2005 = 31 states, 2006 = 33 states, 2007 = 34 states, 2012 = around 18 states, while 2014 = 6 states.

**Foreign Troupe Involvement**

The influence of Cultural management of the Abuja Carnival beyond the shores of Nigeria is to positively project the image of Nigeria to the international community. This could be best achieved by allowing international affiliation through performance presentations during the Carnival. Moreover, the tourism potentials of the Carnival from an International perspective and the attendant socio-economic impact to the Nigerian economy can never be overemphasized.

But despite limited documentation, it is obvious that the Carnival faces a downward trend as foreign troupe involvement over the years have dramatically declined. Out of the projected list of international troupes, comprising Trinidad and Tobago, Egypt, Cameroon, Sudan, Cuba, Namibia, Ghana, etc expected to participate in the 2012 edition less than three participated.
The trend got worsened with no foreign troupe indicating interests in the 2014 edition of the carnival. This recent decline in the number of foreign troupe participation shows that the carnival is losing its central tourism essence. If a product loses foreign interest, how then can its ideals be internationally relevant?

This present trend partly emanates from the government’s desire to reduce funding for the carnival thereby starving publicity and other vital aspects of required funds. This is further exemplified in a personal interview by Abe that the government keeps reminding you that we do not have money to do this, we do not have money to do that (NP). This is further substantiated in a personal interview by Bakare that in the area of marketing and publicity, the federal government did a lot of damage to the Carnival (NP). The whole issue is summarized in a personal interview by Yerima that the ministry people had no passion for the carnival despite the fact that they seem to always be in charge (NP). But the fact that some Ministry technocrats, pleading anonymity, accused some past directors of the carnival of mismanagement, compounds the issue. This raises the question of who is really wrong?

Besides, the insurgency challenge in the North-Eastern region of Nigeria that has exposed the inadequacies of our security system has equally dampened foreign business prospects. This is discouraging disposition trickled down to national events like Abuja carnival reducing the prospects of foreign troupes participation and the tourism potentials of the national carnival. The damage done by unsteady governmental policies at all tiers of government alongside inadequate funding contributed to the factors affecting the image of Abuja Carnival especially in terms of international relevance.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the potency of the theory adopted for the study is no longer in doubt. The interpretation with the past and present Artistic directors of the Abuja Carnival; with reference to the impact of the sub-systems organic functioning confirms the relevance of this theory. From this study, it is evident that the sub-systems of states participation & foreign troupe involvement, affect the tourism potentials of Abuja Carnival.

**FINDINGS**

The following are the findings of this study:

Abuja Carnival has succeeded in its quest to colourfully celebrate the diverse rich cultural backgrounds of the Nigerian people by uniquely celebrating the varieties rather than differences therein promoting unity in diversity.

Furthermore, there are no formal documentations of the performance evaluation of the Carnival impact both locally and internationally.

Besides. It is a festival planned by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism through the appointment of a Cultural Management Committee. The choice of this committee, theme, coordinating Artistic Director and all operational details are subject to the approval of the host Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Moreover, the past Artistic Directors of the Carnival through creative efforts have managed the tide of challenges characterizing the Carnival by the reinterpretation of cultural management in diverse forms.

Also, the Carnival is witnessing sharp decline in the areas of Nigerian States and foreign troupe(s) participation. This has untold negative impact on the Carnival since the total aim of showing the country
as a united heterogenous entity before the international community can no longer be achieved when few Nigerian states perform in the absence of international participation. This hinders the tourism potentials of the carnival.

Finally, it became obvious that there was gross inadequate documentation of all the logistic information of the Abuja Carnival beyond 2008. The number of Nigerian states, foreign troupes participation, documentation of financial grants and budgets, etc were difficult to access in the process of this research.

CONCLUSION

Having examined the impact of cultural management on Abuja Carnival, one can predict that in faces the risk of failing or total extinction in the future if decisive actions are not taken to redeem the situation.

From the study, it becomes pertinent to observe that the image-building essence of establishing the Abuja Carnival has been successfully achieved. But the challenge of funding, reduced state participation and foregoing involvement facing its sustenance has been brought to the fore through this study. The study is an attempt to evaluate the existence of the Carnival in the midst of certain challenges with the view of proffering workable solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This researcher makes the following recommendations:

Abuja carnival management team deserves a more cordial working relationship with the host ministry and every other sector involved in the general planning and execution of the carnival.

Besides, there ought to be an increased level of international publicity for the carnival. Since there are several factors militating against the success of the carnival, the management should engage the media in an intensive image-rebranding exercise as to re-convince the international community of Nigeria’s readiness to convincingly host the annual carnival against all odds.

Also, there should be a detailed explanation of the tourism prospects of each partitioning state. This would encourage them to remain active in the national carnival. Their ability to sustain the showcasing of their unique cultural heritage could be one of the avenues for projecting it to the global community.

In the same vein, cultural grassroots influence should be among the deciding factors in the choice of artistic director. He/she must be a good negotiator that is very conversant with the intricacies of influencing the numerous cultural figures of each tribe. When the cultural leaders of each tribe are convinced, it is easier for them to spur their various states into desiring to participate.

Finally, since the government is reducing its funding for the Carnival, the organized private sector should be challenged to contribute reasonably. Let the government task them to use it as their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). This would reduce the level of financial burden on the government.

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**Personal Interviews**

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