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Alternative Funding Models for Underfunded National Museums in Nigeria

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Abstract
This paper argues that the national museums in Nigeria undergo persistent financial setback for depending too much on the downward spiralling federal government allocations. Hence the functions of the national museums such as research, documentation, conservation, exhibition, and education are often underperformed. There are previous studies on alternative funding of the national museums but they have not offered wide-ranging implementable strategies because they adopted piecemeal rather than comprehensive approach to dealing with the subject-matter. The objective of this paper is to explore and document some robust strategic alternative funding models of financial sustainability in the national museums. Data were obtained from scholarly articles and reputable online sources, and analysed via the qualitative content analysis. Findings reveal that implementing strategies like public-private partnerships, digital monetisation, cultural tourism integration, and endowment funds can ameliorate the financial crisis limiting service delivery in the national museums. It is thus recommended among other things that the national museums must keep diversifying their sources of revenue.

Key Words: National museums, strategies, institutions, alternative funding, theories

Introduction

Nigeria has several public cultural institutions, but national museums are the focus of this study. The national museums in Nigeria are treasure houses of cultural assets which are recognised worldwide. Proofs of this claim abound in the fifty three national museums mandated to house artefacts and oversee heritage sites in the country. The National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) is a department in the ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy that manages the cultural assets of Nigeria. Nok terracottas, Benin bronzes, Essie soap stones, and Igbo-Ukwu bronzes are some arts depicting the Nigerian culture.

Sustaining culture is however a task the national museums are still struggling to perform today as a result of underfunding. This issue of paucity of funds is persisting due to too much reliance on the inadequate budgetary allocations from the federal government. As a consequence, the national museums are bedevilled with infrastructural decay, inept security system, insufficient conservation technology, and under remunerated workers. The stale situation worsened when the hitherto paltry overheads given to the national museums came to a halt.

A resort to alternative funding is therefore unavoidable to help forestall institutional collapse capable of stifling the cultural heritages of Nigeria. It is imperative for the national museums to migrate from excessive reliance on funding by the federal government to a self-

sustaining model of revenue creation. Alternative revenue sources brought about by implementing diverse entrepreneurial initiatives need to be considered without further delays.

Exhaustive submissions have however not been documented that capture robust implementable strategies for alternative funding of the national museums in Nigeria. Yet to be fully addressed are issues of how to commercialise without compromising core values; have profound digital presence; get prioritised by multinationals funding art; mobilise to receive donations from the diaspora and international elites; and apply relevant theories in explaining alternative revenue creation sources. These gaps are addressed in this paper based on secondary data obtained from scholarly articles and reputable online sources, analysed through qualitative content analysis.

Perception of Museum in different Ages

Museum has been perceived in diverse lights in different ages. Non-professionals in museology regard museum in every respect as a house in which materials used in the past are preserved. Geoffrey (2024) claimed that museum in the 19th and 20th century was called "a building housing cultural material to which the public had access". Though it is correct to an extent, the foregoing depiction of museum is now for the most part incongruous with the present-day realities. The evolutionary change of museum in subsequent years turned it into more than just a haven of cultural materials. The activities of museum now include many fieldworks. Hence the evolving of definitions over the years to embrace all museum activities.

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) in different years defined museum as follows. "Museum includes all collections, open to the public, of artistic, technical, scientific, historical or archaeological material, including zoos and botanical gardens, but excluding libraries, except in so far as they maintain permanent exhibition rooms" (ICOM, 1946 in Martins, 2020). "A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of the society and its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates, and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of man and his environment" (ICOM, 1974 in Martins, 2020).

A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment" (ICOM, 2007 in Martins, 2020). **"**Museum is not-for-profit permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage, open to the public, accessible and inclusive, Museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing" (ICOM, 2022 in Jacob, 2022).

Emergence and Evolution of Museums in Nigeria

Museums in antique Greek civilisation were similar to shrines housing artefacts in Nigeria at that era. It is the Greek word museion that was changed to museum. Museion was a temple of goddesses named muses. The Greeks regarded muse as giver of inspiration. Zeus was

king of the gods and goddesses. Nine muses were born by Zeus and Mnemosyne known as the goddess of memory. Each muse had specific inspiration. Euterpe presided over music. Erato handled love poems. Calliope produced heroic poems. Clio was in charge of history. Melpomene managed tragedy. Thalia controlled comedy. Polyhymnia tackled hymns. Terpsichore was in command of dance. Urania headed astronomy (Okpoko & Ibeanu, 2005; Jacob, 2022).

In Nigeria, the genesis of modern-day museums dates back to the period of colonialism. In that inventive phase, assorted items of cultural values like engraved ivory, bronze and wooden objects were preserved because they were very useful and symbolic. Havens for relics were christened colonial museums during colonial time. The surfacing of the colonial museums in Nigeria is traceable to 1913. In that period the political memorandum composed by Sir Lord Lugard acknowledged the necessity of permanent reserves that would improve the inclement climatic condition; conserve the fast fading reserve of flora and fauna; preserve the visual quality and aesthetics of the landscape; and make playing fields available (Chike, 2018).

K.C. Murray, E.H. Duckworth, J.D. Clarke, B.E.B. Fagg, Hunt-Coole and S. Milburn initiated the growth of modern museums in Nigeria. K.C. Murray took the following giant strides in 1927. First was to compile works of arts. Second was to persuade the government to enact laws that put a stop to illegal export of artefacts. Third was to convince the government to create museums in Nigeria. Soon after the abovementioned moves, the Antiquities Commission was established. Antiquities Commission was once headed by K.C. Murray, K.O. Dike, and Bernard Fagg as Directors. Via their headship, museums in Nigeria improved. Regulations and reforms were enforced to help develop the way museums should be operated (NCMM, 2019).

There were Antiquities Ordinance No. 7 of 1953 and Antiquities (amendment) Decree of 1969. Antiquities Ordinance No. 7 of 1953 gave rise to the Department of Antiquities. The other rules were the Antiquities (Prohibited Transfers) Decree No. 9 of 1974 and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments NCMM) Decree No. 77 of 1979. About thirty museums were founded in Nigeria between 1945 and 1985. The Federal Government achieved this feat via agencies named the Department of Antiquities and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments. Both agencies united to set up viable museums in Nigeria (Andah, 1990).

The earliest national museums in Nigeria were founded in 1945 and 1946 in Esie (Kwara State) and Benin (Edo State) respectively. Additional ones were built in later years. Fifty two national museums currently exist in Nigeria. The said museums with different forms and features are subsumed under two key groups namely, private and public. In Nigeria, private and public museums exist side-by-side. Private museums are established and owned by individuals while public museums are founded by government to render services to the general public. Both types of museums operate within the domain of public laws (Murray, 1946; Nicklin, 1991).

Key Functions of National Museums in Nigeria

National museums in Nigeria house invaluable cultural memory, identity, and wealth even amid stringent operational limitations occasioned by excessive dependency on the dwindling federal allocations. Eyo (1994), Eluyemi (2002), and Chukwu (2020) asserted that national museums are instituted to improve learning, provide entertainment, and disseminate knowledge

among members of the public. In Nigeria, there are public and private museums but both are regulated by national statutes. Willett (1967), Onwuejeogwu & Onwuejeogwu (2000), Shyllon (2018), Shyllon (2021), Omoigui & Igbinovia, 2021) stated that national museums are set up to

a. ensure the acquisition of heritage resources by collecting objects having cultural, social, aesthetic, scientific, and religious values used in ancient times;
b. guarantee the conservation of objects brought to the museum by treating and caring for them so that they can always remain in good condition;
c. do research by means of interview and observation methods in order to possess the relevant information about the historical background and uses of objects;
d. educate members of the public by making use of objects so that people can have true knowledge of the past, understand the present and prepare for the future;
e. exhibit objects within and outside their premises to connect the gap between the ancient and modern cultural practices of the people and communities; and
f. organise cultural events like international museum day and world language day celebrations where material and nonmaterial aspects of culture are displayed.

Previous Studies on Alternative Funding of National Museums in Nigeria

There are previous studies on various aspects of alternative funding for national museums in Nigeria. To begin with, Ogunfolakan (2021) examined funding cultural heritage in Nigeria with focus on its challenges and prospects in the 21st century. In similar vein, Uduku (2022) dealt with cultural philanthropy in the diaspora with emphasis on how to leverage external capital for preserving the local heritage in West Africa. Furthermore, Okeke & Ani (2023) assessed the way to preserve the past and finance the future amidst administrative bottlenecks in the NCMM. Moreover, Agbaje-Williams (2024) studied digital heritage and the economic future of African museums. The findings of these researchers have meeting points.

They agreed that the national museums managed by the NCMM are over 50 with scores of structural monuments all over Nigeria. Their studies also show that the funding of the national museums depends mostly on the dwindling federal allocations. They believed that over 85% of federal allocations are exhausted on recurrent expenditures such as salaries of workers and administrative overhead with little capital left for the following key museum operations. First is purchasing and curating artefacts. Second is doing ethnographic research and archaeological excavations. Third is acquiring state-of-the-art conservation technology and galleries. Fourth is setting up exhibition design of international standards and best practices.

Also, their findings revealed that the other statutory revenue source of museums is entry tickets, which is low, collected manually, managed poorly, and susceptible to leakages. They affirmed that this inflexible financial structure hampers innovation, removes the national museums from the global cultural economy, and makes them financially vulnerable to face power failure, poor security, and uncontrolled climate. It was concluded by them that "transparent financial reporting and independent auditing of alternative funds are mandatory to retain corporate and diaspora trust". None of the above researchers however provided a comprehensive report of the implementable strategies for alternative funding of the national museums. This becomes a daunting crack in the abovementioned studies, which is cemented in this paper.

Okeke & Ani (2023) asserted that the federal government allocation to national museums is 85%, internally generated revenue (IGR) from gate fees and leases is 10%, while donations and grants for specific projects amount to 5%. They claimed that the federal allocation is used predominantly for recurrent expenditures such as payment of salaries.

Theories of Alternative Funding of National Museums in Nigeria

Resource dependency theory**,** public value theory**,** and stakeholder theory serve as theoretical tripod on which this paper is standing. The three theories complementarily explain how and why the national museums in Nigeria are required to implement alternative funding models. The assumptions and applications of the entire theories are highlighted below in bits.

Resource Dependency Theory (RDT)

Resource dependency theory was first propounded by Pfeffer J. and Salancik G.R. in 1978. Some other promoters of the theory include Froehlich K.A. in 1999, and Hodge M.M., and Piccolo R.F. in 2005. Resource Dependency Theory holds the following assumptions. Firstly, no institutions depend on self alone because self-sustainability eludes them all. Secondly, the resources from their external environment contribute to the survival of any institutions. Thirdly, institutions that depend only on one source of funding like federal allocations is vulnerable to underfunding (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Froelich, 1999; Hodge & Piccolo, 2005).

It is thus inferable from RDT that the national museums in Nigeria cannot survive without getting inputs from their environments. Also, depending only on the diminishing allocations from the federal government will hinder their capacity and autonomy to curate artefacts and maintain infrastructure. Again, the national museums must do environmental management for diversification of resources to overcome financial dependency and vulnerability. The aforesaid validates the implementation of alternative funding strategies in national museums.

Public Value Theory (PVT)

Public value theory was advanced in 1995 by Moore M.H. It was further upheld by Holden J. in 2006 and Scott C.A. in 2009. The theory firstly postulated that institutions should imbibe diversification of resources. It furthermore established that diversification of resources should however not erode the major mission of any institutions. Public value theory moreover affirmed that administrators of public institutions should not only generate funds for operational costs, but they must also ensure value creation such as societal unity, cultural identity, and peaceful coexistence for public welfare (Moore, 1995; Holden, 2006; Scott, 2009).

It is implied in PVT that the national museums in Nigeria should generate funds from other sources to augment the paltry federal allocations. Caution is however required while generating alternative funds so that their mandate of cultural heritage preservation is not compromised. All alternative funding strategies must be executed to sustain key functions of the national museums such as research, documentation, conservation, exhibition, and education.

Stakeholder Theory (SHT)

Stakeholder theory was put forward by Freeman R.E in 1984. However, the word "stakeholder" was first used in the internal memo of Stanford Research Institute (SRI). Most institutions have adopted its principles in their daily operations after the theorising of Freeman. Its fundamental assumption is the necessity of an institution's continuous networking with other institutions for survival. Furthermore assumed is that institutions which are benefactors in meeting the needs or satisfying the interests of other institutions or people are certain to obtain financial support from their beneficiaries whenever the need arises (Freeman, 1984).

The implication of SHT is that the national museums in Nigeria will obtain financial aid after satisfying the interests of stakeholders like local communities, international bodies, individual and corporate donors, government agencies, tourists, and researchers. It also signifies that the national museums can only succeed in enforcing alternative funding strategies by networking with the aforesaid entities to build mutually beneficial relationships.

The abovementioned clarifies that the basic assumptions of RDT, PVT, and SHT are apt for analysing alternative funding in the national museums in Nigeria. RDT explains the reasons for a necessary shift by the national museums from total dependence on federal government funding. PVT submits the way a shift to alternative funding should be implemented so as not to make the national museums to compromise their core functions. SHT pinpointed the systems such as donor networks and partnerships which the national museums must put in place for the successful implementation of alternative funding strategies.

Analysis of Models for Alternative Funding of National Museums in Nigeria

The implementable strategies for generating alternative funding of the national museums in Nigeria are multiple. The ones submitted by Ogunfolakan (2021), Uduku (2022), Okeke & Ani (2023), and Agbaje-Williams (2024) are private-public partnerships, digital monetisation and virtual tourism, endowment funds and diaspora philanthropic networks. Their applications are analysed below in line with the theoretical assumptions of RDT, PVT, and SHT.

Model 1: Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) is a feasible means by which infrastructures in the national museums can be upgraded without recourse to federal allocations. The implementation timeline is between one to two years. Its revenue generating potential is high, but the basic risk factors inherent in it are unnecessary delayed enforcement caused by bureaucracy, and the danger of commercialising heritage. The risk factor of compromising heritage through commercialisation is an issue PVT guides against. PPPs can be implemented in multifaceted manners.

Firstly, opportunities of mutual benefits to the national museums and other organisations need to be identified. Secondly, the brand of corporate donors should be granted visibility. Thirdly, local communities should be engaged in eco-tourism. By enforcing the foregoing, the national museums will get financial aids and partnerships from hitherto onlookers (Ogunfolakan, 2021; Uduku, 2022; Okeke & Ani, 2023; and Agbaje-Williams, 2024). Corporate adoptions and

commercial concessions explained below are practical ways to implement PPPs in accordance with the theoretical assumptions of RDT and SHT.

(a) Corporate Adoptions: There are several gigantic organisations the national museums can partner with. They consist of the oil, telecommunications, manufacturing, and banking sectors. As the national museums give them brand visibility and naming rights, projects such as building or renovation of the gallery can be adopted by the organisations.

(b) Commercial Concessions: Interested private enterprises can be given space on lease in the national museums to operate traditional gift shops, cafes, and restaurants for selling only Nigerian cuisine and crafts. As the sellers earn profit from sales to various sorts of visitors, the host national museums will collect rental. Activities of business enterprises must however be checkmated so as not to pose threats to the beauty, health, and serenity of their hosts.

Model 2: Digital Monetisation and Virtual Tourism

The world is making a shift in the direction of digital engagement which the national museums in Nigeria are yet to explore and exploit. Its implementation timeline is between two to three years. The revenue generating capacity of this alternative income source is average high. It has some risk factors such as towering initial technical cost, and epileptic internet infrastructure and network (Ogunfolakan, 2021; Uduku, 2022; Okeke & Ani, 2023; and Agbaje-Williams, 2024). Expounded underneath are some possible ways of its implementation most of which are in alignment with the theoretical assumptions of RDT, PVT, and SHT.

(a) Virtual Reality (VR) Exhibits: The NCMM can convert its collections into digitised 3D models. Thereafter, an official virtual tours will be launched for the international audiences, communities in diaspora, and academic institutions worldwide to view and pay for.

(b) Digital Merchandising: Partnerships with artists such as Benin casters, carvers, smiths, forgers, and sculptors can be done by the NCMM to produce digital prints that are of super quality. Such digital prints will be modelled after historical artefacts like the Benin Bronzes, Nok terracotta, Esie soap stones, and any other artworks in Nigeria. This can open up for the national museums an ever flowing global income streams from online users.

(c) Digital Collectibles: The NCMM can partner with developers of websites to create online historical artefacts known as verified digital collectibles (VDCs). Thus, physical artefacts will be in the custody of the national museums, while online users will purchase the VDCs. This arrangement is a viable income generating source.

Model 3: Endowment Funds and Diaspora Philanthropic Networks

Perpetual investment of capital and utilisation of interests generated to foot costs of operations in the national museums is called endowment funds. Setting up viable institutional frameworks to get donations from local and international elites and donor agencies is known as diaspora philanthropic networks. The implementation timeline is three years plus. Its possibility to generate revenue is both high and sustainable, but the fundamental risk factors militating against it are unstable economy, and mismanagement of funds (Ogunfolakan, 2021; Uduku, 2022; Okeke & Ani, 2023; and Agbaje-Williams, 2024). Endowment funds and philanthropic networks can be implemented by adopting the following techniques out of which some are rooted in the theoretical assumptions of RDT, PVT, and SHT.

(a) National Museum Endowment Funds: The NCMM should raise money from private donations and government grants to be independently and privately managed. A continuous investment of the main capital in financial instruments with low-risk should be done. Every interest generated can be used to offset administrative, conservation and research costs.

(b) Friends of the Museum Societies: Robust associations should be formed with membership open for all culture lovers, especially in America and Europe. This will serve as a platform where culture enthusiasts can view objects on their own, listen and watch series of lectures, and get invitations to exhibitions. In return for the aforesaid benefits, members can pay annual dues, as well as make donations to the endowment funds in foreign currencies.

(c) International Grant Sourcing: The NCMM should keep an eye on international culture loving groups such as foreign embassies, Ford Foundation, UNESCO, and Mellon Foundation that possess cultural funds they give as grants to sponsor research. In the same vein, selected workers of national museums should be trained to engage in the task of applying for research, exhibition, and conservation grants from the aforementioned global organisations.

Model 4: Hospitality and Tourism Sector Integration

The NCMM should transform the national museums from being mere repositories of artefacts to being active cultural hubs for tourism. The timeline for its enforcement is between six months. Its revenue generating potential is modest, while the apparent risk factor is intended and unintended destruction of heritage centres. Also inherent in it is the unnecessary delayed enforcement caused by bureaucracy, and the danger of commercialising heritage pointed out in PVT (Ogunfolakan, 2021; Uduku, 2022; Okeke & Ani, 2023; and Agbaje-Williams, 2024). It can be implemented by adopting the following methods advocated in RDT.

(a) Dynamic E-Ticketing: There should be central digital systems of ticketing in the national museums. This method will bring drastic reduction to leakages of revenue generated.

(b) Ancillary Services: The national museums should create spaces for restaurants that prepare special traditional cuisine. Also, curated souvenir shops vending genuine local artworks, and event spaces for renting should be set up. The foregoing will open up cash flows.

(c) Traveling Exhibitions Via Repatriation Leverage: As worldwide conversations about the repatriation of African artefacts produce desired outcomes, the NCMM can take advantage of the returned artefacts for revenue generation. This can be actualised by partnering with other museums across the globe for joint, international travelling exhibitions. Huge sums of money will be generated from foreign exchange by means of loan fees and ticketing. All participating museums will benefit based on the profit-sharing agreements.

(d) Event Space Rentals: The national museums can make money by renting out grounds, halls, and courtyards for corporate events such as weddings, book launches, cultural festivals, product promotions, and inter-school or intra-school competitions.

(e) Graded Ticket Pricing: A graded pattern of pricing and ticketing should be enforced in the national museums. In this arrangement, local residents should be charged lower fees while foreigners should pay competitive international rates. As such, revenue generation will be maximised and local community access to the national museums will not be hindered.

Challenges of Implementing Alternative Funding of National Museums in Nigeria

a. **Over Dependent National Museum Stations:** Zonal and national museum stations depend too much on the NCMM in decision-making particularly in managing IGR.
b. **Insufficient Capacity Development:** Redundancy in civil service encumbers cultural entrepreneurship in the NCMM. Most staff do not know how to mobilise resources, manage finances, write for grants, and do digital curating and marketing.
c. **Obsolete NCMM Act:** The legal framework otherwise known as the NCMM Act is somehow anti-entrepreneurship. Authority is not given to the state national museums in revenue retention, independent investments, and joint ventures.
d. **Poor Networking:** The NCMM and national museums do not sufficiently network with international bodies, local communities, government agencies, corporate and private donors in building mutually beneficial relationships.
e. **Inadequate Value Creation:** The NCMM and national museum administrators are yet to engage sufficiently in value creation like promoting societal unity, cultural identity, and peaceful coexistence to spur public interests in donating funds.
f. **Quomodocunquising:** In desperation for alternative funding, the national museums do condone the misuse of their spaces after giving commercial concessions. The misusers are most times unquestioned because of obsession for money. At the end, funds may be generated but cultural heritages are at the risk of ruin instead of being preserved.
g. **Weak Accountability Mechanisms:** There are frequent issues bordering on financial mismanagement in the national museums, especially the mishandling of IGR.

Conclusion

This paper argued that the national museums in Nigeria are beset with prevailing acute financial drawbacks for excessive dependence on the dwindling federal government allocations. Such phenomenon was found to be among the main limiting factors of effectiveness in discharging the key functions of national museums, which comprise research, documentation, conservation, exhibition, and education. Explored in this paper are the salient strategic alternative funding models for actualising financial sustainability in the national museums. These models consist of public-private partnerships (PPPs), digital monetisation, cultural tourism integration, and endowment funds. Full implementation of these usable alternative funding models by museum administrators is expected to significantly ameliorate the financial crisis hindering effective service delivery in the national museums. The main limitation of this study is exclusive reliance on data from secondary source as evidence without corroborating findings with first-hand data from primary source. This limitation forms the basis for further research. The challenges of implementing alternative funding strategies were however identified and elucidated. It is on the basis of the challenges highlighted that the following recommendations are submitted.

Recommendations

a. **Autonomy for Individual Museums:** The NCMM should allow zonal and national museum stations have autonomy by letting them retain bulk of IGR for maintenance.
b. **Capacity Building:** There should be a shift from the usual civil service redundancy to pursue cultural entrepreneurship in the NCMM. Workers of the national museums should

be trained on ways to mobilise resources, manage finances, write for grants, and do digital curating and marketing. Self development can also be imbibed.

c. **Review of the NCMM Act:** The legal framework known as the NCMM Act which is anti-entrepreneurship needs amendment. The national museums should have statutory power for revenue retention, independent investments, and joint ventures.
d. **Proper Networking:** The NCMM and national museums should engage in networking with international bodies, individual and corporate donors, government agencies, and local communities to build relationships which are of mutual benefits.
e. **Adequate Value Creation:** The NCMM and national museum administrators should engage in value creation like promoting societal unity, cultural identity, and peaceful coexistence in order to make the benefitting public interested in donating funds.
f. **Abeyance of Quomodocunquising:** The national museums must not because of money tolerate any act of misuse of their spaces given out for commercial use. Any misusers must be called to order to forestall the destruction of cultural heritages.
g. **Strict Accountability Mechanisms:** There is the need to be transparent in managing money amassed via philanthropy. Alternative funds should be independently audited and transparently reported to retain trust of corporate and diaspora donors.

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