

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Harnessing Jukun Cultural Heritage for Tourism Development

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Abstract

Nigeria is one of the most culturally diverse countries in Africa with over 250 major and minor ethnic groups. Among these 250 major and minor ethnic groups is the Jukun in Taraba State mostly living in Wukari, Takum and Ibi. The objectives of the study are to identify the Jukun cultural heritage and assess the level of development of these cultural heritages. The study population consisted of One Hundred and Twenty-Five (125) respondents/residents of Wukari, Takum and Ibi who are 25 years old or above and twenty (20) Jukun traditional members were selected for Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). A total of One Hundred and Twenty-five (125) copies of questionnaire were randomly administered to respondents/ Jukun residents in Wukari, Takum and Ibi. In all, a total of One hundred and twenty-two (122) questionnaires were retrieved, which response rate is 97%. The Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involved twenty (20) Jukun traditional members with an interest in the cultural heritage. In all, ten (10) FGDs were held in four (4) different locations, Wukari, Takum and Ibi. The data analyzed using descriptive statistics shows that Jukun are richly endowed with cultural heritage which open a wide avenue for recreation and tourism activities. These cultural heritage are games: Anga, Langa, Vinvin, Adzwe; music, songs and dance: Akishe, Ajo Kweku (Goge, Ajo Kovo); masquerades and festivals: Aku Wa-Shon, Atukun, Puje. The Jukun games, music, songs, dance, masquerades and festival are developed as stated by respondents. This implies that these cultural heritages have the potentials to contribute to tourism development in the study areas. However, appropriate steps need to be taken to harness the Jukun games, music, songs, dance, masquerades and festivals. These appropriate steps suggested are creation of awareness of Jukun cultural heritage, mobilization of fund for promotion of Jukun cultural heritage, involvement of private investment in Jukun cultural heritage, and making of calendar of Jukun cultural heritage events.

Keywords: Jukun, Heritage, Contribution, Tourism, Development.

1. Introduction

Tourism is an economic sector which “depends for its very existence on quality natural environments as much as it equally does on the specific culture and society of the local inhabitants” (Komla and Veirier, 2014). Tourism plays significant roles in socio-economy development of many nations. This is because it contributes towards alleviating the major potential, social and economy problems that characterize the rural areas. It equally helps in developing the urban centres. Tourism has been discovered to be a very

important instrument to poverty alleviation, attainment of the millennium development Goal (MDSs) and Sustainable Development (Olorunfemi and Raheem, 2008) cited Tunde (2012). The ethno-cultural tourism sector is diverse, with many options for development (e.g. village tours, village accommodation (hospitality), food, festivals, artifacts, traditional dance and music, etc.). The ethno-cultural tourism industry is dependent upon indigenous knowledge and values (Mitchell (1991) cited in Amed (2022) revealed that the industry can generate revenues rapidly and the cost of creating employment in this sector is lower

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than in other countries. Falola (2008), ethno-cultural tourism is ideally suited to community-based tourism ventures and there are potentials for smart partnerships with established entrepreneurs. Local ownership of indigenous tourism products is easy to achieve and provides a boost for the local economy.

Nigeria is one of the most culturally diverse countries in Africa with over 250 major and minor ethnic groups. By implication, Nigeria has hundreds of cultures with individual uniqueness and peculiarities (Bankole, 2013). The Hausa/Fulani, Ibo and Yoruba tribes are the major ethnic groups and constitute over 50 percent of the population. The other ethnic groups are Tiv, Ibibio, Nupe, Gwari, Igala, Jukuns, Idoma, Edo, Urhobo, Ijaw, etc. Aside the population disparity and its associated tourism potentials, Nigeria has a vast and varieties of tourism attractions all over the country and possess all the ingredients that can attract tourists from across the world and thus, ensure an efficient and productive tourism (Adekiya, 2016:25). Of the diverse tourism possibilities and rich cultural heritage in Nigeria, not much of these have been mainstreamed and harnessed into the global tourism industry (Bankole, 2013).

The vast Nigeria cultural potentials; historic towns and highly diversified cultural heritage embodying people's traditions, religious, and belief systems, festivals, ceremonies, etc. The capacity of these symbolic representations of people's values, identity, and heritage to promote and develop tourism in the country is not in doubt. However, the inability to transform these cultural potentials for tourism development has been a major concern to tourism, recreation and leisure stakeholders. Particular cultural potential concern here is the Jukun people in Taraba State of Nigeria. The Jukun traditions, religion, festivals, ceremonies, belief systems and practices can be harness for tourism development can earn substantial socio-economic benefit to their local communities, Taraba State and Nigeria. Therefore, this study sought to examine the Jukun's vast cultural heritage and the prospect of harnessing these cultural heritages for tourism development.

The aim of the study is to harness the Jukun cultural heritage for tourism development in Taraba State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study are to:

1. identify the Jukun cultural heritage; and
2. assess the level of development of cultural heritage.

2. Study Area

2.1 The Jukuns

The Jukun live in the Middle-Belt of Nigeria. Oral tradition suggests that they migrated from Yemen in the Arabian Peninsula to Egypt between 350AD and 360 AD and settled in Ngazargamu. They later entered Nigeria between the Mandala hills and Lake Chad and settled in Ngizim, upper Gongola Valley, Owing to internal dissension, part of the Jukun, the Kanuri, moved to the upper east and formed the Kanem-bornu Empire, while the Jukun moved to the Middle belt. The Jukun occupied the Middle Belt around 900-1000AD. By the mid-13th, the Jukun were well established. It was from this location that the Jukun built the Kwararafa Kingdom. The Jukun influenced a number of loosely- knit conferences. Documentation on Jukun territorial coverage and influence has been extensive within and beyond Middle-Belt societies. This influence drew many heterogeneous and homogenous ethnic group into close affinity with them. By the 15th and 16th centuries, Jukun religion, culture and military prowess had become the most influential in the Middle-Belt. They had a distinctive culture and complex religion beliefs and practices, generally tied to theocratic self-understanding. Jukun were known by various names: *Kwararafa* or *Pi*; "*API*" or "*Biepi*". These names have their historic- religious connotations. First, the name *PI* derived from the famous ancient Jukun war medicine, which caused *Pi* (worm) to destroy the shafts of the spears and arrows of their enemies. The enemies were rendered helpless and the Jukun defeated them ruthlessly. Second, *API* means leaves or grass. This name depicts the use of herbs by the Jukun in their religious endeavours. Third, the *Biepi* means a place of leaves or grass, in this case, a location for the manipulation of religious powers. Thus, the name is used in reference to the capital city of the Jukun Kingdom. Kwararafa flourished in the Middle-Belt for over four hundred (400) years (from the 15th to the 18th centuries), before its decline.

The Jukun are now concentrated in Wukari, Takum, Ibi and Abinsi and smaller towns. It is traditionally believed that Aku Angyu Katakpa founded the Jukun community of Wukari around 1660 AD. Tradition has revealed that the original inhabitants of Wukari were the Jukun, descendants of *Wapan*. They migrated from the Middle East, and more specifically from Yemen in the Arabian Peninsula, settled in the Gongola Basin, and then migrated to other places before finally settling in Wukari. The word *Wukari* is from the *Wapan* word, *Uka* meaning,

you are greater, or you are better, or you excel. This is because when Katakpa and his men left the Gongola basin (Kwararrafa city), they settled in order places. They saw Wukari as the most appealing abode, so he called it *Ukari*, meaning, you are the greatest or you are the best. He used this term in comparison

to their previous dwellings. The Jukun culture has been important and still plays a dominant role in Wukari society. The Jukun all through their history have maintained their ethnic identity, military skill and prowess, even after the collapse of the Kingdom (Meek, 1931) cited in Adesoji and Alao (2010).

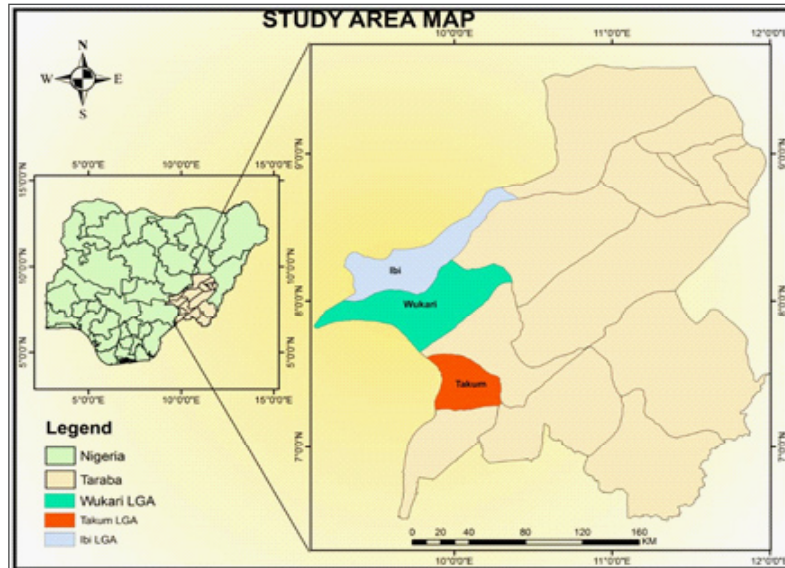


Figure 1. Map of Nigeria showing Taraba State with Wukari, Takum and Ibi LGA

3. Methodology

Data for this study were from primary sources, which were collected through administration of questionnaire and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). A total of One Hundred and Twenty-five (125)

copies of questionnaire were randomly administered to source for information from Jukun residents in Wukari, Takum and Ibi who are 25 years old or above. In all, a total of One hundred and twenty-two (122) questionnaires were retrieved, which response rate is 97%. See Table 1 below.

Table 1. Proportional Allocation of Questionnaire to Respondents

Location	No. of Questionnaire	No. of Retrieved Questionnaire
Wukari	45	45
Takum	40	39
Ibi	40	38
Total	125	122

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The questionnaire generated information on level of development of cultural heritage. Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) was conducted with Jukun traditional members. The FGDs involved people with an interest in the cultural heritage and were selected because are considered key stakeholders who are quite knowledgeable about their cultural heritage. In all, ten (10) FGDs were held in four (4) different locations;

four (4) in Wukari and three (3) each in Takum and Ibi. See Table 2 below. They were attended by stakeholders drawn from Jukun traditional members. All of the FGDs covered a number of common themes which reflected the key Jukun cultural heritage: games, songs, dance, masquerades and festivals, and the level of development of these cultural heritages.

Table 2. Number of FGDS with Key Stakeholders (Traditional Members)

Location	Number of FGDS with Key Stakeholders (Traditional Members)
Wukari	4
Takum	3
Ibi	3

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Data obtained from the study were analysed using descriptive method in form of frequency, percentage and tables. The decision rule is mean of 2.0 for assessing the level of development of cultural heritage for tourism development in the Jukun areas of Taraba State.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Jukun Cultural Heritage

Table 3. *The Jukun Cultural Heritage: Games, Dance and Songs, Masquerades and festivals*

Games
Anga
Langa
Vinvin
Adzwe
Music, Dance and Songs
Akische
AjoKweku(Goge)
Ajo Kovo
Masquerades and festivals
Aku Wa-Shon
Atukun
Puje

Source: *Field Survey, 2022.*

4.2 Games

The Jukun Wapan like other Jukun groups plays a number of games at their leisure time. Among popular games are Anga, Langa, Adzwe and Vinvin.

4.2.1 Anga

Interesting and competitive game among the Jukun Wapan is traditional wrestling which the Jukun called *Anga*. Wrestling is practice by boys and young unmarried men to exhibit their physical strength and skills among their peers in their various communities. Traditional wrestling promoted friendship and respect among the Jukun youths. Addankenjo (2021) observed that: “it was through traditional wrestling that friendship were made and stiffened among peers, and there were Jukun youths who were so powerful and had physical skills which made them unbeatable during wrestling competitions such as one Bisen Adi Kunvyi, who could throw more than twenty (20) opponents at a game. There is hardly anything that beat traditional wrestling in attracting Jukun people and for making long-life friends”.

4.2.2 Langa

Closely related to traditional wrestling is *Langa*, an interesting game that tested the strength and skills of

Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) conducted with key stakeholders (traditional members); the Jukun Wapan in Wukari, Jukun Wanu in Ibi /Abinsi, and Jukun Kpazon in Takum indicated that they had a very rich heritage which opens a wide avenue for recreation and tourism activities. Their cultural heritage form games, dances, songs, masquerades and festivals. See Table 3 below.

the competitor. The game had two sides between two to ten competitors each holding his one leg with his one hand behind and jumping on the other leg. Each side had a point man called the king who is to jump through and touch a certain point at the opponent’s side while the opponents were to stop hum by all means through pushing him to fall. Once a player is pushed down or he lost grip of his one leg, he is considered to have failed and is require to go out of the field until a fresh game is started, and a side is consider winner and game-over when its king jumped through the opponents and touched the particular point without being thrown down and still holding his one leg behind with one hand. Just like traditional wrestling, Langa is a game of physical strength and strategy, preparing the youths for any combat.

4.2.3 Vinvin

This is another game mostly played by young men and children. In this game, two people were normally involved. A log of wood was placed on the ground with sharpened edge facing up while another log of wood with an opening at the center was placed on the sharpened edge of the wood on the ground. The two players sat at the opposite end of the log of wood placed on top and began to spin as it rotated faster until they became dazed and even fell on the ground.

4.2.4 *Adzwe*

In this game, there are two sides, each consisting of six youths armed with arrows and spears.. a nut or pumpkin is thrown between them, and the side that scored the greater number of hits is declared the winner. The victorious side had the right to mount the backs of the members of the defeated side. Similarly, in Wukari area, this game is play in such a way that, one particular person would be dragging a pumpkin tied with a rope while the other young men ran after it throwing either arrows or spears. *Adzwe* is a game that prepared the Jukun youth for either hunting or warfare. It is a training ground for the Jukun youth.

Anga, the Jukun traditional wrestling competition has the potential of attracting the indigenes, and national and international visitors to the host community. This will attract visitors' spending that stimulates the growth of local economy. *Langa*, from the tourism point of view, can be organise to generate revenue to local authority and people in the community as done among the Moi People in Kenya. *Vinvin*, when properly organised and promoted as Jukun cultural heritage in Wukari, Takum and Ibi can promote livelihood of the local residents. *Adzwe*, a Jukun warfare game is similar to Zulu warfare game among the Zulu people in South African. However, the Zulu warfare game is money spinning event in Rainbow carnival in South Africa.

4.3 Music, Dance and Songs

According to the FGDs conducted with the Jukun traditional members (key stakeholders), it was indicated that there are different kinds of Jukun dances accompanied with different songs and drumming. Examples included:

4.3.1 *Akische Dance*

It is dance by both male and female during marriage ceremonies, naming ceremonies and other social occasions. The males used hand fan made of bird feather to fan them while dancing and other footsteps went with the drum as they danced either in a circle or on lines. They also moved their neck front and back as they danced and sometimes swung left and right. During the dance, at a point they knelt down to perform the Jukun style of paying homage by removing their caps and throwing dust on their shoulders three times signifying their respect for only God, the king and death. They always use their tradition wrapper called *adire* tied round their waist. However, those who could not afford the bird feather hand fan or the traditional attire used ordinary wrapper. The steps of the female differed from that of the male. The female used their traditional attire tied round their chest with

stone necklace and danced very moderately more than the males. They use the sound of the drums to move their feet backward and forward, gently as they danced either in circle or in lines. They also in the process paid homage through kneeling down, removing their head gear, throwing sand on their chest three times signifying same thing as did the male.

4.3.2 *AjoKweku (Goge)*

This is a dance using the foot with some Barbados seeds enclosed in small pieces called *Akata* tied round the foot to make the sound *Cha cha cha* as the calabash was being hit and the harp(keku) played. It is among the dances that accompanied a new *Aku* from Puje to Wukari, it is also danced during marriage ceremonies and during other social occasions.

4.3.3 *Ajo Kovo*

The dancers use black shirts(signifying anger or vexation) and red caps(signifying blood), carrying all sorts of weapons such as spears of different types, knives, dangers, bows and arrows and amulets while dancing. It is dance occasionally, particularly when they envisaged war.

The development of tourism in general, and the development of cultural tourism in particular, is the availability of cultural heritage. However, the FGDS with traditional members revealed that music, dance and songs are means of socialization in Jukun society. This is similar to all African societies. In societies in Nigeria and Africa music, dances and song are medium to express joys and pains, tool to link the spiritual to the physical world and it is performed during special occasion or during leisure time. When Jukun music, dances and songs are well harness as tool for tourism development in Taraba State and Nigeria, it is capable to attract local, national and international tourist arrivals. Akama (2001) argued that "the development of tourism in Maasailand in Kenya is the availability of cultural heritage".

4.4 Masquerades and Festivals

The Jukun people masquerades and festivals played a very significant role in the history of the people. Masquerades and festivals in Jukun society did much more than mere entertainment, but they are vehicles for social and cultural activities. The FGDS with traditional members revealed that masquerades and festivals served useful purposes during coronation and burial ceremonies of traditional rulers. Examples of masquerades and festivals in Jukun society are shown in Table 3.

4.4.1 *Aku Wa-Shon*

The female *AkuWa-Shon* is much more interesting

because of how it shook the waist in accordance with the drum beating. *Aku Wa-Shon* is very entertaining.

4.4.2 Atukun

The masquerade is from Akwana in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State. It dance with whip or two long stalks and only come out during special occasion as coronations or burial of traditional title holders. It is more of a social control masquerade that is used to install discipline on the crowd during the occasions. Drummers and musical instrumentalists used instruments such as *akpati (musical box) waya and birizon (two small pots tied together covered with a reptile skin to produce sweet sound)* and calabash beaten with either sticks or the palm of the hand to determine the dance steps of dancers at any given time.

4.4.3 Puje

Puje, Jukun traditional thanksgiving festival. The festival is for bumper harvests and thanksgiving where the Jukun all over the world gathered in Wukari to appreciate the gods for good harvests and protection, and renewed their allegiance to their paramount ruler, the *Aku-Uka*. It lasted for seven days and is observed by all and sundry. *Puje* festival is a unifying point in Jukun kingdom.

Culture is a main ‘pull factor’ which influences visitors’ initial decision to travel to destinations in different parts of the world. The living heritage of Jukun people are the very tourist attractions which people from major tourist generating countries are looking for, and the basic reason to satisfy cultural tourists. This agreed with Ondimu (2001) that “within the Abagusii community area in Kenya, traditional marriage/wedding is a heritage developed to attract more tourists into the western Kenya region”. All it

takes is to have private investment, well packaging and showcasing of these cultural heritages: music, dance and songs.

4.5 Level of Development of Cultural Heritage

The study assessed the level of development of Jukun cultural heritage. The data analysed shows that the results in Table 4 of respondent’s means which indicates that cultural heritage are developed. The results in Table 4 affirmed the position of Angyu (2021) that Jukun cultural heritage are developed: “various Jukun communities were involved in games; music, dance and songs; masquerades and festivals during their leisure time. In Wukari, compounds competed with each other, wards presented representatives during games, dance and festival and winners are hailed by spectators through clapping, singing their praises and dancing”. Adekonge (2021) also maintain that: “Five days to *Puje* festival, the *Ayoku* and the wives of the senior traditional title holders soaked millet for *atswen*. Any family that could afford also soaked millet for *acen-puje*. Work also starts at once at *Puje*. The ministers instruct the *Akon Puje*, who is in charge of the organisation at *Puje*, his assistant, the *Iche-Puje*, the *Katon-Sin* and *Katon-Byene* and other men of lesser titles to construct the *Aku*’s shrine which consisted of different enclosures among which is *Byene*, the *Kyonma*, the *Kusha* rites enclosures made up of booths. When it is a day to the festival, after the morning rite in the palatial shrine, all arrangement were completed. The *Aku*, the ministers and the attendants set at different intervals”. The positions of Angyu (2021) and Adekonge (2021) is an indication that Jukun cultural heritage such as festival are developed.

Table 4. Level of Development of Cultural Heritage

Games	VPD 1	PD 2	HD 3	VHD 4	Mean	Remarks
Anga	0	0	45	77	3.62	Developed
Langa	7	4	57	54	3.30	Developed
Vinvin	3	23	81	15	2.89	Developed
Adzwe						
Dance and Songs						
Akishe	5	3	67	47	3.27	Developed
AjoKweku(Goge)	1	7	35	79	3.57	Developed
Ajo Kovo	19	15	37	51	2.40	Developed
Masquerades and festivals						
AkuWa-Shon	12	27	51	32	2.84	Developed
Atukun	31	17	63	11	2.44	Developed
Puje	3	5	17	97	3.70	Developed

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Note: Very Poorly Developed (VPD), Poorly Developed (PD), Highly Developed (HD), Very Highly Developed (VHD)

5. Conclusion

The study findings concluded that Jukun are endowed with rich cultural heritage such as games, songs, dance, masquerades and festivals. The harnessing of Jukun rich cultural heritage as internationally recognised tourists attractions would boost the economic, improve the living standard of the people and thus expedite their development. When this is achieved, it would impact positively, on income generation, job creation and improvement of living standard of the people. It must be emphasised that the major index of tourism development is high living standard of the people. These rich cultural heritages have potentials for the development of tourism, recreation and entertainment in the Jukun areas of Taraba State and Nigeria. However, necessary or appropriate steps need to be taken to harness these endowed rich cultural heritage among the Jukun for the development of tourism, recreation and entertainment.

6. Recommendations

In all walks of life, the Jukun people have utilised their cultural heritage to contribute greatly to national development in Nigeria. Hitherto, the Jukun cultural heritage can be harnessed for tourism development when the necessary or appropriate steps are taken. Some of the suggested necessary or appropriate steps are below:

Creation of Awareness of Jukun Cultural Heritage

The local community members, Local Government Councils in Jukun Areas (Wukari, Takum and Ibi), and Taraba State Government need to put all hands on duck to create awareness about the cultural heritage to the outside world.

Mobilization of Fund for Promotion of Jukun Cultural Heritage

In order to promote the Jukun cultural heritage for tourism development, there is need for stakeholders (the Local Government Councils and Taraba State Government) to mobile fund for the promotion of Jukun games, music, dance, songs, masquerades and festivals.

Involvement of Private Investment in Jukun Cultural Heritage

It is important that Local Government Councils in Jukun Areas (Wukari, Takum and Ibi), and Taraba State Government should involve private investors in promotion of and investment in Jukun games, music, dance, songs, masquerades and festivals. It is expected that private investors involvement is needed to provide adequate fund for the harnessing of the Jukun cultural

heritage for tourism development. The involvement of private investment, packaging and showcasing of these games, music, dance and songs, masquerades and festivals should be mindful of the cultural values of the heritage and identity of the Jukun people.

Making of Calendar of Jukun Cultural Heritage Events

Local Government Councils in Jukun Areas (Wukari, Takum and Ibi) and Taraba State Government should involve competent private investors to make calendar of Jukun cultural heritage events. This will create the needed awareness and harnessing of the Jukun cultural heritage in Nigeria and globally.

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