Heritage resources as a driver for cultural tourism in Nigeria
Ngozi Ezenagu

Abstract: Nigeria has outstanding and diverse heritage resources, products of its numerous ethnic groups. These heritage resources were created from human interaction with the environment. Under this guise, they have become a source of cultural identity and national pride. They are grouped as tangible and intangible heritages which are today a driver of cultural tourism—travel to experience unique traditional beliefs and practices. This form of travel does not only uncover unique heritage landscape but also allows the tourist to be immersed in intangible heritage processes—traditional rites, festivities, ritual enactment, etc. Such experience could not have been possible without tourism—the process through which culture can be consumed by tourists and positively exploited by host community. Therefore, this work is set to establish heritage resources as one of the major reasons for cultural tourism in the country. To achieve the set goal, the paper will explore UNESCO enlisted heritage resources in Nigeria stating their significance and contributions to sustainable cultural tourism.

Subjects: Tourism; Culture; Heritage Management & Conservation

Keywords: cultural resources; cultural tourism; heritage; Nigeria; UNESCO

1. Introduction
Nigeria is endowed with outstanding and diverse heritage resources—product of human processes and activities (Aplin, 2002). They could be described as living traditions handed through

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
Nigeria is endowed with unique heritage resources. Some of which are traditional festivals, indigenous technologies, traditional arts and crafts and cultural landscape. These are products of the diverse ethnic groups in the country. Considering the uniqueness of the above heritage resources they have become a medium through which Nigeria is identified and appreciated. As a result of the abundance and significance of these products, Nigeria has become a renowned tourist destination attracting tourists and visitors from across the globe to its heritage resources. This study is therefore, of the opinion that the diverse unique heritage resources of the country especially the UNESCO World Heritage Sites promote cultural tourism which is a form of travel that provides tourists opportunity to consume and participate in cultural-related activities.
generations and a source of identity which distinguishes one nation or ethnic from another. These resources manifest as tangible and intangible natural and cultural products. The tangible resources are the material cultural expressions of the societies that are living or lived in the area example include landscape, monuments, traditional buildings, archaeological sites, temples, historic cities, etc. While intangible are the immaterial cultural expressions and traditions of societies rooted in the cultural values and practices of both past and present generations which includes traditional ways of life, social practices, festivals, music, craftsmanship, etc. These resources do not only possess intrinsic beauty and value, but are also one of the key assets of tourism. This is because their uniqueness woos tourists who want to experience unique landscapes, traditions and history of cultural sites. As Herbert (1989) stressed that the attractiveness of heritage as a commodity has increased number of areas being promoted as heritage destinations.

Hence, heritage resources are significant drivers that have the potential to develop and promote tourism, with significant impacts on environmental, social and economic life of the community. As a driver of tourism, many destinations commodify their heritage resources for tourism marketing to increase its appeal and fulfill tourist needs. Within this tourism context, heritage has become a commodity aimed to fulfill the needs of the contemporary tourist (Chhabra, 2010). As a commodity its consumption takes the form of identity affiliation, use in claims to resources such as land; traditional practices, ritual practices, religious practice, use in cultural heritage tourism, to mention but a few (Keitumetse, 2014). In other words, one of the consumption processes is through tourism—a form of travel through which products especially cultural lifestyles and activities are consumed. This form of travel does not only uncover unique tangible heritage but also allows the tourist to be immersed in intangible heritage processes—traditional rites, festivities, ritual enactment, etc. Such experience could not have been possible without tourism. Therefore, tourism is the process through which heritage resources can be consumed by tourists and positively exploited by host community. Since heritage involves using the past for the present through the production and consumption of the past (Raivo, 2002) it promotes tourism.

Under this guise, heritage resources and tourism are indeed complementary. On one hand heritage resources promotes tourism development and tourism on the other showcases and preserves a people’s heritage (Ezenagu & Iwuagwu, 2016). In view of this, Comer (2012) observed that at heritage sites, tourism can provide both economic and social benefit for local populations and opportunities for understanding past and present cultures for visitors. Therefore, heritage is the living edifies of human life protected for its value to cultural continuity. Upon this premise, hangs United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) interest in the preservation and conservation of heritages for both present and future use. This preservation concept led to the endorsement of individual nation’s heritage resources as World Heritage Site. The political, social and economic benefits that could accrue a nation from such exercise cannot be overemphasized. Considering the benefits, it is no gainsaying that heritage resources play very important role in the lives of any nation and as such should be conserved and preserved but not the case with Nigeria. This is because heritage resources as evidences of past and living culture are seen as products of African traditional religions—a religion which has been degraded as a religion of the pagans, idols, heathen, etc. To this effect, anything that emanates from cultural institutions, lifestyle and events are vulnerable to destruction because of its association with African traditional religions. Whereas heritage exists as a testimony to and evidence of past activities through which the present can be identified and future preserved. These heritage resources as earlier stated can be transformed to touristic attraction an avenue not only to showcase their uniqueness but also as a symbol of identity and object of economic rejuvenation for a destination. In order to prove this relevance of heritage resources this research was initiated.

2. Conceptual literature
Nigeria is a multiethnic nation with unique ways of life showcased through the display of unique heritage resources. This could be seen in its myriad of natural endowment and cultural practices (Ezenagu, 2015). The word heritage refers to the indispensable living traditions of a community.
ICOMOS (1999) described it as our legacy “inheritance” from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. In itself heritage is a broad concept and includes the natural as well as the cultural environment. It encompasses landscapes, historic places, sites and built environments, as well as biodiversity collections, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences (Günülü, Yağıç, & Pınar, 2013). Describing heritage from its context encompasses a testament of human civilization which comprises all aspects of a community’s cherished past and present passed on through generations. Many a times heritage is considered from cultural perspective because it is solely the product of human activities. Although it could be either natural or cultural yet the natural altered by the human activities produces cultural processes. That is why heritage resources, cultural resources, and or, cultural heritage resources are used interchangeably.

In the light of the above, UNESCO defines it as the present manifestations of human past. These are usually those elements of our past that have the capacity or potential to contribute to our understanding or appreciation of human story or which are an important part of continuing cultural traditions in a spiritual and emotional sense (UNESCO, 2003). These elements of our past are the creative genius of human activities on the environment invested with cultural significance in a society. The accumulation of these elements and experiences from human creativity produced heritages which manifests as the invaluable cultural traditions of the society. Thus, the outcome of cultural traditions produced objects and generated knowledge which over-time yielded tangible and intangible historical legacies known today as cultural heritage (products of culture) (Ezenagu, 2017, 2015). In this form, culture is considered to be an important market tool as well as a major tourist attraction (Weiler & Hall, 1992).

Hence, the travel to consume cultural products is one of the factors that prompted tourism—a purposeful journey to satisfy human curiosity. This desire to travel to consume or learn about other people and culture has always been an essential travel motivator (Ezenagu & Iwuagwu, 2016). Hunziker and Krapf expressed this well when they pointed out, that there is no tourism without culture (Dewar, 2005). Thus, based on the urge to satisfy tourist curiosity to see other people in their authentic environment and to view the physical manifestation of their lives as expressed in arts and crafts, music, literature, dance, food and drink, play, handicrafts, language and ritual (Dewar, 2005) gave rise to cultural tourism—any journey motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific, or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a community, region, group or institution (Walker & Walker, 2011). According to Timothy and Nyaupane (2009), people visiting cultural and historical resources is one of the largest, most pervasive and fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry today. In order to maximize benefits from cultural tourism, host communities tend to commodify certain elements of their cultural heritage—particularly crafts and events to facilitate tourist consumption (Ivanovic, 2008). Since, cultural heritage attractions are products of historical processes they cannot be consumed without element of commodification in a way to maintain its authenticity and still satisfy tourist’s curiosity. To prevent the total destruction of cultural processes and products embellished with many outstanding historic values through commodification such resources are listed as World Heritage Site. With World Heritage status heritage resources are seen as one of the major motivating factor for cultural tourism in Nigeria. Ordinarily, much attention is not paid to such resources even by the owners but with its global fame, much attention is given to its tourism potentials knowing the benefits that could accrue the destination from tourist visitation. For instance, the inscription of Osun Osogbo sacred grove on the World Heritage List has not only opened the flood gate of international tourism in the destination but added to its value. For this reason, this work postulates that the listing of heritage resources adds to its touristic value and increases touristic activities in the destination. The agreement of heritage scholars on this postulation varies on different grounds. Yang, Lin, and Han (2010) claim that World Heritage Sites (especially cultural sites) have a significant tourist-enhancing effect for China on the pooling estimates. This implies that with the listing of heritage resources they not only gain global appeal but also tourism appeal. Also, Cuccia, Guccio, and Rizzo (2016) are of the opinion that the effects of cultural heritage in fostering tourism are a live topic in planning regional and local development policies. They...
maintained that the growth of UNESCO World Heritage List in promoting tourism has recently attracted great attention in the economic literature. Therefore, the question of heritage resources especially World Heritage Sites promoting tourism according to Buckley (2004) is difficult to answer for two reasons. Firstly, there are severe limitations in historical data on visitor numbers, demographics and expenditure. Secondly, World Heritage designation is only one of many factors influencing visitation and expenditure at particular sites, and there are several sources of uncertainty in attempting to tease out its particular contribution. Although the above is a fact yet Robinson and Picard (2006) are of the opinion that the very fact that such sites are recognized and designated for their universal significance can transform them very quickly into tourist destinations. And they further observed that it is one reason why some countries seek inscription in the first place, along with reasons to do with genuine protection of sensitive sites, landscapes and species, and the increased international profile and prestige designation brings with it. World Heritage Site status increases level of activities at the site especially tourism.

3. Culture, tourism and cultural tourism

Cultural tourism defies precise definition considering the nature and objective of activities therein. Therefore, there is no specific definition of either cultural or heritage tourism. Some call it cultural tourism, some heritage tourism, some cultural and heritage tourism or shortly cultural heritage tourism (Cultural and Heritage Tourism Alliance, 2002). The similarity of elements of cultural tourism and or heritage tourism rooted in culture made it precisely difficult to differentiate.

Heritage tourism could be described as the phenomenon in which the cultural, historical and ethnic components of a society or places are harnessed as resources to attract tourists (Chang, 1997). This definition did not differentiate the elements of attraction of both concepts. Leslie and Sigala (2005) merged both concepts in propounding a definition. They defined heritage and cultural tourism as the segment of the tourism industry that places special emphasis on heritage and cultural attractions. For Yale (1991), heritage tourism centered on what we have inherited, which can mean anything from historic buildings to art works, to beautiful scenery. This implies that heritage tourism is all about visiting sites with cultural relevance. On this note, cultural heritage tourism is commonly understood as the interplay between tourism, the use of cultural heritage assets, the consumption of experience and products and the tourist (McKercher & Cro, 2002). In the light of the above, cultural tourism is a travel that is motivated entirely, or in part, by artistic, heritage or historical attractions. Most often cultural tourism is associated with arts, humanities, museums, festivals, food, music, theatre and special celebrations (Edgell, 2006). While it is true that cultural tourism covers not just the consumption of the cultural products of the past, but also of the contemporary culture or the way of life of a people or region (Richards, 2001) which describes it also as heritage tourism.

Looking at the above definitions of heritage, cultural or cultural heritage tourism one thing clearly portrayed is the interaction of culture and tourism. Cultural tourism is then the product of culture and tourism and or the bridge between culture and tourism. Culture is all about the product of man’s relationship with his environment while tourism commodifies the products of such relationship for tourist consumption. Both constitute different forms of human activity. Culture as human activity is perceived as the totality of a people’s way of life. Otherwise, culture is a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group (UNESCO, 2001). Schaefer (2002) described it as the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects and behavior. In a nut shell, culture is a word that defines man’s relationship, communion and adaptation to his environment (Ezenagu, 2014). In adapting to the environment man evolved products and processes: norms, folklores, dance, traditions, customs, religion, ceremonies, rituals, the arts, crafts, language, dress, food, architecture and landscape. The desire to experience the above exotic unique heritage materials of different cultural areas gave rise to cultural travel. In other words, different forms of cultural expressions lure tourist while tourism activities consume culture. To consume culture requires the commodification of its products and processes. As Rodzi, Zaki, and Subli (2013) rightly observed that
culture needs to be transformed and reconstructed as tourism product and the process has to continue according to demands of tourists. On this wise, the consumption of tourism activity according to Wedow (1977) involves the “transformation of the object and place into attractions, their gradual movement from a setting to a representation of a setting.” Tourism activity in any heritage site transforms heritage resources into attraction through the process of commodification. With a commercial value tourism activities gave rise to the consumption of cultural products through experience. Therefore, cultural tourism will always thrive under the atmosphere of tourist desire to visit places of cultural interest to experience the spirit of the place by consuming heritage resources. The economic benefit derived from such visit serves to preserve and conserve the product at the same time promotes regional development. On the one hand, cultural heritage can serve as a tourism attraction, while tourism can lead to financial and political support for management of heritage. That is cultural tourism can encourage the revival of traditions and the restoration of heritage sites and monuments and at the same time empowers host community with economic activities as demanded by tourists. This form of tourism gives visitors the opportunity to understand and appreciate the essentials character of a place and its culture as a whole (Zedková & Kajzar, 2013). The vast exotic culture and tourism activities are the major drivers of heritage destination attractiveness which according to Danesi (2017) represent a context for socialization, trade and tourism. Thus, cultural materials and activities are raw materials for cultural tourism, an umbrella name for culture-focused tourism activities.

4. Nigeria heritage resources

Nigeria as earlier stated is historically and culturally rich with unique and varied heritage resources. These are amazing evidence of human creativity that can be found in virtually every locality in the country. They range from historic places, landscapes, sites and built environments, biodiversity, collections through past and present traditions, cultural practices, indigenous knowledge and technology to the contemporary life of the host communities. The above rich heritage resources of the country continue to be a strong driver and assets of tourism. Stratan, Perciun, and Gribincea (2015) affirmed that national cultural heritage should be considered an important tourist attraction in terms of intrinsic peculiarities, as well as for its continuing growth in cultural purposes, related to the history of different cultures and civilizations. This makes the cultural heritage of a community, an important tourist resource, increasing the tourism potential of an area. To increase the tourism potential and tourist appeal of heritage resources in the country many with significant cultural and historic values have been declared national monuments by National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM). This is the only government organization in the country charged with the responsibility to declare cherished cultural products and practices national monuments. They identify heritage resources for national recognition and also enlist such profound heritage in the UNESCO tentative list for endorsement as World Heritage Site.

In other words, heritage resources constitute major repository of the country tourism assets. So far, numerous tangible and intangible heritage has officially been gazette in the National Register with only two (Sukur Cultural landscape and Osun Osogbo sacred grove) enlisted as UNESCO World Heritage Site and many more still in the tentative list. At present, NCMM have declared 65 heritage properties national monument across the country. These cultural properties were recognized for their intrinsic values and outstanding significance beyond the community and states where they are located. Some of the unique heritage resources with outstanding historical and cultural significance declared national monuments by the NCMM include the following: Mbari Art of Imo state, Masquerade (mmonwu) festival of Anambra state, Dye Pits of kano state, Sukur kingdom, Osun Osogbo sacred grove, Nok culture of Kaduna state, Argungu fishing festival of kebbi state, Esie stone sculptures, the Great Kano Wall, Kano state, etc. These heritage resources are of great cultural significance to the country. Though only two of these have been enlisted as World Heritage Sites nevertheless others are of rich traditions especially cultural festivals.

Festivals are memorable events set aside to commemorate important events in the life of people and communities such as coronation, worship of god(s), rites of passage, birth, death, history of
origins, commencement of planting season, etc. (Ezenagu & Iwuagwu, 2016). These unique occasions are an integral part of the African life through which unique traditions of a community unfolds showcasing different dance styles, music, traditional wrestling, chants, songs, masquerades, crafts, local menu, etc. In other words, traditional festivals are embodiment of cultural activities especially the masquerade festival of south eastern Nigeria. According to Ezenagu and Olatunji (2014a), masquerade festivals are pertinent among African tribes especially the south eastern part of Nigeria. They are usually used to display cultural values and aesthetics.

The masquerades are very fundamental to traditional African society. This art of masquerade has long been a classic African expressive form, replete with meaning and cultural importance (Ezenagu, 2017). The masquerade is made up of the mask head and masquerade regalia worn by an initiate of the masquerade cult. Consequently, the masquerade regalia are considered sacred as some of the mask heads are replica of the emblems of the gods thereby the person behind the mask must not be unmasked by anyone calling out his name (Ezenagu, 2017). Thus, the masquerade, in some places, they are believed to be the dead ancestors and messengers of traditional deities from the supernatural world. They are entertaining characters of ancient African communities likened to the comedians and clown of this modern age. Many traditional festivals of south eastern Nigeria are masquerade oriented. This implies that there is hardly any cultural occasion without the display of masquerades.

One of such festivals is the Imoka festival of the Awka community of Anambra state. This is the most populous and important of all Awka traditional festivals. It marks the beginning of a new planting season and it is a medium through which the people thank god for the past year praying for a prosperous new planting season. The feast is attached to Imoka god and is generally celebrated in the fifth week of Awka first lunar month (May). It lasts for one native week (4 days) namely Eke, Orie, Afor, Nkwo excluding the first day of the event. It starts and ends on an Afor day. During the festival, young men roam the street accompanying masquerades which parade different villages squares entertaining people. Other features of the feast include display of various dancing group and mock battle of endurance of pain by young men (this involves the use of stick to flog people until one person quits). On the last day of the event, at Ameyi village square masquerades perform theatrical display in form of mock trials after which the festival ends with the narration of memorable stories of Awka great men by an orator.

However, apart from traditional festival, Nigeria possesses rich artistic heritage of great cultural significance from ancient communities of Igbo-ukwu, Benin, Ife, Nok and Esie. The artistic paraphernalia of these ancient cities are kept away in different museums across the world. Thus, it is then an established fact that Nigeria is endowed with many sculptural traditions which have for many centuries marveled the world with their unique artistic paraphernalia (Ezenagu & Olatunji, 2014b). One of such artistic traditions of Nigeria is the Esie soap stone sculpture. It comprises about

1000 soapstone objects carved both in human and animal forms. These sculptures represent men and women in various positions some seated on stools, kneeling or engaged with an activity. The figurines sometimes play musical instruments, hold machetes, or have their hands on their knees. Some sculptures are decorated with sophisticated hairstyle, dresses, tribal marks, necklaces and bracelets. They range in height from about ten centimetres to one metre yet no two of the stone images are exactly alike. These stone figurines depict a high complex civilization of human transaction analyzing the diverse cultural features engraved on the objects ... these stone images stands out as one of the distinguished sculptural traditions of perhaps African lost civilization. (Ezenagu & Olatunji, 2014b, 58)

This great art work was discovered by a hunter in the community by 1775. The strange arrangement of the stone images in a circular position all engaged in different human activities with an image at the center drew an unusual attention. With the images left in-suito, a museum was erected to house the objects and protect their cultural significance in 1945. The museum named
“Esie” to this day attracts tourists from all across the globe admiring the creative genius of the makers of stone sculptures. These heritage traditions have to a great measure promoted cultural tourism in the country.

5. UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Nigeria

UNESCO in bid to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity inscribes such on World Heritage List. This act is embodied in an international treaty called the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972 (UNESCO, 2013). The World Heritage Convention, a body established by UNESCO is responsible for inscribing the chosen site. Thus, a World Heritage Site is an area that is deemed to have exceptional universal value and thereby inscribed on the World Heritage List to be preserved for future generations to appreciate and enjoy. Henceforth, is protected against threats of changing social and economic conditions and natural decay. Originally, UNESCO’s effort was aimed at saving important cultural heritages for humanity from destruction or disappearance. The criteria for inscribing a site as World Heritage Site is for the following reason to represent a masterpiece of human genius or to contain superlative natural phenomena; or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance; or to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared (Leask & Fyall, 2006).

These UNESCO natural and cultural World Heritage Sites are among the world’s most-visited tourist attractions. Together with other culture and nature areas, Endresen (1999) also concurred that these World Heritage Sites are important tourism attractions and form the backbone of the tourism industry. Indeed, inscription on the World Heritage List can quickly cause a site to become a major tourist attraction. Tourism and visitation to these sites in Kajzar (2014) opinion has the potential to generate revenues that may benefit the protection of the sites as well as contribute to the livelihoods of the local communities living within and around the sites. This is the case of Nigeria two World Heritage Sites: the Sukur cultural landscape and Osun Osogbo sacred grove. Exploiting Osun and Sukur heritages as tourism resources could present new economic opportunities for the country because they are rich in historical, cultural and scientific value.

5.1. Sukur cultural landscape

Heritage landscapes play a central role in the heritage industry’s recovery of the past and serve as the quintessential mirrors of a culture’s collective past and their reinvention for tourist consumption (Johnson, 1996). According to Jansen-Verbeke (2009), they are seen as cultural properties representing the combination of the works of nature and of man. Marked by history and way of life, cultural landscapes illustrate the evolution of human society and settlement over time. In addition, they hold the imprints of physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by the natural environment and are shaped by successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal (UNESCO, 2007). They embrace a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment (UNESCO, 2007). In other words, landscape is a piece of land with testament of human interaction evident in continuing cultural traditions that spans over many centuries. Of which Sukur was a natural landscape modified by man's cultural expression into a cultural landscape. In view of this, Sukur cultural landscape is an environment modified, classified and interpreted by humankind (Eboreime, 2003).

The Sukur landscape, an ancient hilltop located in the Mandara Mountains in Madagali local government area of Adamawa state expresses traditional lifestyle over a long period of time. According to Eboreime (2003), the Sukur people constitute a microminority within the state, and display a material and spiritual culture distinct from their neighbors within the Madagali local government area. Garba (2017) described the kingdom as an ancient settlement with a recorded history of ancient iron smelting technology dating back to the 16th-century Sukur, ancient iron smelting heritage. It encompasses eloquent testimony to a strong and continuing spiritual and cultural tradition that has endured for many centuries. The site which has amazing historical,
spiritual, cultural and economic values is characterized by particular artifacts (stone architecture, iron smelting technology, landscape and physical relief) and attributes (Hidi’s Palace, stone walls, paved walk ways, stream, domesticated landscape with sacred trees, agricultural terracing, and other spiritual features, vernacular structures, traditional grave yards, stone wells), respectively (Olukoya, 2016).

Describing the cultural landscape, it consists of the Sukur Plateau and its scenic cultural features. The Hidi’s palace (King’s Palace) is situated at the center of Sukur town, about 16 times the size of a normal Sukur house and surrounded by a stone wall of about 8–9 ft high. The palace has four gates and each gate is used for special purposes. Stone-paved walkways lead to Sukur from the north to the east and this can be found along the hillsides leading to the top of the hill. This was designed to minimize erosion and to facilitate easy climbing and horse riding. This relates to the domesticated landscape for terrace farming as terraces are constructed up the hills to stabilize the soil and provide series of stepped level benches adoptable to hill farmers (Tagowa, 2010). By virtue of its unique continuing cultural traditions of many centuries ago Sukur cultural landscape is the first Nigeria landmark to be listed on the World Heritage Sites by UNESCO at one of its international conferences held in Marekkesh, Morocco in 1999. This amazing cultural landscape was discovered in 1984 by Nicholas David Mandara Archaeological Project. Prior to this time, Sukur was declared a national monument by Nigeria government through the NCMM in 1997 to protect the authenticity of the landscape from intrusion.

5.2. Osun Osogbo sacred grove

Traditional societies around the world have assigned special status to natural sites considered as sacred—either through the perception of residing deities and spirits, as shrines dedicated to ancestors, or as privileged spiritual sites for contemplation, meditation and even purification of the inner self (Schaaf, 2006). Sacred sites are areas of special spiritual significance to peoples and communities (Oviedo & Jeanrenaud, 2006). The sacredness of such place are usually attached to unique features within the natural environment not limited to rivers, rocks, mountains, caves, trees and constructed buildings (Ezenagu & Iwuagwu, 2016). Schaaf (2006) concurred that sacred sites can be found in different ecosystems or biomes, of which Osun sacred grove is a natural forested area in Osogbo town. Osun Osogbo sacred grove is the biggest and perhaps the only surviving sacred groves and rain forest in Yoruba land. The grove is a large area of undisturbed primary forest along the banks of Osun River which covers an area of 75 ha and it is a typical example of a true primary rainforest that is fast disappearing in the West African subregion and one of the few vestiges of the rainforests in Nigeria (NCMM, 2004). The longevity of the grove is attributed to its cultural relevance to Yoruba of South-western Nigeria. Within the sacred grove, Osogbo ancestors encounter Osun goddess and both entered into a covenant sealed with an annual sacrifice which has been kept for many decades now. This made the sacred grove a tangible expression of Yoruba divinatory and cosmological systems; its annual festival is a living, thriving and evolving response to Yoruba beliefs in the bond between people, their ruler and the Osun goddess (NCMM, 2004).

The cultural significance of the Osun festival cumulates in the people’s religious obligations to the goddess. Within the religious duties of the grove blooms the history of the Yoruba race of Osogbo origin. Thus, the focus of this religious obligation is embedded in Osun goddess preference of the grove as her abode with evident of her liquid body (Osun River) flowing therein. And upon this religious or spiritual aura is the grove sustained but with the coming of foreign religions (Christianity and Islam) the once flourishing religious landscape was threatened. The revival of the sacred grove was imperative in order to maintain the covenant relationship between the people of Osogbo and Osun goddess. To restore the spiritual essence of the grove, the assistance of Susan Wenger was sought. Her coming did not only revive the spirituality of the grove but also reinforced the Osogbo cultural identity otherwise would have been lost like that of other communities. As an artist Wenger saw beyond the physical to the abstract that art is an act of creation performed not without the gods. With this she was initiated into the cult of Obatala, from who she got spiritual inspiration made manifest in her creation of spiritual entities depicting spiritual beings

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of Yoruba cosmology at certain sacred spots in the grove. The grove thus became a symbol of Yoruba identity to protect this identity it was declared a national monument in 1965 by NCMM and in 2005 enlisted as World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

6. Challenges of heritage resources in Nigeria
Nigeria is richly endowed with diverse unique heritage resources which have been the major factor promoting cultural tourism in the country. These heritage resources as earlier noted are the products of different ethnic groups of the country. Despite the relevance of these products they are beset with challenges. The cultures that produced, protected and preserved these heritages are now indirectly destroying them through commercialization and modernization.

On the one hand, modernization started with colonization and ended producing Nigerians with western culture. To this new Nigerians African culture is substandard as a result should be replaced (Ezenagu, 2017). In view of this, Adesina (2005, 405) posits that “with the condemnation of everything African and introduction of everything European,” heritage resources which is a summary of the past activities and accomplishment of a group stands the chance of extinction despite its value. However, westernization was not the problem rather it vestiges chiefly foreign value system. The assimilation of foreign values relegated Nigerian traditional value consequently, many Nigerians associate cultural heritage resources with traditional African religion which has been described by some western scholars as fetish. As a result of this, many heritage resources especially traditional festivals are modified into carnivals to suit modern day tourist.

Also on the other hand, the increase in the demand for cultural tourism gave room for the commercialization of cultural products. For instance, in Osun sacred grove, the commercialization of the sacred activities challenges the spiritual essence of the event. As Wall and Mathieson (2006) warned that, as more and more tourists start visiting the holy sites, their religious significance, which made them famous, is being eroded. The demand for Osun festival increased with the addition of secular activities to the original event by some of its sponsors. These activities of sponsors including products used for the sponsorship negate the spiritual essence of the event. As Shepherd (2002) argues that once a destination or event is sold in the tourism market it becomes a commodity (that is a product or experience with financial value) and, as a consequence, loses its authenticity to tourists. This implies that sacred rituals can lose its authenticity when attached economic gain overshadows their spiritual expression. Confirming this assertion, Bahuguna (1998, 22) from his study of Himalayan culture stated that

Due to luxury tourism which is regarded as a soft industry, we have lost our identity. We have become ... half Westerner. This is a part of the material civilization’s concept, which regards everything as a marketable commodity.

This concept of selling Osun ritual as a commodity was observed from the activities of some religious key persons in Osun festival who reveal some hidden spiritual rituals to outsiders in a bid to financially maintain office and maximize profit from the large number of participants. Just as Eades (1992) asserted that the presence of large numbers of tourists could inevitably lead to the commercialization or commoditization of the pilgrimage site. In addition, the large number of visitors to heritage poses a problem of carrying capacity. When the number of visitors outweighs the site resources tends to deplete. The above challenges create the need for proper management of heritage sites for sustainability of cultural tourism.

7. Heritage resources and sustainable cultural tourism
The word sustainable has taken a prior position in the world in view of development. Today world leaders are in pursuit of equitable development in order not to stake the future of world. The United Nations first coined the term sustainable development in 1972 and used it to stress responsible action in development project. Sustainable development refers to a pattern of resource use that balances the fulfillment of basic human needs with the wise use of finite resources so that they can be passed on to future
generations for their use and development. Since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the paradigm of sustainable development has been broadened to include three constituents but mutually supportive elements; environmental protection, economic growth and social equity (UNESCO, 2013). On these elements hangs tourism activity which is been addressed by sustainability. Therefore, the sustainability of tourism activities must be geared toward environmental friendly, social compatible and economic viable activities. This is reflected in the key concept of tourism sustainability which entails meeting the needs of both visitors and host communities and protecting and enhancing the tourism attraction for the future as part of national economic resources. In this vein, tourism development can be said to be ecologically bearable in the long term, as well as economically viable and ethically and socially equitable for local communities. This sustainable development approach to tourism is important because tourism is an activity that is highly environmental dependent which implies that tourism makes extensive use of the environment (political, social, cultural, economic). Since the environment is the direct recipient of its impact the concept sustainability is inevitable. Hence, for tourism to be sustainable it must take cognizance of its impact on the environment.

Sustainability regarding heritages resources implies that the natural, cultural and others resources of tourism are conserved for continuous use in the future, while still bringing benefits to the present society (Khan, 2005). The issue of sustainable development in relation to cultural heritage can be understood in two ways: as a concern for sustaining the heritage, considered as an end in itself, and part of the environmental/cultural resources that should be protected and transmitted to future generations to guarantee their development. And as the possible contribution that heritage and heritage conservation can make to the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development (Khan, 2005).

On this wise, to safeguard integrity and fabric of Nigeria heritage resources can be achieved by sustainable tourism management. Since, Nigeria’s natural and cultural heritage sites are fundamental to tourism appeal their sustainability is dependent on the sustainability of their usage by both destination and tourists. In essence, the sustainable use of the country’s heritage resources for tourism must have at its center preservation and conservation. This kind of tourism must attempt to strike a balance between environment, economic growth and cultural diversity. In this way, sustainable tourism creates an alliance with culture and tourism to produce cultural tourism. This integration of tourism with culture not only contributes to the conservation of cultural assets but cultural tourism itself is a means of advertisement and propaganda, consequently, each cultural attraction individually is wealth, and none of them is superior to the other (Emekli & Baykal, 2011). This importance of cultural and historical heritage for tourism development and promotion was explained by Viva, Vokshi, and Pjero (2005). They observed that cultural heritage as part of human life is real evidence of the past and it attracts tourists and encourages tourism movement. Also Günlü et al. (2013) stressed that cultural tourism brings increased revenue to the heritage sites and, more broadly, to the community and country that hosts them. Therefore, cultural heritage has always played a positive role in preserving cultural values and educating the nation’s patriotic and national pride. And also has a strong potential to promote and contribute to Nigeria’s socioeconomic development. For instance, increased tourism revenue from sales of traditional paraphernalia at the Osun sacred grove World Heritage Sites is a remarkable contributor to Osun’s economic growth, while it creates more job opportunities for local people. Also Stratan et al. (2015) affirmed that many countries get income mainly from tourism activities generated by cultural heritage. The existence of an important cultural heritage from the qualitative and quantitative point of view generates many investments. Considering the benefits inherent in heritage resources, although it is crucial to explore and exploit these great properties to achieve economic, cultural and social benefits but in a way that would contribute to the development of Nigeria’s economic resources and to the preservation of the country’s heritage. Exploiting Osun sacred grove and Sukur cultural landscape as tourism resources, could present new economic opportunities for the country.
Hence, applying sustainable cultural tourism reveals the importance of utilizing heritage resources in tourism as a new source of revenue. Such an approach aims to prepare heritage treasures to be tourist attractions, which would contribute to the economic development of the country and to the dissemination of the country’s culture at the global level. In addition, educate Nigerian people about the value of their heritages and also draw up an outline of the most important scientific steps required to preserve and protect heritages for future generations. Also fostering the responsible use of heritage resources for tourism purposes can provide new employment opportunities, help alleviate poverty, curb rural flight migration among the young and marginally employed, and nurture a sense of pride among communities. This implies that tourism also offers a powerful incentive for preserving and enhancing intangible cultural heritage, as the revenue it generates can be channeled back into initiatives to aid its long-term survival. Therefore, as one of the world’s most powerful economic and social forces, well-managed tourism can and does give heritage, both tangible and intangible, a major role in contemporary society, reinforcing cultural identity and diversity as key reference points for development. In a nutshell, tourism and cultural sectors provide opportunities for sustaining traditional and contemporary cultural values.

From the foregoing, while natural and cultural heritages constitute unique attractions tourism has the power to deliver significant earnings for environmental protection, as well as add economic value to cultural heritage.

8. Conclusion
Tourism is a service industry that transforms human environment and activities into attractions. The activities of tourism in transforming natural and cultural heritages into attractions are reflected in the increasing number of destinations with products of historical and cultural relevance. The demand of such products gave rise to cultural tourism. In other words, heritage either cultural or natural could be best described as a tourist attraction. Nigeria is proliferated with numerous exceptional tangible and intangible heritage resources which have become very expensive human resources for sustainable tourism development especially as the country is on the move to diversifying its economy from the oil monopoly and developing tourism as one of the leading economic sector.

Over the past years, these cultural heritages have played a positive role in preserving cultural values and educating the nation’s patriotic and national pride. This is because heritages have strong potential to promote and contribute to the country’s socioeconomic development. The two UNESCO heritage sites in the country clearly illustrate the economic relevance of heritage. The historic value and cultural activities at these sites have not ceased to attract both international and domestic tourists to the site but have also enhanced their value. Today, many Nigerians now participate in activities at heritage sites because of its importance as a mark of cultural identity. It is rarely relegated as even African traditional religion which nurtured its activities is regarded as a way of life rather than a religion of pagans. To further illustrate the above, the Osun Osogbo annual festival with its ritual enactments has become an international event which has opened wide the flood gate of international tourism in the country. With the international status of the grove it further enhanced the value and activities of the site. Based on this, many more heritages have been placed on UNESCO tentative list for future enlistment. In view of the above, it is no gainsaying that heritage is and will remain one of the major products of tourism as long as tourism transformation and consumption of heritages will yield preservation and conservation of its resources. The vast and rich heritage resources of the country should be strategically repositioned to partner with tourism as its driver to lift the country’s economy as tourism cannot effectively flourish without the heritage components (Awodiya, 2016). Consequently, heritage resources have been increasingly employed as cultural tourism product and as destination competitiveness. This synergy between culture and tourism is more significant on the economy of the country. Culture is perhaps seen as motivating factor for tourism. In essence, cultural tourism is essential on the basis of the benefits it accrues to the nation’s economy. It supplements other attractions thereby increasing areas of interest and adding to tourist experience. Aside this, cultural tourism has
proven to have the potential to enhance understanding among cultures of the globe and a tool for not only in preserving heritage sites but also maintaining peaceful coexistence in different culture areas of the country. Many communities today because of communal ownership of heritage resources share common identity.

In conclusion, heritage resources are seen as one of the major mark of community’s survival and represents huge and varied collection of human creation across the globe and the entire span of human history. They are one of the major assets for tourism development. As vital tourism product can be used to educate visitors on the value of natural and cultural heritages. For this, reason heritages especially World Heritage Sites are effectively managed as sustainable tourism resources. This is because sustainable tourism development addresses economic, social and environmental issues.

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