

Developing Art and Craft as Marketing Commodities for Contemporary Nigerian Economy

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Abstract

Artists and craft-men often attempting to go further than the boundaries of normal art to untie the secrets of the world portray the true meaning of life and deliberate on the true purpose of existence. Artists have open creative minds which very few people possess in their respective societies at the time. This work discusses the value of arts and crafts in the general market. Art and Craft are like “brothers from the same father differing in motherhood”. They both come from the creative perspective. The works of art and craft are sold and exported across the shores of this country. Centres of art productions and craft centres are serving the purpose of tourist centres and resulting in foreign exchange. Both turn out house hold utensils used daily and as such, needed by everyone in one way or the other. They have both been used as a means of cultural preservations. The demand for these led to increase in the market value. The main thrust of this work focuses on the relevance of art and craft in the development of Nigerian economy in contemporary times.

Keywords: commodities, art, craft, contemporary, market, economy.

Introduction

The warm value of the Nigerian art and craft are attracting a lot of attention which has also involved the activities practiced in the rural and urban settlements. Nigeria is well known for her innovative craft works and her comprehensive effort over art and craft works which has brought her to the face of the world (Moses, 2007). The business of creativity has found a way and it is taking over the world. Capital for these kind of businesses are small, meaning most owners can create items in their own homes, making it an accessible and affordable opportunity for owning such a business.

Definitions and outline of crafts and visual arts

The dissimilarity between crafts and visual arts has always been vague. Some talk of 'the useful arts' as objects formed for everyday use, and the 'decorative arts' as those formed for their own sake. The use of craft techniques and skills by visual artists is seen easily, e.g. the photograph of a craft product is measured to be a manifestation of visual art. There has been no sharp dividing line between crafts and visual arts. According to Onwusah (2009) some observers consider crafts to be a bridge between visual art and industrial design, and industrial design, in turn, to be a bridge between craft and industrial manufacturing. This may be called the traditional mass production standpoint.

It is not possible to consider visual arts as merely contributing to crafts. Each sector has its own independent standing and market, but they also have a mutually supportive and interdependent relationship, including their linkages with the industrial design and formal factory-oriented mass production sectors. Generally, as well as from a marketing and consumer perception, crafts and visual arts have common characteristics in that they both produce basically hand-made products, most times culturally rooted, whose characteristic quality or inherent character has principally an aesthetic appeal which is judged mostly by the eye.

Artisans and craft share many similar characteristics. Artisans see themselves as more business inclined people. Artisans are mainly

successful when it comes to economic terms. Artisans learn their skills in the family or community where they live, or receive skilled training under government craft development initiatives. In developed communities, artisans make career choices, studying degree courses in the craft and visual arts areas in universities and colleges. Artisanal products are normally commercial, utilitarian objects used in many different ways. Artisans' prices are usually based on material and labour costs, although a small number of artisans may command premium prices, linked to good reputation. Artisanal products sell in exhibitions, retail outlets, street markets, fairs, tourist venues and export markets. They are frequently sold through entrepreneurs and middlemen, NGOs, and producers' and exporters' associations. Internet facilities and websites are also being increasingly used for marketing artisanal products (Chukwukadibia, 2000).

Art and Craft as Marketing Commodities

Nigerian local handicrafts are not only superb; they also show identity also in several colours and forms. These art pieces could be used for interior decoration and embellished attires. Bearing in mind the essential values of these artworks, some craftsmen use them to show for textile materials of several flora and fauna motifs appreciated by some people. It is also worthy of note that tourists spend their money on them. These artworks ranges from carved beautiful human figures, plants and animals, designed beads and ornaments that show out the uniqueness, variety and relativity of the Nigerian, also extending to the African nations. Craft and artworks are highly appreciated in and outside Nigeria. Arts and crafts, even though are mostly done by local people, is a lucrative venture (Magu, 2006).

As observed by Darlington (2001), craft of decorative baskets, foot mats, drink covers and other items made with grass and cane has a lot to offer to the economy, and until the grassroots craftsmen are motivated, government would continue to lose huge sums in revenue through such neglect.

Ahmed a craft man from Kano said he makes decorative covers, food pads and trays from grasses, bamboo and cane and sells them in the open

markets and to middlemen, who resell them to people that take them overseas. He continued that some people buy the baskets to store precious items such as necklaces and jewellery, among others. To this category of people, the basket helps to preserve their jewellery for as long as desired," he posits.

In narrating, he explained that the baskets come in different sizes and designs, and also mentioned that buyers acquire them for different purposes, too. According to him, the table pads and food covers also made with grass are in high demand. Furthermore, he pointed out that "While ladies like the very small, handy baskets either for keeping their clothes or storing precious items, ranging from ornaments to needlework materials, hotels go for the pads and food covers. The food pads protect tables, especially those with glass tops from scratches and losing their lustre," he said. Ahmed said the business is a lucrative one as huge sums of money in local and foreign currencies exchange hands daily. He explained that some of his clients include tourists, especially those from Europe, who love local arts and crafts for their aesthetics and the stories behind them. "Aside big profile artworks, whose prices run into hundreds of thousands of Naira, the market also sell locally made ornaments such as bracelets, necklaces and headbands (Uzor, 2002).

Daniel (2004) pointed out that while Musa and his peers make gold out of weaving grasses and canes, lots of other craftsmen deal on ivory, wicker and leather works, pottery, textiles, jewellery, bronze, brass, glass casting and such others. All over and across the country, these craftsmen sell their products, which are estimated to be in hundreds of million Naira to middlemen, who take them to locations such as the airports, five star hotels and other outlets for tourists to buy and in turn make huge profits.

One may ask out of curiosity, "How lucrative is craft work in Nigerian market"

The big truth regarding this challenging question is that craft works are doing great and their market blooming. Creativity and articulated innovations form the main key to keep an individual in the art and craft

business. The Nigeria handcraft has witnessed a rise as the demand for our local craft products is on the increase because outstanding hand-crafted products have become the order of the day which is competing and almost knocking out foreign products.

Knowledge and innovation of craft works forms the basis for sustainable economic development with radically accelerating the pace of change and raising long term stake to the national development. A suitable analysis of Nigeria Art and craft will give you a quick look of a prevailing market in this present economy. There are lots of benefits from the Art and Craft marketing. They are

- a. It is natural
- b. It is market flourishing
- c. It has various opportunities to tap into
- d. It represents our Nigerian culture.

Nigeria is modern example of development in today's global economy. Modernism and tradition intertwine together in a time of globalization, making these cities fertile environment for sociological analysis. Art is one fascinating sector in this time of social upheavals. Transformation processes in the area of art direct changes in the function of art. As the positions of the artists that are part of the material and symbolic art value chain begin to shift (Bourdieu, 1992/1996).

Nigeria is trying to catch up with established, international, cultural metropolises like New York, Paris and London. Economic success alone is no longer the aim today. Everyone wants to be great, and this requires cultural development.

Modernity is an artefact of the hegemonic position of this country Nigeria, who shaped an art world according to its institutions and laws, with art pieces originally functioning differently from and unlike raw commodities (Smith, 2013).

Marketing fundamentals for visual artists

There are noteworthy differences in business management for artworks, and the basic marketing principles are often completely different. The main differences are in the nature of the products, markets and prices of the artwork:

- i. works are non-functional, emotional, social, political, traditional and should have cultural statements,
- ii. works should not be greatly affected by commercial sector constraints.

Art works are sold in outlets like the galleries, exhibitions, art fairs, and through commission. Prices of art works usually have their basis in aesthetic (appreciation of beauty) values and artistic rendition and not in the material or labour costs of the commercial sector. Marketing of artworks is of personal and individual effort. The marketing channels sometimes differ from those used by artisans and craft enterprises and could be sold through the same channel. But the basics of the business cycle remain equally applicable to marketing original artworks, even though the artist's reputation somehow has a greater impact on the demand for his or her works and therefore, on the price of the artwork.

Exhibitions

An exhibition can be organized by a visual artist alone, sharing a show space with other artists, or in collaboration with exhibition agencies or galleries. Describing how the project will benefit all involved with it can be advantageous. No matter what market approach is adopted, artists and artisans should think through the basic issues when creating their marketing strategy in order to capitalize effectively on their assets.

Recommendation

In response to a growing market of symbolic goods and international competition for global visibility, the Nigerian governments should introduce creative policies and programs to transform their landscapes

with an accumulation of symbolic institutions including “mega-museums”, theatres, and art and craft schools.

Conclusion

The extensive approach of this brand of market has liberated the poor and the middle class to a great magnitude with a hopeful future. Nevertheless, students are also finding and grabbing their opportunities around craft work, it is a hope for Nigeria as a nation, and massive wealth creation for the people.

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