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The Role of Cottage Art Industry in Developing Nigeria Economy

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ABSTRACT

The current economic reforms implemented by the Federal Government of Nigeria aim to realign the nation's economy in order to address the prevailing economic challenges, including a high unemployment rate and imbalances in foreign trade resulting from excessive reliance on imported goods relative to domestically produced goods. The objective of this study is to examine the contributions of the cottage industry to the economic development of Nigeria, with the intention of addressing the aforementioned challenges. The cottage industry plays a crucial role in the Nigerian economy, making substantial contributions to the production of employment opportunities, the redistribution of income, the alleviation of poverty, and general economic expansion. This research provides an examination of the history and contemporary state of the cottage industry, complemented by empirical data to substantiate its importance. Furthermore, this study delves into the many obstacles encountered by cottage industry firms in Nigeria and puts up suggestions to enhance their progress. The data for this study will be gathered from reputable academic journals, official government reports, and scholarly literature.

Keywords: Cottage, Arts, Economy, Nigeria, Unemployment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The cottage art sector in Nigeria has exerted a substantial influence on the country's economy, encompassing a diverse range of indigenous crafts such as pottery, ceramics, textiles, carving, and painting.

This conventional industry, frequently disregarded in conversations regarding economic progress, has not only played a role in safeguarding cultural heritage but also in enhancing the socioeconomic welfare of local people. In Nigeria's pursuit of diversification and sustainable prosperity, it is imperative to acknowledge and bolster the potential of the cottage art sector. The cottage art sector has been a prominent contributor to Nigeria's economic progress. The sector in question has played a significant role in stimulating economic development, facilitating tourism, and generating employment prospects for local residents, owing to its abundant cultural history and wide array of indigenous crafts. (Adeyemi, 2017; Ezihe & Okeke, 2021; Gbenga & Eke, 2015; Ogunleye & Ayandibu, 2019).

The pursuit of self-sufficiency and economic progress in Nigeria has served as a catalyst for the current economic reforms implemented by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The privatisation policy of government industries, companies, agencies, institutions, and establishments in Nigeria has been implemented as a commendable measure to decrease the excessive reliance of the Nigerian population on the government for their sustenance. This policy aims to promote and guarantee optimal productivity and efficiency. According to Soludo (2006), the implementation of economic reforms by the federal government led to an increase in the external reserves level to slightly over \$40 billion by August 2006. This increase was observed even after the payment of \$12 billion to Paris Club creditors. Professor Charles Soludo, the former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), emphasised that private-public partnerships continue to be the most effective means of fostering economic growth. He observed the necessity of further enhancing the public-private cooperation approach. Globally, there is a pervasive emphasis on the well-being of individuals. A nation that fails to engage in this practice can be considered unsuccessful.

Art serves as a valuable tool or instrument that can be efficiently employed to promote the well-being of its citizens, as no individual can sustain their existence without the presence of art. Therefore, the claim that art is synonymous with life. In light of this, it is imperative to rejuvenate the apathetic disposition that our society has cultivated towards the field of art. It is important to acknowledge that there has been a lack of significant attempts to revive certain struggling art industries, such as textile mills, the ceramic production sector, and the printing industry. Furthermore, there has been a lack of assistance for existing cottage art industries in order to enhance their production levels. In support of this assertion, recent developments indicate that the Nigerian industrial sector is currently experiencing a state of economic downturn, characterised by intense competition and fragmentation. According to Sonowo (2006), it is particularly astonishing to consider that a significant number of employees have been terminated despite the hardship in the country. He asserts that the Textiles and Garment Workers Union, one of the most powerful affiliate unions of the Nigeria Labour Congress, exemplifies the unfortunate condition of the labour force. The workforce of textile workers has experienced a significant decline, decreasing from 370,000 to a mere 30,000 individuals. The "textile sub-sector" has been severely impacted by smuggling and disadvantageous tariffs, resulting in widespread factory closures and workforce reductions.

It is important to acknowledge the significance of art in the advancement of any economy. The primary objectives of incorporating art education into school curricula are focused on self-improvement and productivity, which are crucial for economic progress. According to Jegede (1979), unless we actively engage our artists in all aspects of our lives, our development would be susceptible to widespread exploitation by outsiders, who would benefit from their cultural and economic progress.

It is discouraging to observe that individuals who are engaged in cottage art sector do not receive government financial assistance to enhance their degree of inventiveness. They are seen as people who produce low-quality artworks primarily for their own survival without considering the importance of their works to human life. It is important to acknowledge that art is essential for the survival of every individual, and therefore, no economy can function without giving proper acknowledgment to the role of art and the cottage art sector.

Jegade (1979) notes that the modern economy's structure, material accumulation, and political dominance by external powers pose a significant risk. It has been asserted that the production of material goods and the process of nation-building are rooted in creativity and also, argued that the architects responsible for the construction of skyscrapers and the design of automobiles, trucks, and planes are derived from the imaginative faculties of artists. Furthermore, they assert that the creation of various items such as textiles, tiles, cups, plates, and bottles can be attributed to the efforts of artists. Regrettably, Nigerian society has become a dumping ground for industrial items due to our inclination towards foreign goods without critically examining their impact on the culture that produced them. Nevertheless, the recent economic reforms have begun to generate positive outcomes for indigenous cottage art by enhancing its patronage.

2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE COTTAGE INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

Pre-Colonial Era

The pre-colonial era in Nigeria witnessed a significant historical progression of the cottage industry, which was founded upon conventional economic pursuits like agriculture, fishing, blacksmithing, mineral mining, and manufacture. Prior to British colonisation, these commercial endeavours served as the fundamental support of Nigeria's economy. During this age, the factors of production, including land, labour, capital, and entrepreneurship, played a crucial role in facilitating production (Oloidi, 2021). Indigenous populations actively participated in diverse activities that provided sustenance to their communities and made significant contributions to local economies.

Furthermore, the establishment of direct interactions with Europeans in port cities such as Bonny introduced a novel aspect to the pre-existing commercial networks that had been in existence since approximately 1500. Following the Berlin Conference in 1884, European powers partitioned the interior of Africa into colonial territories, resulting in the British colonisation of Nigeria from 1889 to 1914 (AHA, 2022). During this century, Africans underwent substantial transformations as a result of World War I, including military conscription and heightened engagements with European countries (AHA, 2022). The pre-colonial period in Nigeria was marked by a dynamic traditional economy that relied on indigenous customs and economic endeavours, serving as the basis for subsequent advancements brought about by the colonial era.

Colonial Era

The cottage art industry had a substantial impact on Nigeria's economic environment during the colonial era. The cottage industry flourished by promoting traditional artisanship, which encompassed activities such as textile dyeing, weaving, and ceramic manufacture. This not only empowered rural people but also made significant contributions to local economies (Oluwambe and Ogunduyile 2020).

The artisanal activities in question not only functioned as a source of sustenance but also served as a medium for cultural manifestation and the safeguarding of a legacy. The cottage art sector underwent significant transformations during the colonial period, resulting in notable impacts on production processes and market dynamics. According to Abiodun (2018), the incorporation of novel technologies and materials has had a significant impact on conventional art forms, resulting in a fusion of indigenous methodologies with colonial influences. Furthermore, the arts and crafts industry has emerged as a promising domain for generating wealth and promoting sustainable development, underscoring the significance of these skilled crafts in Nigeria's economic framework (Iriwieri, 2009). In general, the colonial era in Nigeria was characterised by a phase of change and adjustment for the cottage art sector. This period witnessed the convergence of traditional handicraft and colonial influences, which significantly influenced the course of artisanal production and economic endeavours inside the nation.

Post-Colonial Era

The cottage art sector in Nigeria experienced notable advancements throughout the post-colonial period, characterised by a fusion of traditional workmanship and contemporary inspirations. According to Oluwambe and Ogunduyile (2020), the cottage industry, which includes various activities such as textile dyeing, weaving, pottery, and wood carving, maintained its significant presence within the cultural and economic fabric of the nation. The preservation of Nigeria's rich legacy and the provision of economic empowerment opportunities, particularly for rural populations, were facilitated by these artisanal activities (Abiodun, 2018).

The emergence of the cottage art industry was further accelerated by the formalisation of art education following the process of colonisation. According to Kashim, Ogunduyile, and Adelabu (2011), educational institutions such as Yaba College of Technology and Ahmadu Bello University have emerged as centres for the cultivation of artistic abilities and the advancement of indigenous art forms. During this era, there was a combination of conventional methods with modern design ideas, resulting in the production of distinctive and culturally influenced artworks that attracted both domestic and global audiences.

In addition, the cottage art sector plays a significant role in the preservation and development of culture. Nigerian art is celebrated for its wide range and distinctiveness, which mirrors the dynamic history, customs, and convictions of the various ethnic communities in the nation. Cottage art goods serve as a means of conserving and promoting Nigerian history by portraying various cultural features. The industry plays a significant role in fostering the advancement and perpetuation of traditional art techniques and craftsmanship, thereby mitigating the potential loss resulting from the process of modernization.

The export sector also demonstrates the economic contributions of the cottage art industry. Art goods originating from Nigeria, including textiles, sculptures, and paintings, are in high demand within global markets. These commodities are exported to several countries globally, thereby making a significant contribution to the country's foreign exchange profits. The aforementioned exports serve the dual purpose of generating cash and bolstering Nigeria's global standing as a prominent centre for cultural and artistic manifestation.

3. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE COTTAGE INDUSTRY TO THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY

In Nigeria, the cottage art sector has made noteworthy contributions to the nation's economy. This industry encompasses a range of small-scale artisanal endeavours that generate diverse artistic expressions, including pottery, textiles, woodwork, metalwork, beading, and fine art paintings. These artefacts are greatly esteemed both domestically and globally, symbolising Nigeria's abundant cultural legacy. One of the significant benefits of the cottage art sector is the provision of employment opportunities. The industry offers work prospects for a substantial population, especially in rural and underdeveloped regions where employment possibilities are limited. Artists and artisans engage in their craft in compact workplaces or within their residences, enabling them to generate revenue for the sustenance of themselves and their families.

Furthermore, the cottage art sector generates indirect employment prospects for merchants, suppliers, and retailers who play a role in the value chain of these products. The cottage art industry assumes a pivotal role in the alleviation of poverty and the advancement of rural areas. A significant number of artisans and craftspeople originate from rural regions where agriculture serves as the primary means of sustenance. Through participation in cottage art activities, individuals have the opportunity to broaden their sources of income and decrease their reliance on subsistence farming. Consequently, this phenomenon contributes to the mitigation of poverty and the advancement of rural development within the nation. (Oshavadua, 2017; Sanga, 2017; Ogboni & Timipa, 2018; Ohaneje & Obetta, 2019; & NTDC, 2016).

Furthermore, the cottage art industry assumes a substantial role in the sustainability and advancement of cultural heritage. Nigerian art is renowned for its extensive diversity and uniqueness, reflecting the vibrant history, traditions, and beliefs of the several ethnic groups in the country. Cottage artefacts function as a mechanism for the preservation and advancement of Nigerian history through the depiction of many cultural characteristics.

The sector has a crucial role in promoting and preserving traditional art skills and craftsmanship, therefore reducing the risk of loss caused by modernization. The cottage art industry's economic contributions are also evident in the export sector. Nigerian art objects, including textiles, sculptures, and paintings, are highly sought after in international markets. The exportation of these commodities to several countries worldwide plays a substantial role in generating foreign exchange earnings for the respective country. The exports stated above have a twofold function: to generate revenue and to enhance Nigeria's international reputation as a renowned hub for cultural and artistic expression. (Oshavadua, 2017; Sanga, 2017; Ogboni & Timipa, 2018; Ohaneje & Obetta, 2019; & NTDC, 2016).

The cottage art business serves as a catalyst for the growth of domestic tourism. Nigerian tourists, along with international visitors, are drawn to the distinctive crafts and artworks originating from the nation. Visitors frequently frequent local markets, art galleries, and craft fairs with the intention of acquiring these commodities as mementos or for individual consumption. Consequently, this stimulates local economies and generates supplementary revenue for artisans and craftspeople. The Nigerian government has implemented a range of interventions and programmes to bolster and advance the cottage art industry. These encompass the provision of financial assistance for training initiatives, the facilitation of access to credit facilities, and the building of infrastructure to augment production and marketing capabilities.

Furthermore, the implementation of art centres and galleries has enhanced the prominence and commercial viability of cottage art goods, both at the local and global levels. The cottage art business in Nigeria has produced substantial economic contributions through the creation of jobs, alleviation of poverty, preservation of culture, acquisition of foreign currency, and promotion of tourism. In addition to sustaining the lives of artists and craftspeople, the sector also serves to advance Nigeria's abundant cultural legacy. The Nigerian government can enhance the potential of the cottage art sector and optimise its contributions to economic development by offering essential assistance and investments. (Oshavdua, 2017; Sanga, 2017; Ogboni & Timipa, 2018; Ohaneje & Obetta, 2019; & NTDC, 2016).

The cottage art industry could contribute immensely to the economic growth by replacing imported goods with home-made goods. This helps to strengthen the economy. Ajayi(2005) observed that the role of cottage industries in economic development cannot be over-emphasised. He asserted that, "it is one of the ways to reduce imports and thereby correcting balance of trade". Through art creativity, 'some locally produced goods can be developed, nurtured, encouraged and thus improve their patronage. Jhingan (2002) remarks that export promotion helps a country to reduce its overdependence on foreign made goods. Arije (2005) supports this assertion when he observes that in spite of the proliferation of the traditional set up by foreign religious, western education and industrialization, traditional pottery industry in Igbara-Odo (Ekiti State) has served the targeted patrons who still find it more pleasant than the industrialized utensils both at home and abroad. Some of the art cottage industries were borne out of a strong desire to recreate creativity and innovation, purposely to bring out a revolution in the art of large productivity.

Employment Generation

The cottage art sector in Nigeria has a substantial impact on job creation, especially for youth and women. Approximately 4.2 million individuals are currently employed in Nigeria's creative industries, encompassing media, entertainment, tourism, visual arts, and handwork sectors, as per estimates. According to the Work and Labour in the Creative Industries: Nigeria Final Report (2023), this sector has the capacity to provide an extra 2.7 million work opportunities by 2025, hence aiding in the reduction of both young unemployment and overall unemployment rates in the nation. Regarding gender distribution, the Nigerian creative industries employed approximately 3.2 million individuals in 2019, with 1.9 million being females and 1.3 million being males. According to Employment and Labour in the Creative Industries: Nigeria Final Report (2023), the cottage art industry offers job prospects in diverse occupational sectors, including beauty and lifestyle, entertainment, handicrafts, textile production, and garment trades. In Nigeria, the cottage art industry plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage, promoting artistic expression, and generating economic opportunities. This industry makes a substantial contribution to the country's economy and social development by combining traditional craftsmanship with new influences and generating a wide array of work opportunities.

Income Redistribution

The cottage art sector in Nigeria assumes a substantial role in the redistribution of income through the provision of employment opportunities and its contribution to the alleviation of poverty. Research findings indicate that cottage enterprises play a significant role in generating employment opportunities and income across different regions of Nigeria, encompassing both educated individuals and young women. Artisanal activities generate economic prosperity, employment prospects, and aid in alleviating poverty in rural regions, ultimately resulting in enhanced quality of life (Umeji, Eleanya, Obisike, & Okuma., 2021).

In addition, cottage industries employ locally procured raw materials, function from residential or small-scale workplaces, and exhibit a high degree of labour intensity, hence demonstrating their efficacy in accommodating surplus labour within the economy. Cottage industries in Nigeria play a significant role in income redistribution by generating work opportunities for individuals who would otherwise be unemployed. This contributes to the creation of wealth and the decrease of poverty. The cottage art industry in Nigeria has a substantial impact on income redistribution. It not only provides income for artisans but also contributes to the enhancement of rural infrastructure, the increase in household incomes, and the promotion of a fairer distribution of national income (Umeji, Eleanya, Obisike, & Okuma, 2021).

Poverty Reduction

The cottage art industry in Nigeria is vital for alleviating poverty through the creation of job opportunities, the stimulation of local business ventures, and the facilitation of economic growth in both rural and urban regions. Cottage industries, which possess the capacity to generate employment opportunities, have been recognised as a viable approach to mitigate poverty and unemployment (Gulloma, 2020). The implementation of cottage industries has been suggested as a potential approach to alleviating poverty among a significant number of Nigerians, with intentions to develop a total of 774 cottage enterprises throughout the nation. Furthermore, cottage enterprises are regarded as crucial for generating income and employment prospects, particularly in rural areas.

Nigeria can attain a more equal income distribution, balanced regional industrial development, and enhanced living standards for rural residents by advocating for the growth of cottage industries. Cottage industries make significant socio-economic contributions to rural livelihoods by effectively alleviating poverty, generating employment opportunities, using indigenous technology, and efficiently mobilising local resources (Umeji, Eleanya, Obisike, & Okuma, 2021). The cottage art industry in Nigeria has a substantial impact on income redistribution. It not only provides income for artisans but also contributes to the enhancement of rural infrastructure, the increase in household incomes, and the promotion of a fairer distribution of national income (Umeji, Eleanya, Obisike, & Okuma, 2021).

Economic Growth

In Nigeria, the cottage art sector plays a crucial role in fostering economic growth through its contributions to poverty alleviation, job creation, and socio-economic advancement. Research has indicated that cottage businesses have a significant impact on poverty and unemployment reduction, particularly in rural regions where small industries serve as primary contributors to employment and revenue generation. Cottage industries have been found to have significant socio-economic contributions, including promoting fair income distribution, facilitating balanced regional industrial growth, and enhancing living standards in rural communities (Umeji, Eleanya, Obisike, & Okuma, 2021). Studies have emphasised that cottage enterprises generate economic prosperity, employment prospects, and aid in alleviating poverty, especially in rural regions. Cottage industries in Nigeria have a crucial role in promoting the equal distribution of national income and enhancing household incomes, thus contributing to the enhancement of living standards, despite the presence of obstacles such as inadequate infrastructure. Cottage industries in Nigeria make a substantial contribution to both economic growth and social development through the promotion of local entrepreneurship, utilisation of indigenous technology, and absorption of surplus labour within the economy (Umeji, Eleanya, Obisike, & Okuma, 2021).

4. CHALLENGES FACED BY THE COTTAGE INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

(i) Limited Access to Financial Resources

The Nigerian cottage industry's expansion is impeded by insufficient capital, which restricts investment in infrastructure, equipment, and technology. This limits the ability to produce, develop new products, and expand into new markets. Entrepreneurs encounter challenges in optimising operations, implementing quality improvements, and achieving successful competition in the absence of enough finance (Eniayewu, 2005). Obtaining finance is essential for achieving long-term growth and fostering innovation. The availability of finance plays a pivotal role in the prosperity of cottage industries. By enhancing financial assistance and facilitating access to the capital market, small firms can augment their productivity and profitability.

(ii) Insufficient Infrastructure

The cottage art business in Nigeria faces substantial difficulty due to insufficient infrastructure, which encompasses restricted availability of dependable electricity and regulatory obstacles. The lack of adequate infrastructure is a significant obstacle to the expansion and functioning of cottage firms, hence impeding their productivity and capacity to prosper in the era of digitalization. The resolution of these deficiencies in infrastructure is of utmost importance for the long-term viability and growth of the cottage art sector in Nigeria.

(iii) Restricted Market Access

The cottage art sector in Nigeria faces a notable obstacle in the form of limited market access, which poses constraints on product distribution and impedes profitability. Cottage enterprises encounter obstacles in expanding their market reach as a result of inadequate infrastructure and insufficient expertise in branding and marketing, which adversely affects their sales and competitiveness.

(iv) Competencies and Technological Disparities

The cottage art business in Nigeria faces notable obstacles due to skills and technological shortages, which have a direct impact on the quality of products and the industry's competitiveness. The industry's growth and sustainability are hindered by a lack of technical skills and insufficient technology, emphasising the necessity for capacity building and technology transfer.

5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COTTAGE INDUSTRY

Enhancing Financial Accessibility: In order to foster the growth of the cottage art sector, governments should prioritise enhancing the availability of financial resources for craftsmen. The aforementioned objective can be accomplished by implementing dedicated microfinance institutions or loan programmes that are tailored to meet the specific requirements of cottage art entrepreneurs. Furthermore, it is imperative for governments to contemplate the establishment of financial incentives, such as grants, subsidies, or tax benefits, as a means to stimulate investment within the sector. As an illustration, the Indian government has introduced initiatives such as the "MUDRA Yojana" to facilitate accessible financial resources for small and micro-enterprises. This initiative has the potential to be expanded to encompass the cottage art sector (Planning Commission, 2016).

Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development is a crucial factor in facilitating the expansion of the cottage art sector. It is recommended that governments allocate resources towards the establishment of art clusters or specialised craft communities, which would offer craftspeople access to communal amenities such as workshops, training centres, and exhibition venues. Furthermore, the enhancement of transportation networks and logistical facilities will play a significant role in facilitating the effective transit of both raw materials and finished commodities. Bhutan has implemented a notable instance of infrastructure development through the establishment of "Centres for ZorigChusum" throughout the nation. These centres serve as training and manufacturing facilities for traditional crafts, as highlighted by the National Environment Commission (2020).

Enhancing Market Access

The enhancement of market access is of utmost importance for the cottage art sector to flourish. Authorities can bolster craftspeople by offering platforms and marketing aid, including both tangible and virtual resources. One such approach is to create specialised markets or e-commerce platforms that facilitate the connection between craftsmen and potential buyers. Moreover, engaging in trade fairs, exhibitions, and cultural festivals on both national and international scales can provide artisans with the opportunity to showcase their products to broader audiences and enhance their market penetration. According to the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (2017), the Government of Bangladesh has introduced various programmes such as the "Crafts Fair" and "Craft Villages" in order to facilitate market entry for artisans.

The Importance of Skills Development and Technological Upgrading

The continuous development of skills and the upgrading of technology are crucial factors for ensuring the long-term viability of the cottage art sector. It is recommended that governments engage in partnerships with educational institutions and vocational training centres in order to provide customised skill development programmes that cater to the specific requirements of artisans. This may encompass instruction in both conventional and contemporary artistic methodologies, advancements in design, and proficiencies in entrepreneurship. Moreover, offering monetary assistance to craftsmen to acquire contemporary technologies and digital resources might augment efficiency and the calibre of their products. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020), the "Sumae Skill Development Programme" in Japan is a commendable endeavour that facilitates the enhancement of skills in traditional crafts through the establishment of connections between artisans and expert craftsmen.

6. CONCLUSION

Faced with a myriad of obstacles, including limited access to capital, weak infrastructure, and low market accessibility, the cottage art sector persists in flourishing, thereby providing significant contributions to the broader Nigerian economy. It is important to acknowledge that the cottage art sector plays a crucial role in the economic development of any country, including Nigeria. Nevertheless, the lack of acknowledgment by the government, education planners, and policymakers about the significance of art as a catalyst for economic reforms exacerbates the challenges faced by the cottage art industry within Nigeria's industrial framework. The insufficient financial resources allocated to the management of the cottage art sector by numerous entrepreneurs provide a significant obstacle to its progress.

This has rendered many cottage art industries ineffective, transforming them into 'roadside art' that receives minimal or no support from the public. Therefore, it is imperative for the government to promote the establishment of cottage art businesses in many states of the federation and offer financial aid, such as low-interest loan grants, to incentivize art practitioners. This measure will effectively contribute to the enhancement of the declining economy by fostering job creation and promoting optimal productivity, thus mitigating our excessive reliance on imported commodities.

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