

## USER'S PERCEPTION OF ICONIC BUILDINGS DESIGN IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

Many notable countries has remain relevant in the geographical world through the architectural product associated with it. Iconic buildings, especially, have represented the culture and the practice in a locality. It has also serves in capacity of economic revitalization, preserves historical events, keeps order and meaning of religious concepts and expresses the evolving architecture of a locality. This means that iconic buildings in its originality, representing the sited community, exhibits the uniqueness of their architecture, thereby, capable of improving the economy of the locality through tourism. Therefore, this study was carried out to evaluate the hypothesis that the iconic buildings in Nigeria do not represent the culture and architecture of the sited locality. A total of 480 copies of questionnaire returned were used to examine twelve selected iconic buildings in two prolific cities of Lagos and Abuja in Nigeria. The originality of the iconic buildings was evaluated through the compass of the sited neighbourhood and inhabitants socio-cultural characteristics. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to establish the relationship between participant neighbourhood and socio-cultural characteristic and the selected iconic buildings. The study concluded that the majority of the architectural landmarks in Nigeria lack cultural and lifestyle representation of the sited communities, thereby fails in its expectation of social and cultural relevance. The implication is that it lacks the uniqueness of local architecture and cultural potentials that is sellable for an economic boost.

Keywords: *Iconic Design, Inhabitants, neighbourhood, Nigeria*

### INTRODUCTION

A building that captivates a city, nation and the world, exemplifying uniqueness is referred to as an iconic building. This type of building portrays an identity borne out of the geography, tradition, behaviours, visions, and history of a community, region or nation of its emergence (Torabi and Brahman, 2013; Ede, 2014). Such building inspires confidence and comfort when its identity is correctly interpreted, being the first thing to be experienced even before the exploration of the building functionality and usability (Jashari-Kajtazi and Jakupi, 2017). A good reference is the Angkor Wat religious building that integrates the Cambodian identity so much that it appears on their national flag. Likewise, an iconic building shows the community's advancement in architecture and technology, its aesthetic ideals, and portrays the mastery of who conceived and its moral concerns (Colin, 2000). For instance, Tokyo sky tower fused an improvement of design technology with traditional Japanese aesthetics. Iconic buildings also aid improvement of cityscapes and the economic development of a locality. Burj al Arab hotel transformed what could be called a sleepy fishing village to a futuristic cyber city with sparkling skyscrapers, shopping malls, water parks, golf course welcoming daily overwhelming reception.

All the above examples of architectural masterpieces have their forms and features representing the culture and value of the sited communities and influential to their economic developments. Thus, the sense of belonging and the relationship with the inhabitants of the community are two priorities considered during the design and construction an iconic building (Adam, 2012).

However, majority of the existing iconic buildings currently built in Nigeria does not exhibit the architecture and place of where they are established (Taylor 2008; Ayem, 2011). According to Ellis (1988), this is dated to the back to 19<sup>th</sup> century when western architecture was first introduced by the Portuguese. Ozeoghosa (2011) stated that the gradual replacement of local architectural originality was from the change in design features, materials used and adopted technology.

Ahult (2005) points that, "in today's globalized world, every city must compete with every other city for its share of the world's tourists, investors, talent, cultural exchange, business visitors, events and media profiles. Arguing a case for the application of branding principles in the marketing of places, Peter van Ham said that "a state just like a company requires a strong brand. Therefore, building forms and features supposed to be the product of inhabitants' traditions, culture, beliefs and way of doing things for it to represent and be influential to the local locality.

It is with this view that this study investigates the perception of iconic buildings by the inhabitants in two prolific cities, Lagos and Abuja in Nigeria, with the view of assessing its relevance and potential for the improvement of the cityscape and the economy of the country. The perception of the inhabitants was measured by considering their socio-economic and socio-cultural characteristics and level of its reflection on the selected iconic buildings in the areas studied.

#### REVIEWED LITERATURE

Over time, buildings have become the defining pinnacle of the greatness of the residing cities as they improve the skyline and the cityscape of such areas. Structures such as the Tower of Pisa, Eiffel Tower, the Sydney Opera House, the Burj Al Arab, the Beijing National Stadium (the Bird's Nest Stadium), Beijing Water Cube, the Flatiron Building, the Pyramids of Egypt, British Airways London Eye and the Millennium Dome are examples of architectural masterpiece of iconic forms represent the type of architecture that people want and the technological moment (Falamaki, 2006; Torabi *et al.*, 2013).

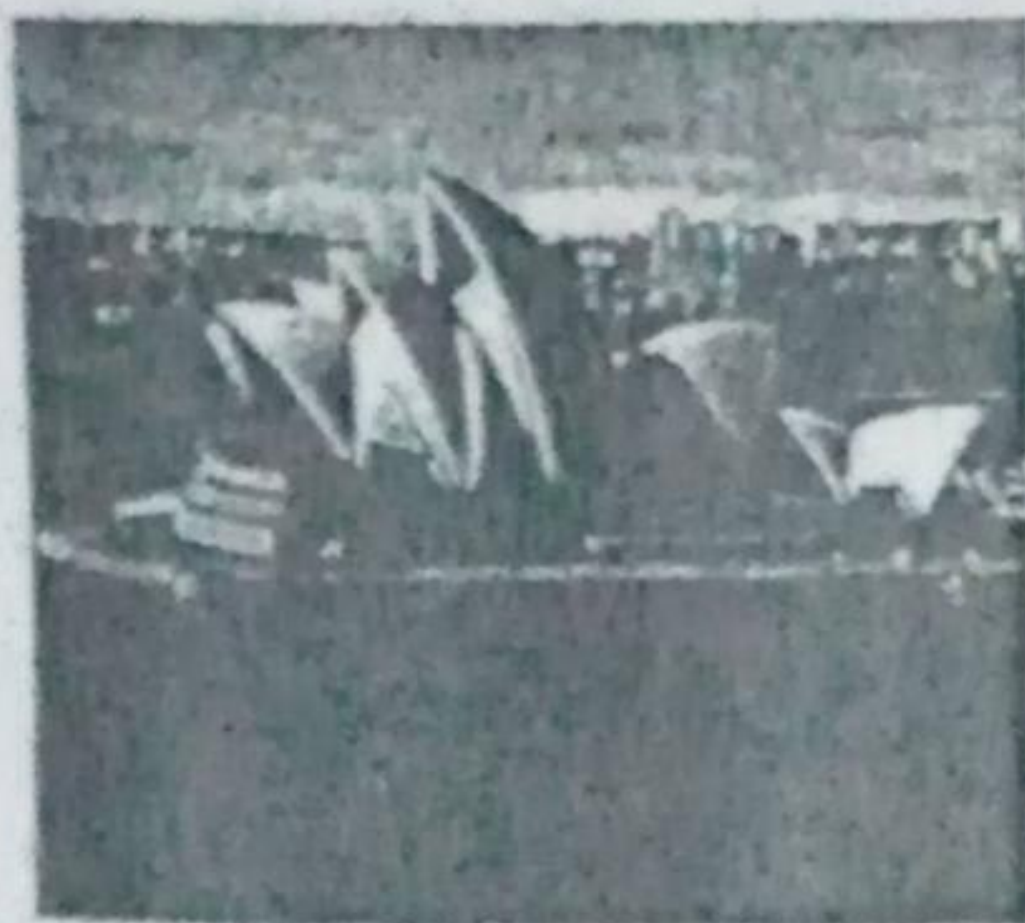


Plate 1: Sydney Opera House

Source: Adapted from [www.motherlandnigeria.com](http://www.motherlandnigeria.com)  
[www.visitdubai.com/en/pois/burj-al-arab](http://www.visitdubai.com/en/pois/burj-al-arab)



Plate 2: Burj Al Arab

Source: Adapted from

Vitruvius perceived the vocation of the architectural forms to represent different things themselves. In other words, the architectural form has a symbolic vocation, and what the symbol means and the meaning are two points that are to be considered; that is, the identity it portrays (Colin, 2000). These

Iconic structures are beautiful in form, serve the designed purpose and create a sense of place by contributing to the public realm (Etheridge, 2007; Ilde, 2014). The identity not only provides room for the expression of national identity of where it exists, but also combines this identity with the presence of multinational component (Jashari-Kajtazi *et al.*, 2017). Sometimes with the porosity of boundaries due to modernisation, national identity can be replaced with mere sense of place and collective memories. Thus, landmark architecture should be considered responsible for modelling collective memories of cultural potentials rich in the material and technology of place and become a metaphor of the place where it exists (Delanty *et al.*, 2001; Jashari-Kajtazi and Jakopi, 2017).

The sense of space or rootedness has a beneficial influence on the strengthening of social bonds and caring about the common good. Initially, these landmark architectures were designed as symbols of secular or religious power, but over time, they have exceeded the fame of their patrons and turned into urban landmarks. This serves as a proof of their cultural importance, and of the fact that by traditional usage they have come to build the identity of the local community. This type of architecture has become an essential resource for meaning and power, and it is produced intentionally to achieve political, social or economic capital.

Another is the famous buildings that are a direct reflection of the needs of ordinary, average residents in urban forms. These designs are built spontaneously, mostly without the participation of professionals, and they reflect the taste and culture of the residents of a given society. They are associated with the way of life, customs and ambitions of the residents, rather than with the principles of official planning composition that is created for the elite. It has been used to vend the local image with the hope of attracting foreign investment, tourists and possible residents.

One can find here the elements of cultural symbolism and the diversity of expression. A manifestation of this can be found in the individualization of detail, specific proportions of urban indoors, the use of small-scale and being part of the social context. Local context emphasises such elements as a direct adaptation for a specific user, spontaneously formed proportions of urban indoors, articulations referring to the aesthetic preferences of residents, details referring to the taste and aesthetic sensitivity of residents and colour scheme that is rooted in tradition. The improvement of this type of architecture is what is termed modern regionalism. The concept of modern regionalism utilises traditional element in a building structure. The modern regionalism concept persists to tackle the diminishing effect of internationalism on reflection about local conditions, which by contrast constitutes the most critical element of regionalism.

Local cultural tradition remains a potential source of new creative inspirations that can be successfully interpreted, enriching the contemporary appearance of public spaces, giving individualised character to housing estates. Integrating local cultural traditions in the development of the architectural masterpieces in Nigeria will result in its enhancement in communal relevance and improve its potential of universal recognition. Such potential can attract inquisitive tourists and, thereby, improve the economy of the sited communities.

## METHODOLOGY

The paper discusses part of the research findings of the study of users' perception of iconic buildings in selected cities of Abuja and Lagos in Nigeria. The researchers sought to find out how the inhabitants in the neighbourhood where the buildings selected are sited perceive the visual aesthetics, the form of the structure and the meaning the form interpreted to them. The buildings selected in Abuja include The NCC building at Maitama, the office/commercial complex at the central area, Nikon luxury apartment, World trade centre central Area, Opic house at Maitama. In Lagos, Civic centre at Ikoyi.

Anglican church of Nigeria at Ikoyi, Cultural centre of Lagos, City Square at Victoria Island, Lagos, Lagos Island and Federal House were selected.

The primary data were collected through the use of a questionnaire administered by the university of the selected study area. Also, the study utilized relevant text and publications on the urban setting which form the background of the study. All the people that built or live in the vicinity of the selected buildings constitute the general sampling frame for the study. The sample size (n) was calculated regarding the number of participants that is considered adequate using the formula suggested by Creswell (2002, 1014). Using a research sample based on stratified sampling design, a total of 200 participants were administered a questionnaire in the study area. A total of 180 copies which amount to 90% of the questionnaires administered were returned and used for analysis. The responses are used to elicit data on vital variables factors earlier highlighted.

The questionnaire consists of 24 variables in question format, coupled randomly in short and simple form, thereby avoiding ambiguity. Four (4) variables which are age, gender, income level and education level was used to assess the respondent attributes, and four (4) variables describing the participant's profession, experience, exposure and familiarity were used to measure their socio-cultural characteristics. The visual aesthetic was measured considering the building roof design, foundation, colour usage, facade design and the building form or shape. The data collected from the respondents were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses.

The descriptive statistics was used to show the frequency and percentage distribution of the results from the study. In utilizing inferential statistics, a simple chi-square test and the Kruskal-Wallis Test (K-W Test) were used to demonstrate whether or not there is a significant relationship between the socio-economic, socio-cultural characteristics of the respondents and the selected iconic buildings.

**STUDY AREAS**

Lagos State is the economic nerve centre of Nigeria. It would be the fifth largest economy in Africa if it were a country. At the inception of Lagos state in 1967, Lagos Island was both the state capital as well as the seat of the Federal Government.



Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing the study area

Source: Adapted from [www.motherlandnigeria.com/graphics.html](http://www.motherlandnigeria.com/graphics.html)

However, when Nigeria's federation was restructured into 19 states in 1976, the capital of the state was moved to Ikeja. Lagos state is also made up of five administrative divisions in which Ikeja was one; the administrative division was further divided into local governments.

Abuja is Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory and lies approximately between longitudes 8°48'E to 7°37'E and Latitudes 8°21'N to 9°18'N (Figure 1). It is bounded in the east by Nasarawa State, north by Kaduna State, west by Niger State and south by Kogi State. These locations were selected due to their constant exposure to the modern trend of architectural form aided by the resultant effect of urbanisation and industrialisation engulfing the globe.

## RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

### Participants' socioeconomic status

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents' attributes. Majority 66.9% of the respondents fall within the age range of 31-40 years, while 5.4% are 50 years and above. Also, 72.7% of the respondents are male, while 27.3% are female.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents' Attributes.

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
Age (in years)		
21-30	40	8.3
31-40	321	66.9
41-50	93	19.4
51 and above	26	5.4
Gender		
Male	349	72.7
Female	131	27.3
Academic Qualification		
OND	10	2.1
HND/ BSc	271	56.5
Masters	186	38.8
Ph.D.	13	3.7
Income level per month		
<50,000	18	3.8
50,000-99,000	58	12.1
100,000-149,000	234	48.8
150,000-199,000	138	28.8
200,000 and above	32	6.7
Years of Experience in practice(in years)		
<5	38	7.9
5-9	123	25.6
10-14	276	57.5
15-19	30	6.2
20 and above	13	2.7

On the distribution of academic qualifications, 56.3% have HND/BSc certificates, 2.1% are national diploma holders, while 3.7% are PhD degree holder. More so, 48.8% of the respondents earn a monthly income between the range of ₦100,000 - ₦149,000, 28.8% earn between ₦150,000 - ₦199,000, while 3.8% of the respondents make less than ₦50,000 monthly. On Respondents' years of experience of the environment and the buildings under study, 57.5% have between 10-14 years of experience, 25.6% have between 5-9 years, while only 2.7% have 20 and above years of experience. The table shows that the participants used for this study are of many experiences of the buildings selected. Thus, they are qualified to provide reliable data on the preference and perception of the society concerning the twelve buildings under study.

#### Users' assessment of the buildings

The respondents were asked to evaluate the twelve buildings under study. Table 2 showed the respondent's rank of building image base on their perception of preference. Building image 10 was rated as the most preferred with a weighted mean score of 1.3, followed by building image 6 (WMS=1.16), and building image 7 (WMS=1.1); while the three that were ranked lowest are Building image 8 (WMS=0.19), building image 2 (WMS=0.18) and building image 5 (WMS=0.1).

Also, the respondents were asked to assess the selected building considering their forms and shape, features, material usage and colour applications. Table 3 showed respondents results for the building images 1-10 under study. On the scale of 1-5, the result revealed that innovation in building shape is highly rated with a Mean Weighted Score (MWS) of 4.31, followed by Entrance design with MWS of 3.82, and fenestration design with MWS of 3.27. Facade colour was rated lowest with a mean weighted score of 2.74. Likewise, the respondents were asked to rate the colours used for the buildings. The result in Table 4 shows that the building with cream colour dominance is more preferred, but that of blue dominance is never preferred.

Studies have shown that colour is symbolic and its representation is richly entrenched in people's culture (Gage, 1993; Bleicher, 2012). The choice of cream colour, which is the lighter and creamy shades of yellow could be borne out of its feel of freshness, elegance and joyful expression the colour has on people. It is believed that yellow is a favourite among people with high intellect. Therefore, the choice for the colour is expected since the majority of the respondents are learned with vast experience and exposure.

Table 2: Mean weight ranking of the selected buildings

Building image	Most preferred (3)	Less preferred (2)	Least preferred (1)	MWS	Rank
1	96	0	27	0.66	5 <sup>th</sup>
2	0	32	21	0.18	9 <sup>th</sup>
3	0	31	0	0.34	7 <sup>th</sup>
4	24	35	283	0.88	4 <sup>th</sup>
5	0	24	0	0.1	10 <sup>th</sup>
6	122	49	92	1.16	2 <sup>nd</sup>
7	154	33	0	1.1	3 <sup>rd</sup>
8	0	47	0	0.19	8 <sup>th</sup>
9	49	229	5	1.3	1 <sup>st</sup>
10	35	0	0	0.60	6 <sup>th</sup>

Table 3: Assessment of the characteristics of the building

	Least preferred (1)	Least Preferred (2)	Average preferred (3)	Preferred (4)	Most preferred (5)	MWS
Roof design	35	57	268	88	57	1.18
Fenestration	99	0	80	373	36	1.84
Facade colour	33	91	266	59	35	1.82
Entrance design	0	32	56	357	347	1.31
Innovation in building shape	32	33	35	33		

Table 4: Respondents' perception of colour usage of the selected buildings

Facade colour in building images	Like Frequency (%)	Dislike Frequency (%)
White	20(4.2)	25(5.2)
Grey	48(10)	0
Cream	362(75.4)	124(25.8)
Blue	0	306(62.8)
Off-white	50(10.4)	

Furthermore, the study investigated the relationship between the participants' attributes and their perception of the twelve buildings selected for this study. The result in table 5 showed there is a correlation between the respondents' attributes and the roof type (Age,  $p=0.004$ , academic qualification,  $p=0.004$ ; income level,  $p=0.001$ ; experience,  $p=0.015$ ) with exception of the respondents' profession ( $p=0.403$ ). Meanwhile, the window choice (fenestration) only show significant relationship with respondents' age ( $p=0.029$ ) and profession ( $p=0.006$ ).

Similarly, the building colour shows significant relationship with all the respondents' attributes (Age,  $p=0.002$ ; profession,  $p=0.017$ ; academic qualification,  $p=0.000$ ; income level,  $p=0.001$ ; experience,  $p=0.002$ ), the entrance design also has significant relationship with all the participants' attributes except the profession ( $p=0.855$ ). Equally, the table shows that the perception of building innovation is strongly related only with respondents' Age ( $p=0.001$ ), Academic qualification ( $p=0.050$ ) and Income level ( $p=0.018$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study is to investigate the hypothesis stated that the iconic buildings in Nigeria does not represent the culture and architecture of its locality. The study was necessary because several studies have shown the benefit of maintaining a locality identity through architecture to include promoting the image of the locality, thereby, making it attractive for tourism purpose. The buildings selected for this study are not just appealing to the beholder, but are also expected to represent the cultural image, religious facts, and trade centre for Nigerian culture and architecture.

Table 5: Test of the relationship between respondents' attributes and their perception

Perception parameters		Respondents' attributes				
		Age	Prof. designatn.	Academic qualificatn.	Income level	experience
Roof design	Pearson Correlation	-.132**	-.038	-.131**	-.145**	-.111*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.403	.004	.001	.015
	N	480	480	480	480	480
Fenestration	Pearson Correlation	.100*	-.126**	-.018	-.013	-.055
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029	.006	.692	.770	.228
	N	480	480	480	480	480
Façade colour	Pearson Correlation	-.142**	-.109*	-.225**	-.153**	-.140**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.017	.000	.001	.002
	N	480	480	480	480	480
Entrance design	Pearson Correlation	.156**	-.008	.207**	.193**	.094*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.855	.000	.000	.041
	N	480	480	480	480	480
Innovation	Pearson Correlation	-.150**	.021	-.089	-.108*	-.071
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.642	.050	.018	.118
	N	480	480	480	480	480

\*Correlation significant at 0.05% \*\*Correlation significant at 0.01%

Listed among the selected buildings is Nigeria world trade centre in Abuja, cultural centre in Iganmu Lagos and the first Anglican church in Nigeria. The Nestoll building was purposely situated at the intersection of two major business districts in Lagos with a visual proximity to Eko Atlantic city and Atlantic Ocean. The building was built to target dynamic businesses, multi-national industries, financial institutions that requires top brand positions. All the building were carefully selected due to their capacity of showcasing the image and culture of the country for tourism improvement.

However, the historical Anglican Church was ranked lowest among the selected building, followed by the world trade centre building. Unlike the elaborate Borobudur Buddhist temple in Indonesia that was designed to take pilgrims on a journey through kamadhatu (the world of desires), represented by the temple's base, rupadhatu (the world of forms), represented by the five square terraces and the arupadhatu (the formless world), and represented by the three circular platforms and stupas, the historical Anglican church does not habituate the early religion history as it is expected to portray. This corroborate the study by Onanuga et al. (2016) that revealed that Christianity was one of the factor that strongly influenced architecture and urban design method in Nigeria. He further stated that



The choice western style architecture used to position responsive activities and infrastructure in the case of the cities for a better communal life did not just fail, but has further displaced traditional values of community identity, agricultural focus, and even social interaction among communities. In contrary, Nigeria's urban and cultural center both in Lagos were highly influenced by the independent. However, the study shows that only the building movement was the selling property is not. It is the modern material that is celebrated and promoted even in a building sector to promote cultural values. The result, therefore, substantiate many other studies (Chukwura, 2009; Ayin, 2011; Olanuga et al, 2016) that have earlier reported that most public building in Nigeria lack sense of contextual harmony that represent and respect the character of a place by acceptance with the lifestyle of its people, the material for construction available and their technology of construction. This is due to the receptivity and the amenability to change and access to western education, culture, Christianity and capitalism (Olanuga et al, 2016). The specificity of the designers of these iconic buildings no longer contain the social beliefs and practices of the community where the buildings are sited. Majority of the design innovation is the adoption of influential foreign culture. The local spirit of the communities where these architectural masterpieces are situated are not reflected in the design product; thereby, the buildings become less relevant and not intriguing to the inhabitants and the world at large.

The study shows that all relationship established in the correlation between the building features and the respondents' attitudes were negative. The negative relationship that the buildings selected indicated with the attitudes of the respondents' shows the respondents' attitudes are good variables to measure the perception of relevance of iconic buildings. It also shows that the features of the selected buildings did not represent the culture and architecture of the people. Consequently, the hypothesis that the iconic buildings in Nigeria do not represent the culture and architecture of the local people is accepted. Meaning that the iconic design product studied appear to be irrelevant identity, so, it is not relevant to the culture and lifestyle of the people where the building is sited.

### CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that the architectural masterpieces with iconic characteristics in Nigeria lack traditional proclivity and neither conserve the historical heritage and values nor capture the identity of the locality. The buildings, although fascinating, did not attract the tourist around the globe and less contribution to the economy of the community where it is situated. The study concluded that the majority of the architectural landmarks in Nigeria lack cultural and lifestyle representation of the local communities, thereby fails in its expectation of social and cultural relevance. The implication is that it lacks the uniqueness of local architecture and cultural potentials that is reliable for an economic base.

It is, therefore, recommended that design product that optimizes resources and fosters equitable resource distribution should be encouraged. Also, emphasis should be laid on the crystallization of variations of concepts and ideas to reflect the past in order to restore and re-identify the lost glory. Variations derived from traditional culture would be more authentic and long lasting than variations arising from official fiat or imposed conditions and concepts. Likewise, initiatives should be taken by co-operatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies, to promote the awareness of indigenous building materials in order to popularize their use. Also, by promoting the use of indigenous building materials, it will employ the unskilled workers and income for the community where the indigenous materials are being harvested. It will create a forum to improve local technology by inhibiting western technology.

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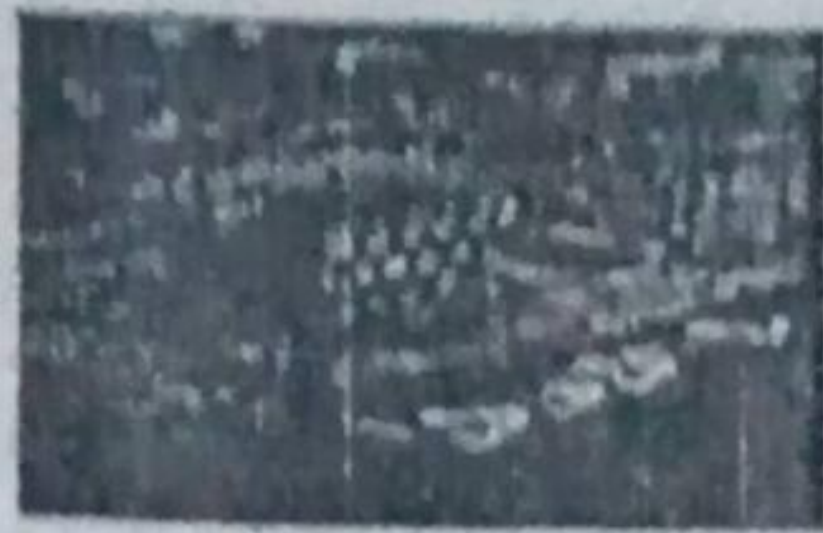
Photo interviewing analysis. Below are the 10 images of the building samples under study.



Nigeria communication commission Maitama Abuja  
Nicon Luxury Area B Abuja



World trade centre central Area Abuja



Civic Centre V.I Lagos State  
centre at Iganmu, Lagos state



Anglican Church Of Nigeria V.I Lagos state



Cultural



Optic House maitama Abuja  
Lagos State



Glo house V.I Lagos State



Nestlé tower. V.I



Shell house Ikoyi Lagos state