

EVALUATION OF THE FEATURES OF ICONIC ARCHITECTURE IN SELECTED BUILDINGS IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

One of the global phenomena in recent years in many developed worlds is development of iconic architecture. Iconic architecture interpreted into buildings can promote global tourism and financial investments in a particular clime. Against this background, this paper seeks to evaluate the features of iconic Architecture in Nigeria. The vernacular architecture in Nigeria is also studied with the intention of exploring the possibility to fuse culture in contemporary iconic buildings. The study involved literature review and Case study of Selected buildings in Nigeria. Six buildings were randomly selected and studied, these buildings are the Nigerian Communication Centre located in Abuja, the World Trade Center, tower 1, in Abuja, the Polo Park Mall in Enugu, the National Theatre in Lagos, the Civic Centre in Lagos, and the Anglican church of Nigeria, in Lagos. exploratory research method was utilized in analyzing the content of literature and reporting the data collected from the case studies. The result from this study highlights the features of the selected iconic buildings and has clarified the poor fusion of cultural elements in iconic buildings in Nigeria. Government should be deliberate about tourism and should make policies that promote cultural considerations. Therefore, little drops of interesting architectural piece add up to the overall image of the city, which in turn promotes tourism. The study has practical implication for environmental designers in Nigeria as regards the global trend applicable to the development of Iconic architecture in the country which will ultimately aid in diversifying the country's economy from a mono dependent economy.

Key words: Culture; Vernacular architecture; Iconic Architecture; Tourism.

Introduction

Buildings and spaces that are famous for people in and around architecture, as well as the public, and have specific symbolic / aesthetic significance are referred to as iconic architecture. (Sklair, 2006). The basic component of an icon, according to C.W. Morris' criteria, is 'aesthetic,' and an aesthetic sign is defined as an image whose design datum is a value. Architecture design practice from inception, evolved by adapting to remain viable and sustainable. The observed dynamism is a result of changes in the very nature of practice. Several developing nations have evolved particularly in the built environment, resulting from global trends. This projects architecture as a cultural product for a dynamic society, with more priority on the rationale in the process over product in the programming of public spaces (Silberberg, 2013).

Background Of Study

The graphical illustrations of some existing buildings and structures are represented here below. The important question here is: what is the first thought that comes to mind when you see these figures portrayed in whatever medium?

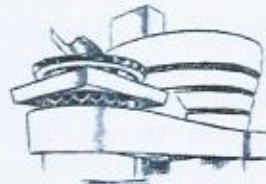


Figure 1: Burj Al Arab, Australia. Dubai.

Figure 2: Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao Spain.

Figure 3: Sydney opera, Museum, New York.

The shown figures above, draws your attention to their country of origin or location. This makes you appreciate the civilization, science, and technology of the host country.

According to Muratovski (2012), architecture serves as a promotional medium and an identity definer. It can be used as a territorial identity image. As a result, the importance of built-environment heritage for tourism cannot be underestimated.

Aim and Objectives

This paper aims at evaluating the features of iconic Architecture and exploring the peculiarity of this phenomenon in Nigeria.

The objectives through which the above stated aim will be achieved are:

1. To study the features of Iconic Architecture.
2. To explore the vernacular Architecture of Nigeria.
3. To investigate fusion of vernacular and iconic Architectural features in Nigeria, as a penitential for tourism option.

Study Area

Nigeria is located between latitudes 4° and 14° to the North and longitudes 3° and 14° East of Greenwich mean time (GMT). in the West of African region. The total area of the country is about 923,768 square kilometres, and about 13,878 square kilometres of water (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010) with a population of 213 million (National Population Commission, 2021). Ayeomoni (2012) suggest that there are more than 250 ethnic groupings, speaking over 500 local dialects and upholding highly varied social practices and concepts. However, the predominant tribes of Hausa-Fulani's occupy the Northern region, the Yoruba occupy the Southwest region, and the Igbos occupy the Southeast regions (Demographics of Nigeria, 2018).

Methodology

This study seeks to contribute to existing knowledge on iconic architecture and the various vernacular architecture that are existing in Nigeria, which are predominately found in the three major ethnic groups of Nigeria as well as the regions in which the ethnic groups dominate. This was achieved through studying existing literatures on iconic architecture, and cultural Nigeria architecture. The primary data were derived from author's observations and previous research works. The secondary data were obtained from the review of published literature. Graphics images were presented to elaborate more on the findings of the studies for better understanding. The exploratory research tool was used for collecting data from existing literatures. This method uses strategic and organized approach in the quest of knowledge to arrive at a logical conclusion. Most of the Literatures were derived from books, journals, articles, and reports on related topic.

Population of the Study

A sample size of 6 iconic building was studied in Lagos, Abuja, and Enugu. These facilities were randomly selected within mixed-use corridors, and their features were observed using the variables gotten from literature. A structured observation schedule was used to evaluate the architectural design element used at each building studied.

Iconic Architecture

Iconicity in architecture is defined in terms of fame and special symbolic/aesthetic significance as applied to buildings, spaces and in some cases architects themselves.

Architecture, more than any other type of art, has the distinction of being directly linked to humanity. Building designs link to the human culture, socialization, religious and history to generate the new image. Anderson (2000) asserted that the growth of architecture has been based on the most peculiar culture at a given period. Religion ruled the world during the middle Ages, and buildings symbolized religious, socio-cultural, political, and other facets of society. After the Renaissance, there was a change of mentality regarding architecture. Society was being transformed and instead of only the former gothic replication of architecture, technology used to design buildings represented not only the lifestyle of the people but incorporated also their religious affiliations, cultural background, history and other aspects of life.

As technology and money brought power to many nations, high rise buildings and skyscrapers were built to show power. This evolved and brought about a rebirth of iconic buildings, because it emanates distinctive traits of the location and expresses some unique features of its environment, architecture is integrated into human life in the form of an iconic building. Therefore, iconic buildings integrate an extraordinary relationship with the place and humanity. A good example for an iconic building that created a new image and represents its environment is the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, which brought urban regeneration and economic stability to a formerly unpopular Bilbao (Klaus Reichold, 1999). This phenomenon is widely known as the "Bilbao effect" (Klaus Reichold, 1999).

Tourism Relevance of Iconic Architecture

Iconic buildings are a powerful tool when it comes to marketing cities with such buildings as tourist destinations, the images of iconic buildings usually become the symbol of a city's new identity for example how the Burj al Arab has been a symbol of Dubai (Worth, 2009). As cities struggle to position themselves as destinations, use of architecture helps in giving them a visible distinction. Architecture does benefit tourism, but the focus should be on "good architecture" rather than "expensive architecture". Architectural critics assert that iconic buildings are not only absurdly expensive to construct but also that their design is based on marketability (Klein, 2004).

Features of Iconic Architecture

Iconic buildings are mainly built to be visually attractive before being used with their proposed function. It must offer a new briefed image, be high in figure or form, and be obvious from the city. Over time, features of iconic buildings have been changed. During each period, the architecture of the building has special aspects. Therefore, the philosophical definition of an icon must communicate the sign to the object that it signifies. Iconic buildings have an impact on community and the place in which they are created with their durable impression on all visitors of the place. Yildiz K. (2018) identifies a set of special characteristics elements should be present in any iconic building. This list contains, but not limited to;

Location, Architectural Character, New Technique, Scale, Religious, Political Factors, Economic, Factor, Material and Color, Technology, Historical Value, Symbolic Value, Cultural Value, Visibility, Form Orientation, and Height.

Review of Existing Iconic Buildings around the world

Burj Al Arab, Dubai, United Arab Emirates



Figure 5: Exterior Design of Burj Al Arab
Design of Burj Al Arab at night
Source: Mohamed N. (2015)



Figure 6: Exterior

Burj Al Arab is located in Dubai. The hotel is located on an island of reclaimed land, the building was designed in 1994 by multidisciplinary consultancy Atkins, led by architect Tom Wright and opened in December 1999. The building was built to resemble the sail of a traditional Arabian vessel called a dhow. Two "wings" spread in a V to form a vast "mast". The unique style of the building comes from its formal design, Material of covering (glass, steel, and concrete), height, location and it is the first 7 stars hotel in the world.