



The Impact of Tourism and Globetrotting on Individuals

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In this enlightening personal reflection, Ago-Amaechi Godwin Ifeanyi (Amexify) recounts his experiences as a globetrotting soccer player, both within his native Nigeria and across the globe, stressing the vital importance of travel as firsthand cultural education. This essay was composed for Introduction to College Writing with Dr. Brenda Brown.

WHILE TOURISM, IN ITS simplest form, means to travel for pleasure or business, globetrotting is the similar act of traveling widely around the world. The former encompasses the latter. Traveling within or outside a geographical space – this essay is mostly focused on the impacts of that action. Does it have a positive or negative impact? Many would, without hesitation, answer “positive” to that question. Perhaps that is just my thought. But if so, would they be right? Well, we’ll find out. Within the paragraphs of this essay, some well-known and some largely unknown facts will be unraveled. In any case, it is important that you find where and how its contents affect you.

Of the thirty-six states in Nigeria, I was able to visit six in all my years: Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Delta, Lagos, and Ebonyi State. For an indoor person and introvert, this might seem a bit interesting and out of place. But I bet this made me see the world better. With over

200 different ethnic groups, you can imagine the difficulty in visiting, experiencing, or interacting with each of them. Nigeria is that diverse! My few travels exposed me to these diversities. As a boy who grew up in the busiest city and state in Nigeria — Lagos — I never really understood the deep-rooted diversity that existed between the Igbos and the Yorubas, among a few other tribes. Yes! The city is a mixture of tribes; however, these people present nothing of their tribes compared to what you'd discover when you visit their hometowns. Suffice to say, what actually exists in the city are “polished tribes.”

Despite my Igbo origin, leaving Lagos for Anambra (an Igbo-dominated state) for the first time made me realize that there is more to my tribe than I actually knew. I am from Abia (also an Igbo-dominated state), and these two related states share a border. However, it was surprising to know that even though our local, traditional language is the same, there exist certain variations, and you might have to strain your ears to distinguish the difference if you're a foreigner. But it was there — the accent, the intonation. How amazing! It was quite interesting to learn that they share similar lifestyles and customs but have slightly different beliefs.

Having lived in a Yoruba-dominated land — though home to many other tribes — my Lagos experience was nothing compared to my Anambra experience. The Yorubas are a totally different people. The difference in language, tradition, custom, belief is very contrasting. While *bia* is “come” in Igbo, the same is *wa* in Yoruba. God is known as *Chukwu or Chi* in Igbo, but *Oluwa or Olorun* in Yoruba. The Igbos value business more; the Yorubas value education more. The typical Yoruba person prostrates (for the males) and kneels (for the females) in greeting. On the contrary, the Igbo person stands to greet, or slightly bows, although in rare cases.

Soccer especially took me places. It gave me the perfect reason to leave my zone. Specifically, it is a game that unites people. Soccer has helped a great deal in bringing the world together. In the pro-

fessional level of the game, you hear and see players migrate to different continents on the basis of “transfer.” In the case that a player is traveling to a country or region with a different language, he definitely undergoes language training and cultural education in order to better understand the ways and lifestyle of his new “home.” While, on one hand, the sole aim is to play and reinforce his new team (club), on the other hand, the effects of tourism are also being made manifest. He learns the ways of his new neighbors, adapts to their kind of food and weather, and much more. In the lower category, while playing as amateur in my home country, I also enjoyed this same advantage, only on a different scale. Traveling to different states for tournaments, among other events, helped me assess people differently. You come to see and understand variations to the same game you played back home. And then you come to experience the tension, the thrill, the satisfaction that comes with playing on a different soil and environment, seeing different faces. It is electrifying!

Crossing my country’s border for the first time is actually one benefit I always attribute to soccer. But looking at the bigger picture, it goes beyond the game. I have met many Americans, Arabs, Englishmen, and Indians at home (Nigeria) and communicated with a good number of them. Nonetheless, it is nothing compared to meeting them in their own home countries. There’s a wide gap between an Arab in Nigeria and an Arab in the UAE. While he may exhibit only few of his traits in a foreign land owing to certain limitations, it is quite different in his homeland. My experience here in America has further strengthened my understanding of the diverse ways of the Americans — the food, the lifestyle, the governance, the people in general. It is a lifetime set of memories I will come to cherish. And working together with a biracial African American and a Netherlander in the same team is quite enriching. Nothing short of amazing!

Often, transportation costs seem to be the major constraint for many, therefore restrict them from traveling or touring. My case

wasn't so different, but my drive and passion for soccer and sport made me see beyond this obstacle. Not to pat myself on the back, but being good at what I did, it was no surprise that a few would be willing to lend a hand to have me among the squad, but this does not nullify the fact that cost (expenses) is a major limiting factor generally. Additionally, poor road networks can be deterring, too. For journeys that done by road, it is quite disheartening to encounter the poor state of roads and those that are poorly mapped out. Do not be quick to forget that many cannot afford a flight ticket, too.

By and large, the benefits of touring or traveling cannot be over-emphasized. In all senses, it boosts your knowledge of the outside world, much more than is portrayed by the media. Whatever your personality, it shouldn't hinder you from exploring this amazing part of life. A person stands to gain so much from changing location and seeing the world from a different lens, a different perspective. Local or international, I urge you, dear readers, to embrace this life-style — alone, or with family, friends, or your spouse. ►►