

## CONSCIENTISATION STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF TOURIST ATTRACTIONS TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITIES IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

This study exposed the conscientisation strategies for effective management of tourist attractions towards development of communities in Imo State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided this study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 1513 indigenes of the host communities with tourist attractions. Questionnaire on Conscientisation Strategies for Effective Management of Tourist Attractions towards Development of Communities (QCSEMTADC) ( $r = 0.81$ ) was the instrument used for data collection. Completed and retrieved 1500 copies of questionnaire were analyzed using mean score statistics. Results showed that in the communities of Imo State, dwellers are not adequately conscientised on tourist attractions and its management. The finding also revealed that conscientisation strategies that can be used for effective management of tourist attractions are village meeting, popular participation, awareness campaign, community education, and mass media programmes. The study therefore recommended that community members should be adequately conscientised and given proper education on the potentialities of tourist attractions and its management through village meeting, popular participation, awareness campaign, community education, and mass media programmes.

**Key Words:** Conscientisation Strategies, Effective Management, Tourist Attractions, Development, Communities

### Introduction

Tourism is a business which improves and serves the needs of people travelling and staying outside their home communities for either business or pleasure. It is an enjoyable way to spend free time and use of vacations, holidays, weekends, and time after retirement. In fact, it contributes to the enrichment level of educating people, both tourists and host populations through contact with new cultures and civilizations. In the wake of globalization and economic restructuring, many countries

of the world are struggling to redefine and rebuild their economies to reduce poverty and encourage economic development. In this direction, governments and International Aid Agencies (IAA) have recognized the significance of tourism development for creating economic opportunities and general quality of life of the people especially at the grassroots levels.

By the mid-year of 2015, Imo State was one of the States in Nigeria highly indebted to civil servants and contractors in term of unpaid salaries and contract bills. This is as a result of drastic fall in Federal monthly monetary allocations and low Internally Generated Revenue (IGR). Imo State is at this mess despite the presence of many resources such as tourist attractions that the State can harness to enhance her income to avoid heavily relying on monetary allocation from the Federal Government.

As revealed in literature and research findings that were reviewed in this study, many countries of the world such as Kenya, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Australia, United States of America, Kuwait, France, United Arab Emirates, Aruba, and South Korea have used tourism to develop their economy, communities and improve the conditions of their citizens.

Since nature has endowed most communities of Imo State with resources of tourism potentialities, it is expected that if members of the communities in collaboration with Imo State Government are educated and conscientised on the action towards tourist attractions management, the community members (especially the adults) and government will not only understand the value chain of tourism, but will be empowered on identification and effective management of tourist attractions towards socio-economic development of the citizens and Imo State as a whole. The main principle of conscientisation as developed by Paulo Freire was to arouse the consciousness of the grassroots people on the noticed and unnoticed challenges confronting them and to provoke them into action towards harnessing their potentialities for resolving the challenges. Since Imo State, despite all her potentialities in tourism, still encounter serious financial challenges/constraints as evidenced by her inability to pay salaries and contract bills, the need to further look inward to generate more funds through local resources becomes very necessary. It is in this direction that the necessity to conscientise the people of Imo State for effective management of tourist attractions in the State comes to the fore. The question that arises therefore is what conscientisation strategies will promote effective management of tourist attractions towards development of communities in Imo State? Exposure of these conscientisation strategies is the problem of this study.

### **Area of Study**

The area known as Imo State today, which is located in south-east geopolitical zone of Nigeria, was originally part of the defunct East Central State which was one of the twelve states initially created in 1967 by General Yakubu Gowon's regime. The old Imo State which originally included Abia province was later created in 1976 before Abia State was carved out of the state in 1991 by General Ibrahim Babangida. Imo State derived its name from Imo River, which takes its course from the Okigwe/Akwa upland. The state is divided into twenty seven local government areas which include Aboh-Mbaise, Ahizau-Mbaise, Ehime-Mbano, Ezinihitte, Ideato-North, Ideato-South, Ihitte/Uboma, Ikeduru, Isiala-Mbano, Isu, Mbaitoli, Ngor-Okpala, Njaba, Nkwere, Nkwangele, Obowo, Oguta, Ohaji-Egbema, Okigwe, Onuimo, Orlu, Orsu, Oru-East, Oru-West, Owerri -Municipal, Owerri-North and Owerri-West.

Imo State has an estimated population of about 4.8 million and the population density varies from 230-1,400 people per square kilometre. The state is culturally homogeneous as it is a predominantly Igbo speaking state with minor differences in dialects. Imo State has a very rich

cultural heritage and this is manifested in dressing, music, dance, festivals, arts and crafts, and the traditional hospitality of the people. The population of Imo State is predominantly rural. Some of the most densely settled areas of Nigeria are found in Imo State, where a direct relationship exists between population density and the degree of dispersal of rural settlement.

Covering an area of about 5,100sq km, Imo State lies within latitudes 4° 45'N and 7° 15'N and longitude 6°50'E and 7°25'E. It occupies the area between the lower River Niger and the upper and middle Imo River. The state is bounded on the east by Abia State, on the west by the River Niger and Delta State; and on the north by Anambra State, while Rivers State lies to the south. Temperatures are similar all over the state with hottest months between January and March. The mean annual temperature above 20°C with an average annual relative humidity of 75 per cent which is highest during the rainy season, when it rises to about 90 per cent. The high temperature and humidity experienced in the state favour luxuriant plant growth, which produce the Imo State's rich and beautiful vegetation of the tropical rain forest.

Imo State is blessed with abundant natural resources, which include crude oil, lead, zinc, white clay, fine sand, limestone and natural gas in commercial quantities. The state also produces agricultural produce such as palm produce, cocoa and rubber. The main staple crops are yam, cassava, cocoyam and maize.

There are many traditional festivals observed in the state. Each community has different festivals celebrated in honour of ancient deities or to mark an important event in the history of the area. There are different festivals to usher in harvest season, the most popular being the Ahiajoku Festival, which is observed in all the farming communities. Traditional music and dances include Abiigbo, Ekpe, Ikoro, Mmanwu, etc. Also there are tourism destinations in the state such as Imo wonder lake resort, Abadaba lake, Source of Urashi river, Amadioha shrine, Ekwe and Ebenator spring, Blue Obana lake, Nekede Zoo and Gardens, Iyi Ogidi spring, Rolling hills, Culture and Art centre and many more.

Learned professionals, entrepreneurs and seasoned artists also abound in the state. Works of art produced in the state include: carved doors, walking sticks of different designs, sculptures, flutes, wooden mortars and pestles, gongs, and the famous talking drums. Metal works and various types of fabrications are locally produced.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to expose the conscientisation strategies for effective management of tourist attractions towards development of communities in Imo State. Specifically, the objectives are to:

1. Determine the extent to which dwellers in the communities of Imo state are adequately conscientised on tourist attractions and its management.
2. Ascertain the conscientisation strategies that can be used to educate the citizens on the action for effective management of tourist attractions in Imo State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study.

1. To what extent are the dwellers in the communities of Imo state adequately conscientised on tourist attractions and its management?
2. What are the conscientisation strategies that can be used to educate the citizens on the action for effective management of tourist attractions in Imo State?

## **Theoretical Review**

A number of theories have been put forward to explain the benefits of tourism development to the people and communities at large. However, the appropriate theory for this study, which gives coherence to empirical enquiry is conscientisation theory propounded by Paulo Freire in 1970. It is explained as a process of reflection, interaction with others, and action that facilitates an authentic voice for the oppressed. Freire further described conscientisation as the transformation towards empowerment. He was disappointed with the educational systems in Brazil and Chile and advocated their “replacement with a more liberating type of communication education that would contain more dialogue and would be both more receiver-centered and more conscious of social structure” (Darder, 1995 in Berta-Avila, 2003). Armed with new knowledge of their existential situation, the people could then come up with action plans to liberate themselves from their dependent and exploited status. He called this process conscientisation.

In Freire’s (1970) theory, which he explains in his book "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed", development communication can be considered as a "tool that the grassroots can use to take control of their ignorance of development". This tool can be used for the following purposes: becoming aware of the various facets of the real development problems in their region; organizing in order to react collectively and effectively to these problems; bringing to light the conflicts that divide the various interest groups; becoming politicized—learning to provide alternatives to problem situations and finding solutions to various problems; and obtaining the necessary tools to put to concrete use the solutions provided by the community.

Freire (1970) insisted on the fact that the mere transfer of knowledge by an authority source to a passive receiver did nothing to help promote growth in the latter as a human being with an independent and critical conscience capable of influencing and changing society. According to him, for development communication to be effective, it had to be linked not only to the process of acquiring technical knowledge and skills, but also to the awareness-raising, politicization and organization processes.

## **Relevance of Conscientisation Theory to the Study**

Conscientisation theory is employed in this study in order to stimulate consciousness in the people for effective management of tourist attractions for development of communities. The theory will enable people to depart from their individualistic tendency and approach to issues with a view to embracing a more reliable collective resolve in addressing problems facing development in the tourists attractions host communities.

The challenge in the context of this study is that little attention has been paid to the need to build community consciousness that would enable the people to see the need to jointly solve their problems through discovery, preservation and maintenance of tourist attractions. However, community awareness is conscientisation of the people with regard to the complexities and potential impacts of a proposed development. Here, the community collectively itemizes what values will not be compromised for the sake of growth and the ground rules on which the product will be built or established. The process can be gradual or accelerated, depending on the conditions created for dialogue and reflection. Here, action is fundamental because it is the process of changing the reality. But the bottom line is that people are ready to receive positive information that will bring development to the community and as well swing into actions when adequately conscientised.

## Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population comprised 6,054 indigenes of host communities with tourist attractions in six selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Imo state, Nigeria. The study adopted multi-stage sampling procedure. In the first stage, random sampling technique was used to select 2 LGAs from each of the 3 Senatorial zones in Imo State. In the second stage, proportionate sampling technique was used to select 25% of the population from each of the six host communities with tourist attractions. This translates to 1513 indigenes of the host communities with tourist attractions selected for this study. A 10-item self-developed research instrument tagged “Questionnaire on Conscientisation Strategies for Effective Management of Tourist Attractions towards Development of Communities” (QCSEMTADC) with  $r = 0.81$  was used for data collection. The completed and retrieved 1500 copies of questionnaire were analyzed using mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) statistics to answer the research questions. Criterion mean for taking decision was 2.5 (4+3+2+1 divided by 4 = 2.5). All items whose values are below 2.5 were either rejected or low to an extent while items equal or above 2.5 were either accepted or high to an extent.

## Results

The results are presented below.

**Research Questions One (RQ<sub>1</sub>):** To what extent are the dwellers in the communities of Imo State adequately conscientised on tourist attractions and its management?

**Table 1: Mean Scores of Responses on the Extent to Which the Dwellers in the Communities of Imo State are Adequately Conscientised on Tourist Attractions and its Management**

S/No	Items	Responses				Total	Mean $\bar{x}$	Remark
		VHE (4)	HE (3)	LE (2)	VLE (1)			
1.	I understand that tourism potentials improves standard of living if properly harnessed	470 (1880)	500 (1500)	200 (400)	330 (330)	1500 (4030)	2.6	High Extent
2.	I have the knowledge of discovery, preservation and maintenance of tourist attractions	250 (1000)	340 (1020)	510 (1020)	400 (400)	1500 (3440)	2.2	Low Extent
3.	I am committed to preservation and maintenance of tourists attractions in Imo State	280 (1120)	275 (825)	510 (1020)	435 (435)	1500 (3460)	2.3	Low Extent
4.	I understand the opportunity to create wealth through tourism businesses	250 (1000)	290 (870)	530 (1060)	430 (430)	1500 (3360)	2.2	Low Extent
5.	I am aware that tourist attractions brings about infrastructural development	420 (1680)	400 (1200)	300 (600)	380 (380)	1500 (3860)	2.6	High Extent
<b>Grand mean (<math>\bar{x}</math>)</b>							<b>2.4</b>	

Analysis of data on Item 1 as contained in table 1 shows that residents of communities in Imo State to high extent understand that tourism potentials improves standard of living if properly harnessed ( $\bar{x} = 2.6$ ). The result on item 2 shows that to low extent, residents have the knowledge of discovery, preservation and maintenance of tourists attractions as the mean score 2.2 is less than

the criterion mean of 2.5. Item 3 with mean score of 2.3, revealed, that to low extent, residents are committed to preservation and maintenance of tourist attractions in Imo State. The result on item 4, shows that, to low extent, residents of communities in Imo State understand the opportunity to create wealth through tourism businesses as the mean score of 2.2 is less than the criterion mean of 2.5. The mean score of 2.6 generated on item 5 shows that to very high extent, residents are conscientised that tourist attractions bring about infrastructural development.

In response to research question one, a grand mean of 2.4 recorded established that dwellers of the communities of Imo State are not adequately conscientised on tourist attractions and its management.

**Research Questions Two (RQ<sub>2</sub>):** What are the conscientisation strategies that can be used to educate the citizens on the actions for effective management of tourist attractions in Imo State?

**Table 2: Mean Scores of Responses Showing the Conscientisation Strategies that Can be Used to Educate the Citizens on the Actions for Effective Management of Tourist Attractions in Imo State**

S/No	Items	Responses				Total	Mean $\bar{x}$	Remark
		SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)			
6.	Village meeting is one of the conscientisation strategies that can be used to educate the citizens on effective management of tourist attractions in the communities of Imo State	500 (2000)	450 (1350)	200 (400)	350 (350)	1500 (4100)	2.7	Accepted
7.	Popular participation is another conscientisation strategy that can be used to educate Imo citizens on effective management of tourist attractions in the communities of Imo State	450 (1800)	550 (1650)	300 (600)	200 (200)	1500 (4250)	2.8	Accepted
8.	Awareness campaign is a conscientisation strategy that can be used to educate the citizens on effective management of tourist attractions in the communities of Imo State	300 (1200)	590 (1770)	220 (440)	390 (390)	1500 (3800)	2.5	Accepted
9.	Community education is another conscientisation strategy that can be used to educate the citizens on effective management of tourist attractions in the communities of Imo State	440 (1760)	560 (1680)	290 (580)	210 (210)	1500 (4230)	2.8	Accepted
10.	Mass media programmes are conscientisation strategies that can be used to educate Imo citizens on effective management of tourist attractions in the communities of Imo State	350 (1400)	560 (1680)	200 (400)	390 (390)	1500 (3870)	2.5	Accepted
<b>Grand mean (<math>\bar{x}</math>)</b>							<b>2.7</b>	

Table 2 shows the conscientisation strategies that can be used to educate the citizens on the actions for effective management of tourist attractions in Imo State. On this, item 6 with a mean score of 2.7 reveals that village meeting is one of the conscientisation strategies that can be used to educate the citizens on effective management of tourist attractions in the communities of Imo State. For item 7, the result ( $\bar{x} = 2.8$ ) shows that popular participation is another conscientisation

strategy that can be used for effective management of tourist attractions in the communities of Imo State. Item 8 with mean score of 2.5, reveals that awareness campaign is a conscientisation strategy that can be used for effective management of tourists attractions in the communities of Imo State. The result on item 9 ( $\bar{x} = 2.8$ ) shows that community education is another conscientisation strategy that can be used to educate Imo citizens on effective management of tourist attractions in the communities of Imo State. The mean score of 2.5 generated on item 10 shows that mass media is a conscientisation strategy that can be used to educate Imo citizens on effective management of tourist attractions in their communities.

In response to research question two, a grand mean of 2.7 recorded confirmed that village meeting, popular participation, awareness campaign, community education, and mass media are the conscientisation strategies that can be used to educate the citizens on effective management of tourist attractions in the communities of Imo State.

### Discussion of Findings

In this sub-heading, the findings obtained from the analyses of data were discussed based on the research questions that guided the study. Research question one sought to determine the extent to which dwellers of the communities of Imo State are adequately conscientised on tourist attractions and its management. The finding shows that dwellers of the communities of Imo State are not adequately conscientised on tourist attractions and its management. This finding corroborates Aref and Ma'rof (2009) who in their study found out that educational awareness towards environmental protection and conservation requires knowledge, understanding, and the change of attitude by each individual and more commitment to tourism. Awareness about the role and importance of environmental issues is considered being a core factor in the management and commitment to tourism.

Also, the study by Ajake, Egbe, Ambo, Emanghe, and Eneji (2010) established that lack of education has seriously led to low commitment to tourism by residents in most developing cities of the world. The scholars revealed that most residents are unaware of the significance of a good environment to tourism development. As such, their activities on the environment greatly discourage tourists from visiting the areas.

According to Nwogu (2013) tourism helps increase awareness about the value of local heritage, encourages social involvement and pride of the host population with resulting interest in its preservation. On the other hand, the educational process as a result of development of society in general, helped develop a new category of tourists made up of young students, professors, diplomats and officials who went to "travel knowledge" of new lands and experiences.

Research question two, which sought to ascertain the conscientisation strategies that can be used to educate the citizens on the actions for effective management of tourist attractions in Imo State, shows that village meeting, popular participation, awareness campaign, community education, and mass media are the conscientisation strategies that can be used to educate people for effective management of tourists attractions in the communities of Imo State. This finding is consistent with Sanoff (2000) who maintains that the main purpose of community participation is to involve people in the design and the decision making processes. It is further argued that community participation in decision making increases people's trust and confidence with the tourism industry. It also provides the local community with a voice in design and decision-making in order to improve plans, service delivery, and finally, promotes a sense of community by bringing together people who share common goals.

According to Geoffery and Alister (2006) in Enemuo and Amaechi (2015), mass media is a non-personal channel of broadcasting a message to the general public through television, radio, newspapers, journals and internets etc. Therefore, a profound knowledge of mass media is very necessary if tourist attraction has good reputation because it is the most economic and effective way to promote tourist attractions.

The finding also supports Jamal and Stronza (2009) who asserted that involving the rural communities in tourism development within and around protected areas is crucial in bridging the gap between governance and use of the resources in a tourist destination. Apart from the economic contribution that the rural communities can accrue from tourism, their involvement in tourism development can as well be beneficial to tourism development because they can create an effective environmental stewardship that builds on indigenous, local and scientific knowledge, economic development, social empowerment, the protection of cultural heritage and the creation of interpretive and nature-based experiences for tourist learning and cross-cultural appreciation.

In practical terms however, the recommendations made by this study will be realised only if the members of the communities with tourist attractions are adequately conscientised by tourism experts using strategies such as village meeting, popular participation, awareness campaign, community education, and mass media programmes.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that in the communities of Imo State, dwellers are not adequately conscientised on tourist attractions and how it should be managed due to their level of illiteracy and ignorance of tourism potentialities. The study also identified village meeting, popular participation, awareness campaign, community education, and mass media as conscientisation strategies that can be used to educate people on effective management of tourist attractions in the communities. Therefore, this study established that conscientisation strategies are essential to effective management of tourist attractions towards development of communities.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Community members should be adequately conscientised and given proper education on the potentialities of tourist attractions and its management in their areas so as to help them in the discovery, preservation and maintenance of the sites.
2. Tourism development experts and education professionals should adopt village meeting, popular participation, awareness campaign, community education, and mass media programmes as conscientisation strategies that can be used for effective management of tourist attractions in the communities.

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