

The Role of Mass Media in Tourism Development in Abia State

Enemuo, Ogechi B. and Amaechi, B.

Department of Hotel Management and Tourism, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, P.M.B
7267, Umudike - Abia State, Nigeria

Abstract

This research work was aimed at establishing the role of mass media on tourism development in Abia State. The objective of the study was to identify the tourism destinations in Abia State, to determine the medium/ media used in advertising the identified tourism destination in the study area, to find out the impact of advertisement on the level of patronage to selected tourist site in Abia State, and to identify ways of improving visitation to the destinations. A structured questionnaire was used to gather the relevant data. Percentages and frequencies were used to analyze the collected data. Findings from the study revealed that National War Museum at Umuahia was the most visited tourism destination in Abia State with 56.8% of all the interviewed tourists having visited it. Wonder tree in Amakama was the second most visited destination. It is recommended that more funds for marketing tourist attractions in Abia State be availed. In addition, there is need to develop a professional human resource base in order to raise service delivery to globally acceptable standards in Abia State.

Keywords: Abia State; Nigeria; Mass Media; Tourism Development; Attractions.

1. Introduction

Tourism is currently the world's largest industry with annual revenues of over three trillion dollars. It provides over six million jobs in the United States, making it the country's largest employer (WTO 2004). Tourism is a collection of activities, services and industries that provides a travel experience, including transportation, accommodation, eating and drinking, retail shops, entertainment businesses and other hospitality and tourism services provided for individuals travelling away from home (WTO, 2008). According to Geoffrey and Alister (2006), tourism is a temporary movement of people to destination outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, the facilities created and the services provided to care for their needs. The development in which environment is the key component of tourism development (Holden, 2008). The attributed of environment can either be viewed as natural or cultural. Tourism development takes place where the natural/cultural environment is attractive and desirable.

According to the NTDC (2007), organized tourism in Nigeria dates back to 1962 when the Nigeria Tourism Association (NTA) was formed by a group of private practitioners to project the tourism potentials in Nigeria and encourage both domestics and international tourism. The efforts of their association led to the International Union of Official Travel Organization (IUOTO). The formation of World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 1964 and the promulgation of degree 54 of 1976 establishing the Nigeria Tourism Board was a boost to Nigeria's tourism. The Nigeria Tourism Development Co-operation (NTDC) in 1992 became the apex tourism agency of the Federal Republic of Nigeria charged with the overall responsibility of promoting, marketing and coordinating tourism activities in the country (Franklin, 2003).

Tourism development focuses mainly on specific areas, and the media is a mediator between tourism and society. WTO (2004) defines mass media as that which covers all the activities and process to bring buyers and sellers together. Mass media is the mode of communication which provides information about products, service and places; people move to different destinations for the purpose of leisure, rest, sightseeing and recreation. Their choices of destination depend upon the information they get from mass media. That is, they choose destination based on what they have heard, read or seen from mass media (Iledia, 2003). Mass media is a non-personal channel of broadcasting a message to the general public through television, Radio, Newspapers, journals and internets etc.

According to Alegre and Acladera (2006), advertisement is less effective in convincing people to visit a tourism destination from which they have little or no knowledge at all, and even less effective in convincing people to visit a place for which they have negative experience. Therefore, a profound knowledge of mass media is very necessary if the destination has a good reputation. Therefore advertising is the most economic and effective way to promote tourism attractions in Abia State such as Azumiri Blue River, wonder tree in Amakama, national war museum in Umuahia among others.

According to Echtner and Ritchie (2013) the main purpose of advertising a tourism destination is to create awareness, promote product of the industry, service brand image and for communication on the existence of such tourism destination in Abia State. The internet's vast capacity enables each media to exhaustively investigate and publish in-depth analysis. Mass media have a crucial role to play in tourism development. The relationship between tourism development and mass media is virtual dependent on mass media because the vast majority of travel decisions are made by tourists who have never seen the attractions (Ananda, 2011). Tourism

development and mass media refers to all the activities such as skill development, jobs and wealth creation and marketing of tourism products through various channels of mass media (Ananda, 2011) so that tourists get to know about those tourism potentials we have in Abia State.

Abia State, whose capital city is Umuahia, is one of the 36 States in Nigeria. Abia State is one of the Niger delta regions blessed with diverse cultures, abundant tourism potentials scattered all over the state.

Poor budgetary allocation and low profit margin has become a nagging problem in Abia State tourism development and this has tremendously affected both marketing and advertisement efforts of various tourism destinations in Abia State (Njoku, 2006). It is quite obvious that advertisement is very paramount in creating awareness for the attraction of local and international tourist. But in the case of Abia State, meager funds availed to the tourism industry has led to poor advertisement and marketing, thereby causing a near collapse of the Abia State tourism sector. Another factor affecting the tourism development in Abia State is lack of professionals in the tourism industry. The government of Abia State only appoints ordinary politicians who don't have the professional knowledge on tourism as the commissioner of ministry of tourism, and these results in lack of new ideas and innovations in Abia State. The state government's lack of focus in developing tourism products is mainly due to poor funding. Today, both domestic and international tourists have little knowledge of the tourism destinations in Abia State because the state government have failed to push tourism development beyond rhetoric (NnajiObed, 2008).

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain the role of mass media on tourism development in Abia State. Specifically, the work identified the tourism destinations in the state; determined the medium/media used in advertising the identified tourism destination in the study area; found out impact of advertisement on the level of patronage to selected tourist site in Abia State; and identified ways of improving visitation to the destinations.

2. Methodology and data analysis

The study was carried out at Abia State. The total number of tourists that visit Abia State is over 5,200 annually (ASTB, 2012). This figure formed the population for the study. Yaro Yamane method was used to determine the sample size (Yamane, year???- please quote source and year).

$$N = \frac{N}{1 + n(e)^2}$$

Where N is the population (here N = 5,200) and n is the unknown sample size. Using the formula, the computed sample size for the study is 371. A questionnaire was designed to elicit demographic characteristics of the respondents drawn from the tourist and tourism destination personnel. Three hundred and seventy questionnaires were administered at different tourism destinations in Abia State, with all being filled and returned. Interview schedule was also used to obtain more information from the respondents.

Simple percentages and frequencies and means were used to describe the data. For instance, the total score on the five levels of agreement (likert scale) was fifteen (15) that is, the total summation of 5,4,3,2 and 1 and the average mean of this agreement was 3.0. Any response with a mean of 3.0 and above was regarded as agreed indicating positive while any response below 3.0 was regarded as disagreement signifying negative response.

3. Result

3.1 Tourist attractions in Abia State

The next table summarizes the main tourist attractions in Abia State.

Table 1: List of tourist attractions studied

Destination	Location
1. Long Juju	Arochukwu
2. Azumiri Blue River	Ukwa East L.G.A
3. Wonder Tree	Amakama
4. National War Museum	Umuahia
5. Obunkwa Temple	Ohafia

4.1 The Long Juju of Arochukwu

This is a cave with a long dark tunnel that is associated with the slave trade (Plate 1). Prior to the slave trade era, it served as a court used to arbitrate tribal and inter-tribal disputes. During the slave trade, it was an important route through which slaves were sold and transported outside the country through the Cross River to the ocean port in Port-Harcourt. Because of the significant role it played during this period, the long Juju has gained international recognition in historical perspectives. The state government has therefore applied to the world body UNESCO for its recognition as one of the world heritage sites.

Also, the long juju cave is believed to hold the long metal pipe through which the gods speak to the people. The entire religious outfit has a well-laid down administration structure headed by a chief-priest. A traditional region would find the oracle quite an attraction.

4.2 The Azumiri Blue River

Azumiri Blue River is found in Abia State towards its boundary with Akwa-Ibom State. The River has become a resort for tourists because of the pleasantries it offers (Plate 2). The attractive features of the River include its crystal clear blue river, canoe rides, sandy beaches with relaxation facilities such as chairs and table, in addition to availability of BBQ grill for picnickers.

This makes the destination good for relaxation for both local and foreign tourists. As the name implies the blueness and freshness of the river adds to its attractiveness. The river that takes its course from the Aba River (popularly called waterside) has room for the construction of a world class tourism resort. When fully developed, the Azumiri blue River site would provide an all year site for tourists worldwide.

4.3 The Amakama Wonder Tree (wooden cave)

This is a wonder tree with a hollow inside, that is capable of accommodating up to twenty people at a time. It is claimed that the tree is as old as the Amakama community and acted as a safe haven to the community during the inter-tribal wars and the slave trade era. The beautiful serene environment of the site is good for the construction of a standard tourism village.

The trees are eight in number which represent the eight villages in Olokoru. When the Eze of Amakama died, the two villages - Umuokoroukwu and Obizi, started to quarrel over who the next King should be. And before the late King was laid to rest, the two trees of Umuokoroukwu and Obizi fell down at night and lay each of other. This implied that there was a big problem between these two villages. Consequently, they waited for the burial of the late king to be done before choosing the new King. All these trees were built up naturally; not man-made (Plate 3). It is believed that when entering the wooden cave, you should not go there with any charm or evil thoughts, for there will be a problem.

4.4 The National War Museum Umuahia

These are federal government establishment that contain the relics of the Nigeria Civil war. These relics are constant reminders of the evils of war. The Museum (Plate 4) serves as a research centre.

3.2 Media used to advertise destinations

Results show that three out of the five tourist attractions use radio advertisements while two use the internet. National War Museum use the highest number of medium (Radio, flyers and internet) to advertise their destinations. Apart from the National War Museum whose advertising activities are done by the management of the destination, all the other attractions reported that the Abia State Government is responsible for their advertisements.

Table 2: Medium of advertising destinations

Options	Medium used	Total no of medium
Azumiri Blue River	Radio advert	1
Wonder Tree	Television advert	1
Long Juju	Internet	1
National War Museum	Radio, advert flyers, Internet	3
Obunkwa Temple	Radio advert	1

3.3 Visitation to the destinations

Table 3 indicates that the National War Museum had the highest number of visitors (about 2,000 visitors) while wonder tree had the least (400 visitors). However, the study revealed that the entire tourism destination was not certain of the number of visitors because there were no proper records.

Table 3: Number of visitors to various destinations in the last three months

Destinations	Number of visitors
Azumiri Blue River	About 1,000
Wonder Tree	May be 400 and above (not certain)
Long Juju	About 400-500
National War Museum	About 2,000
Obunkwa Temple	Nothing less than 700

3.4 Impacts of advertisement on patronage to destinations

Tourists were found to come from various places. Those residing in Abia State accounted for 35.9% while those

from Imo State and Lagos State accounted for 14.3% and 6.8%, respectively. Result also revealed that (1.1%) of the tourists were foreigners (Togo = 0.5%, New York = 0.3% and West Germany = 0.3%) as shown on table 4.

3.5 Sources of information

Table 5 shows that 30.5% of the tourist interviewed indicated that they knew about the tourism destination through radio while 24.3% and 22.7% reported that their source of knowledge was through television and internet, respectively.

Table 5: Sources of information about attractions in Abia State

Options	Frequency	Percentages
Radio	113	30.5
Television	90	24.3
Bill boards	22	5.9
Internet	84	22.7
Flyer	14	3.8
In schools	53	14.3
Total	370	100

3.5 Diversity of tourists visiting the attractions

The study revealed that the tourist interviewed in National War Museum were from 25 different States in Nigeria and 2 foreigners (Togo and West Germany). Most of the tourists were from Abia State (40.5%) and Imo State (15.7%, Table 6). Tourists interviewed in Obunkwa Temple were from 12 different states in Nigeria. Most of the tourists were from Abia States in Nigeria. Most of the tourists were from Abia State (50.0%) and Imo State (10.9%). Few visitors from Imo State may be attributed to poor advertisement by the tourist destinations. The absence of international tourists at most of the attractions signifies poor marketing, therefore, a failure by destinations to attain their full potential.

The tourist that visited the Azumiri Blue River were from 17 different States with most coming from Abia (23.9%) and Imo (22.4%) states. No foreigner was among the tourists interviewed. Tourists from 22 different State in Nigeria and 3 foreigners visited the wonder tree at Amakama. Most of the tourists were also from Abia (42.1%) and Imo (13.2%) states. Also 7.4% of the tourists were from Lagos State. Tourists from 15 different states in Nigeria visited the long juju. Most of the tourists were from Abia (40.0%) and 8% from both Akwa-Ibom and Enugu States, while 6.0% were from both Imo and Lagos. No foreigner was among the tourists interviewed.

4. Discussion, conclusion and recommendations

The study identified some of the tourism potentials in the state. Among those identified and documented are the National war museum in Umuahia, Azumini blue river in Ukwu west local government, The long juju Arochukwu, Wonder tree in Amakama Olokoru and Obunkwa Temple in Ohafia. All these traditional arts and craft are modified for economic reasons and for other purpose in Abia State (Okpoko, 2006).

It was found that 30.5% of the tourist interviewed learnt about the attractions through the radio, 24.3% and 22.7% reported that the source of their knowledge was through television and the internet, respectively which is in line with Ayen (2006) who stated that that tourism is widely recognized as one of the world's largest industry that focuses primarily on leisure, business and travel activities around the world.

The study also found that 37.6% of the tourist had the knowledge of the destinations through the internet while 33.2% through the radio advertisement.

The study revealed that the tourism attractions adopted internet as a source of advertisement because most tourists identify it as a better way of creating awareness, a fact that matches with Mauritius (2004): that the media planner must choose the best specific media which will attract tourist to visit that particular destination. The media planners are increasing by developing more sophisticated measures of effectiveness and using them in mathematical models to arrive at the best media mix. Many advertising agencies use computer programs to select the initial media and then make further schedule improvement based on subjective factors not considered by the media.

The National War Museum, Umuahia was the most visited tourist destination in Abia State. This result shows that 56.8% of all the tourist have visited the destination. Wonder tree in Amakama was the second most visited attraction with 32.7% of the tourists indicating visiting the destination. This is in line with (Ayeni, 2006) who observed that with a population of 120 million people in a country made up of about 1 million beautiful coastal land and ecological resources, Nigeria appears to be the "Giant of Africa" as far as tourism is concerned. Tourism industry is currently undergoing serious re-organization and re-structuring in the establishment of different tourism destinations throughout Abia State, Nigeria.

Based on the findings of the study, the following tourists' destinations were in Abia State: The Azumiri

Blue River, the Wonder tree, the National war museum, Obunkwa temple and long juju in Arochukwu. The ministry of tourism in Abia State revealed that tourism destinations were advertised through radio, television and internet. The state government was responsible for the advertisement, but that is not enough. The state Government should also develop the infrastructure that create conducive environment. Such infrastructure and services include good roads, electricity, water supply, adequate security and means of communication. Advertisement of tourism destinations could be improved through creating more awareness through publications, radio/television adverts and seminars. There is also need for the tourism destinations' management to adopt internet as a method of advertising because most tourists identify this as a better way of creating awareness to the public for high rate of tourist flow in the destinations.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The State Government should harness the attractions and make the roads accessible for high rate of tourists flow in Abia State. In addition, state Government should develop the infrastructure that create conducive environment.
2. It is recommended that all tourist attraction be advertised using the mass media such as radio, television, internet.

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Table 4: Origin of the visitors

Options	Frequency	Percentages
Abia	133	35.9
Akwalbom	12	3.2
Anmbra	17	4.6
Imo	53	14.3
Cross River	8	2.2
Rivers	21	5.7
Ebony	6	1.6
Enugu	20	5.4
Lagos	25	6.8
Ondo	3	.8
Kebbi	2	.5
Benue	3	.8
Abuja	13	3.5
Ogu	2	.5
Adamawa	5	1.4
Kogi	6	1.6
Delta	12	3.2
Bayelsa	2	.5
Edo	7	1.9
Plateus	2	.5
Niger	3	.8
Kwara	2	.5
Bauchi	1	.3
Nasarawa	2	.5
Oyo	3	.8
Kastsina	1	.3
Kaduna	1	.3
Jigawa	1	.3
Togo	2	.5
New York	1	.3
West Germany	1	.3
Total	370	100

Table 6: Crosstabulation of destinations and origin of visitors

Origin	Azumiri blue river	Wonder tree	Long juju	National War Museum	Obunkwa temple
Abia	16 (23.9)	51 (42.1)	20 (40.0)	85 (40.5)	23 (50.0)
Akwa-Ibom	3 (4.5)	-	4 (8.0)	6 (2.9)	-
Anmbra	4 (6.0)	5 (4.1)	2 (4.0)	12 (5.7)	1 (2.2)
Imo	15 (22.4)	16 (13.2)	3 (6.0)	33 (15.7)	5 (10.9)
Cross River	4 (6.0)	3 (2.5)	--	2 (1.0)	1 2.2
Rivers	6 (9.0)	7 (5.8)	2 (4.0)	9 (4.3)	4 8.7
Ebony	2 (3.0)	3 (2.5)	- -	3 (1.4)	-
Enugu	3 (4.5)	4 (3.3)	4 (8.0)	12 (5.7)	3 6.5
Lagos	1 (1.5)	9 (7.4)	3 (6.0)	13 (6.2)	3 6.5
Ondo	-	2 (1.7)	- -	1 (0.5)	-
Kebbi	-	1 (0.8)	- -	1 (0.5)	1 2.2
Benue	2 (3.0)	1 (0.8)	1 (2.0)	2 (1.0)	-
Abuja	2 (3.0)	4 (3.3)	2 (4.0)	7 (3.3)	2 4.3
Ogun	-	1 (0.8)	1 (2.0)	-	-
Adamawa	1 (1.5)	1 (0.8)	- -	3 (1.4)	1 2.2
Kogi	3 (4.5)	1 (0.8)	- -	1 (0.5)	1 2.2
Delta	1 (1.5)	2 (1.7)	3 (6.0)	7 (3.3)	-
Bayelsa	-	2 (1.7)	- -	-	-
Edo	-	--	--	-	-
Plateaus	-	--	1 (2.0)	1 (0.5)	-
Niger	1(1.5)	--	2 (4.0)	1 (0.5)	-
Total	17	25	15	27	12

Pictures of attractions in Abia State, Nigeria**Plate 1: The Long Juju of Arochukwu****Plate 2: Azumiri Blue River in Ukwa East L.G.A.****Plate 3: Wonder Tree in Amakama****Plate 4: National War Museum, Umuahia**

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