

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING TOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

This paper identifies tourism as a major global industry that Nigeria needs to break into. Though the country has formulated a tourism policy, the budget, the infrastructure and security concerns reflect that Nigeria is an ill-prepared player in the global tourism industry. The paper has also shown that whereas much of Nigeria's tourist attractions are in dismal state; the Cross River State government has taken the boldest step to place the Cross River tourism circuit in the world map.

This paper equally x-rays the problem facing tourism in Nigeria and pinning its discourse against the framework of Rogers and Dearing's (1987) model of differential agenda setting. It affirms that through advocacy, social mobilization, communication and community participation, tourism stakeholders can use the folk media, the mass media, little media and outdoor/transit media and other channels and formats to heighten interest and promote participation in tourism for sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

A lot has been said and written about Nigeria's tourism potentials. Whether these potentials are being consciously developed at both national and local levels is another question entirely. The world over, tourism has been seen as a monumental revenue and foreign exchange earner for those countries that have taken the sector seriously.

It is often reasoned that Nigeria has sufficient grounds to develop its tourism sector. This is so because, the country is essentially, a mono-product economy having depended on petroleum and gas for part of its history. With its manufacturing sector contributing only about 0.5 percent export earnings, a largely undeveloped solid mineral sub sector, and a comatose agricultural sector; strident calls have been made to diversify its economy for a more sustainable development. This is so because a developed tourism sector has been known to generate huge opportunities for investments in different directions of the economy.

However, the problem in Nigeria has been that the approach to tourism has really not been well coordinated. There has been a tendency to see tourism as consisting of relaxation parks, hotels and air travels, but tourism goes beyond this if it must attract the sort of revenue that can create wealth, reduce poverty, and stimulate economic growth.

Probably, because of the haphazard nature of Nigerian tourism, the communications media have also tended to portray tourism as consisting mainly of hospitality, travel, and elite sports such as golf. In truth, tourism involves hospitality, travel, sports, education, health, agriculture; arts, culture, music,

conservation, industrialization, public activities, security, cuisine, religion, architecture, etc.

To this end, this paper intends to examine the rationale for tourism development in Nigeria. It will explore the problems that militate against tourism development against the backdrop of Nigeria's tourism landscape or potentials. It will also deliberate on pertinent issues that arise from tourism discourses and dilate on communication strategies for boosting tourism for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Basing its thesis on Rogers and Hearing's (1987), model of differential agenda-setting, the paper concludes that a confluence of policy makers, the public, and the communications media are crucial on setting agenda for tourism development in Nigeria.

### **Method**

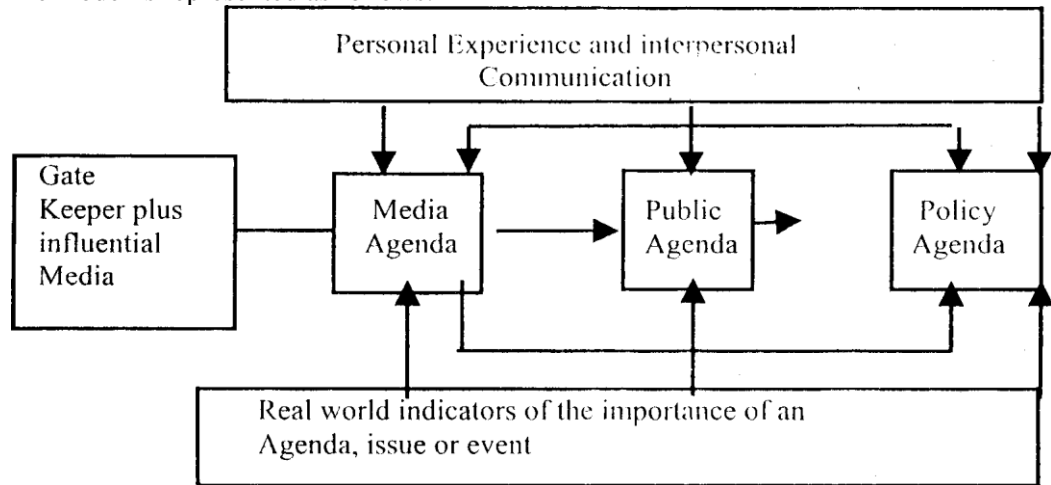
Facts and other data on which this paper is based are mostly derived from reading, analysis, and interpretation of relevant literature gleaned from textbooks, newspaper articles, journals, internet-based sources and personal experience.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The promotion of tourism for sustainable development in Nigeria can be explained under the framework of Rogers and Dearing's Model of Differential Agenda Setting. The 1987 model works on the premise that, there are three different kinds of agenda:

- a) Media agenda which refers to the priorities of attention in media content to issues and events.
- b) The public agenda - that is the varying salience of issues in public opinion and knowledge.
- c) The policy agenda which describes the issue and policy proposals of politicians (McQuail and Windahl, 1993).

The model is represented as follows:



**Fig. 1:** Rogers and Dearing's (1987). Model of Agenda Setting. (Source: McQuail and Windahl, 1993).

McQuail and Windahl (1993), explained that, the communications media do influence the public agenda directly, the public agenda influence the policy agenda and that while the media agenda have independent direct influence on the policy agenda, on some issues, the policy agenda have a direct and a strong influence on the media agenda. On the other hand, the media agenda are directly influenced by many sources and by real world events which come to the attention of the media.

Concerning tourism, the model shows that if the communications media make it a priority, both the public and policy makers can be influenced. It also means that if policy makers make it a priority, the media would directly be influenced. Again, the public, if it has tourism as its priority especially because it elects those who govern, can influence policy makers who are politicians to take action that will improve the tourism industry in Nigeria.

### **Rationale for Tourism Development in Nigeria**

As a nation, Nigeria recognizes the full import of tourism development to • the extent that it has formulated a tourism policy. The policy reflects the nation's intention to: Develop and promote tourism into economically viable industry. The main thrust of the 1991 policy is that of making Nigeria a prominent tourism destination in Africa, generate foreign exchange, encourage even development, promote tourism-based rural enterprises, generate employment, accelerate rural urban integration and foster sociocultural unity among the various regions of the country through the promotion of domestic and international tourism The. policy also aims at encouraging active private sector participation in tourism development (littp://wwwv.Nigeria.vo.uk/"tourism/index.htm I).<sup>1</sup>

According to the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE), Nigeria currently ranks as the eighth tourist destination in Africa and that government projects tourism employment generation capacity at 420, 000 direct jobs and 1.5 million indirect jobs ([www.bpe.uov.ng](http://www.bpe.uov.ng)).

It is therefore, apparent that Nigeria has taken the pains to enunciate tourism policies because the potentials of tourism are vast. Awake! (August 22, 2005: 3-9), reports that whereas in the early 1960's, international tourists were only about 70 million annually, by mid 1990's they had enlarged to 500 million. The Awake! Report states further that:

Around the globe, tourist resorts sprang up to cater for both international and domestic travelers. Industries not directly associated with tourism benefited, since tourists consume vast quantities of food and drink and spend money on numerous other goods and services.

Today tourism is important to the economy of over 125 countries. The benefits tourism can bring... comes through the creation of small and medium size tourism business. As it creates new jobs, it can raise environmental, cultural, and social awareness (Awake! August 22, 2005:4).

Expanding on the environmental benefit, the above-stated report states further that in some countries tourism provides a valuable financial incentive to save plants and animals. In Kenya for instance, one lion is worth \$7,000 annually from tourism while an elephant herd brings in \$610,000 per annum. Also, Hawaii's coral reefs generate approximately \$360 million yearly from nature-based tourism. The report concludes that, resorts, airlines, travel agencies, and other businesses that cater for travelers - is described as "the worlds number one employer".

Olumide's (2006), summary of the UN World Tourism Organization confirms the Awake! reports and further provides the rationale for Nigeria's interest in tourism. He wrote that, apart from combating poverty in developing countries, tourism retains its position as the world's largest service sector and is instrumental to establishing contacts, recognizing diversity and practicing tolerance.

Apart from these, (he tourism industry is said to be bigger (ban car manufacturing, agriculture business or the electronics industry because it generates \$800 billion yearly in international tourist spending - a sum that will more than double by 2020. Again, tourism is said to represent 40 percent of global service trade and six percent of total world trade and that in the last ten years, it grew in the poorest 49 countries at six times the rate at which it grew in Europe. Africa particularly has interestingly one of the fastest growths in the sector. Owojaiye (2006), points out that, the number of international tourists grew from 28.2 to 36.8 million between 2000 and 2005 despite concerns about terrorism and Sub Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The relevance of these figures is that the tourism industry is big and that there are benefits to derive in Nigeria's quest for tourism development.

### **Nigeria's Tourism Landscape**

Nigeria is frequently described as a greatly endowed country. Nigeriabusinessinfo.com( [www.nigeriabusinessinfo.com/places.html](http://www.nigeriabusinessinfo.com/places.html)) looks at Nigeria as being blessed with warm, sundry climate, with over 800 kilometers of fascinating beaches, evergreen vegetation and alluring landforms. Its more than 140 million culturally rich people, its waterfalls, springs, hills, mountainous areas with temperate climates and wild life give Nigeria its hope as a tourist destination.

Most of Nigeria's tourist attractions arc to be found in numerous national parks, games reserves, resorts, and man-made attractions. They arc about eight

national parks namely: Yankari which has now been handed over to Bauchi State, Kainji Lake in Kwara, Oyo National Park, Gashaka Gumte National Park in Adamawa/Taraba States, Chad Basin National Park in Borno/Yobe, Cross River National Park, and Kaniuku National Park in Kaduna State.

Other attractions include recreation grounds, cultural attractions, museums and monuments, crafts, conference centres and sports. Numerous attractions including hotels are also to be found in each state of the Nigerian federation. Nigeriabusinessinfo.com lists more than 600 of them. But for the purpose of this paper, four notable tourism projects are highlighted as follows:

**a) *Obudu Ranch Resort/Tinapa***

By far, Cross River State's tourism development effort appears to be the most concerted, coordinated, focused and expansive. From a rustic cattle ranch established in the colonial times, the tourist site has been developed in recent times to a world class standard. Apart from exotic lodging, cable cars (the first in Africa) take people from the foot of the hills to the top. The natural surroundings offer tourists forest and wildlife viewing through the forest walkways atop of trees. There is a water park at the foot of the hills, a burgeoning craft trade by neighbouring communities, guided tours and a temperate climate.

The ranch is one of the major planks in the Cross River tourism circuit, others being the AH mountain (forest) reserve, the drill (rarest ape species) ranch, the Kwa falls, Agbokini water falls in Ikom, the Cultural Village in Calabar, the old residency museum, the Calabar tourists beach and the gigantic billion dollar international Tinapa business resort.

By investing massively in tourism through a conscious building of tourism infrastructure, Cross River State, with an array of luxury hotels, sports facilities, a sea port (Free Trade Zone), and an international airport; is being packaged as the tourism capital of Nigeria. This is an integrated approach to tourism development which is good.

**b) *Mambilla Plateau***

The Mambilla Plateau is located at the Southeast section of Taraba State bordered by Cameroon. It is a scenic grassland Plateau with a cold weather like the Obudu ranch resort.

The park offers a beautiful setting with its cattle ranches, tea plantations and rolling hills. It has spectacular flora and fauna especially some common species of birds and animals ([www.onlinenigeria.com/travelindex.asp](http://www.onlinenigeria.com/travelindex.asp)).

In spite of its beauty, the plateau is yet to be developed. The road leading to it is in a bad state, and as if there is no plan to develop it for public use, Barde (2006), reported that, "so much has been written about the beauty and clement weather of the Mambilla Plateau, perhaps, explaining why most big names in Nigeria, especially retired Generals... have large parcels of land on the plateau." Barde is of the view that if the plateau must serve as a haven for tourists, top class hotels and an airstrip need to be constructed.

**c) *Yankari Game Reserve***

The Yankari Game Reserve is part of the Yankari National Park. It was established in 1956 and opened to the public in 1962. About one and a half hours journey by road from Bauchi town, the reserve, now handed over to Bauchi

government was a delight to foreign tourists. Conditions had since worsened in the park which boasts of a wide variety of plant and animal species including elephants, apes, buffaloes, crocodiles, and lions.

**d) *Ibom Hotels and Golf Course Resort***

This marks the beginning of tourism development in Akwa Ibom State. Located a few kilometers from Uyo, the state capital, the resort in Nwaniba is mainly an architectural splendour sited on a waterfront with a scenic 18-hole golf course adjoining it. As noted earlier, the concept of tourism goes beyond hotel accommodation. What will bring in the visitors? Bed space? Definitely not. Golf? Not for its sake alone. Tourism is usually built around waterbeaches, business and trade, popular sports, wildlife, cultural carnivals and festivals, arts and craft, medicine, cuisine etc. If these components are not built into the Ibom Resort Concept, the project may soon fail.

**Nature and Forms of Tourism Unfolded**

Wikipedia (2006), (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/tourism>), the free encyclopedia states that the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourism as “traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited”. Wikipedia, also defines tourism as: a service industry, comprising a number of tangible and intangible components. The tangible elements include transport systems, roads, rails, air, waterways and space; hospitality services - accommodation, foods and beverages, towns and souvenirs; and related services such as banking, insurance and safety and security. The intangible elements include: rest and relaxation, culture, escape, adventure, new and different experiences.

Tourism occurs in two major forms, international and national and it depends mainly on three required factors: discretionary income to be spent on non-essentials, time in which to do that and infrastructure such as accommodation facilities and means of transportation.

**Factors Militating Against Tourism Development in Nigeria**

The problems that work against tourism development in Nigeria has been summed up thus:

... many of these attractions are still largely untapped and even at their raw states, they are still being enjoyed by few outsiders, either very rich visitors in quest of exoticism or adventurous people in search of new challenges and experience. The lack of required modern infrastructural facilities and in some parts of the country acute conditions of underdevelopment and poverty can be seen which many potential Nigeria-bound tourists may not like to be confronted with (<http://www.onlinenigeria.com>).

It means that for Nigeria to seriously look to tourism to contribute meaningfully to the national economy, the following problems must be tackled:

- 1) Insecurity including hostage taking, kidnapping, robberies, murders, religious disturbances and unfriendly police, immigration and customs officials.
- 2) The parlous state of the aviation industry, bad roads, and dead rail and water transport.

- 3) Unreliable telecommunication facilities as well as other utilities such as electricity, water, health centres, etc.
- 4) High incidence of advance fee fraud, bribery, corruption and general lack of transparency.

To mitigate those problems, policy makers, the public, and the communications media have crucial roles to play. This paper shall concern itself in the following section with what the media can do to promote tourism in Nigeria.

### **Communication Strategies for Promoting Tourism**

The predominant methods of communicating about tourism are the traditional means and the use of the mass media. Since modern mass media organs are rare in rural areas, the use of folk ways becomes necessary.

#### **Folk Media Strategies**

Folk media methods that can be used to disseminate messages on tourism development include the town crier, festivals, music, and drama. Wilson (1997:98), has described these methods as popular, adaptable, cheap, credible, integrative, etc.

In rural Communities where strong importance is attached to festivities such as new yam festivals. New Year celebrations, cultural days, and reunions, the tourism potentials of these could be harnessed. Similarly, urban-based celebrations such as World Earth Day, World Habitat Day, World Tourism Day, World Heritage Day or the World Environment Day can be made more relevant to rural dwellers and urban sluniites by pointing to their tourism significance through songs, dance, drama, and discussions.

Folk media essentially incorporate interpersonal communication. Tourism experts, government officials, investors, and tourism partners can engage in face-to-face, one-to-one, or small group interaction to share ideas, information and other data about tourism and what communities can do to promote it. The effectiveness of interpersonal communication has been underscored by UNICEF/WHO/Polio Partners (2002: A-18). To them, interpersonal communication is explanatory, legitimizes programme ideas, builds consensus on issues, addresses rumors and responds to issues, problems and questions of a personal nature that may in this case, relate to tourism development issues.

It follows therefore, that communication programmes can employ communication modes such as group discussions, seminars, workshops, and business fora (in urban centres) and town meetings, village converges, agricultural groups, craftsmen, food handlers, tour guides, parents, male and female youths, religious retreats and educational excursions in rural areas to build knowledge and promote tourism in the country.

#### **Mass Media Strategies**

The mass media are critical in the promotion of tourism. With the recordings and reproduction of sounds, motion and vision, tourist sites can come alive and have more telling impact in living rooms, or public places. Through photograph, video clips and filming, the best in tourism that Nigeria possesses can be told and shown and interest awakened on a more regular and frequent basis.

The mass media, by providing accurate, and timely information on tourism

issues and by critically selecting and interpreting tourism information, they can help to increase the breadth of public appreciation and understanding of tourism concepts, issues, problems and their remedies.

According to UNICEF/WHO/Polio Partners (2002), again, the mass media do this because they define agenda, influence public opinion, force attention to issues, exert a subtle, indirect, cumulative effect on audience over time; suggests what people should think about, know about and have feelings about and provide important lessons or facts to governments, tourists, tourism investors and developers, communities, individuals and other stakeholders for a better performance of regulatory, oversight, or monitoring activities. Mass media channels and formats which can be employed to promote tourism are as follows:

- a) **Channels:** Tourism and tourism development can be promoted through mass media channels like radio, television, film, newspapers, magazines, books, (including booklets, pamphlets, posters, flyers, and leaflets). Other channels include, tapes, digital video/audio compact discs, the Internet including electronic mail, personal letters, cellular phones, advertising, and little and outdoor media.
- b) **Formats:** There are also many forms in which tourism issues, messages and problems can be presented to intended persons, groups, or communities. Depending on the channel and the purpose for which communication is made, popular formats include pictures, interviews, news stories, feature articles, editorials, comments and analyses, press conferences, talk shows, documentaries. Others are advertorials/supplements, opinion articles, announcements, phone-ins, etc.

By using this wide array of formats, communicating about tourism becomes easy. Through the formats, general awareness is created, tourism issues receive a sense of importance and the messages become reinforced and popular. Besides, others are pressured to participate in the discourse.

### **Little Media Strategies**

To spread messages on tourism more effectively, little media can also be used. These messages are designed and conveyed on small media products such as t-shirts, car stickers, badges, bottle openers, face-caps, brochures etc. These small products can be produced in millions of quantities and spread around large areas to cover schools, hotels, bus or train terminals, sea ports, hilly regions, town halls, bars, pubs, and so on.

Minorities, refugees, migrants, or other displaced people may also help carry the message afar. Indeed such products may be used to reach groups who do not easily access the popular media.

### **Outdoor and Transit Media Strategies**

Large overhead billboards, posters, and messages mounted on cars, buses, trains, ships and other moving vehicles can also be used to communicate tourism messages. Billboards and large wall posters or printed displays are used when sponsors of such messages intend to saturate the audience, create impressions and send specific messages to specific groups. On the other hand, the power of transit media rests with the millions of people who ride on commercial transportation



facilities and pedestrians who view the messages (Bovee and Arens, 1986).

A very important point to note whether the media strategy adopted be folk, mass, little, or outdoor/transit media, the message must be simple, clear, and devoid of technicalities. Secondly, a sound knowledge of message recipients is required so that messages can be tailored to their needs. Thirdly, the intended audience of tourism messages should participate in the design of the proposed communication materials which should be pre-tested for effectiveness, acceptance, and cultural relevance.

### **Ethical Issues**

Communicating about tourism also compels the practitioner to learn and be sensitive to ethical issues and in the other dilemmas in the field. One of such issues is that tourists also degrade the environment and produce pollution. Another, is that tourists come with their materialism which adversely affects local population. The third is that a large proportion of tourists use it for child prostitution (*Awake!* August 22, 2005). Another of such ethical questions is seen in what has been called embryo tourism where tourists visit places like India where the In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) procedure is less expensive. A *Daily Mail* of London report by Ben Farmer carried in *Daily Sun* (March 7, 2007) stated, "Experts in Britain raised questions over the ethics of such treatment, with fears that poor Indian couples may be driven by poverty into providing embryos for cash.

Tourism communicators must be sure to understand the issues and communicate professionally about them. The task of the tourism communicator is four fold. These are:

- (1) **Social Mobilization:** This involves bringing together tourism stakeholders to pinpoint needs, raise demand for, and maintain progress towards tourism development.
- (2) **Advocacy:** This means that the tourism communicator must collect, sort and formulate data into informative and persuasive messages to be shared with tourism stakeholders through various interpersonal and media channels in order to gain their commitment to and active support for activities aimed at developing tourism.
- (3) **Communication:** This is a research-centered dialoguing process of responding to groups in society so as to sensitize them towards tourism development activities.
- (4) **Community Participation:** This involves working with the communities to identify tourism issues, needs and problems and taking responsibility for planning, managing, controlling and assessing collective action that is required to solve tourism problems identified (Adapted from UNICEF/WHO/Polio Partners, 2002: X).

To be able to do this, tourism communicators, must equip themselves sufficiently. Some of the ways of doing this are as follows:

- 1) Taking short courses in travel, hospitality and tourism whenever available to

- broaden the communicator's knowledge and keep pace with the trends.
- 2) Joining sponsored tours to tourism sites to improve the quality of reporting and discussion and to popularize the destinations.
  - 3) Attending tourism expos, workshops, seminars, conferences and participating fully in order to gain useful insights into the field and make useful personal institutional contacts.
  - 4) Subscribing to tourism journals and other publications, watching tourism channels and cultivating tourism experts, scholars, enthusiasts, and managers.
  - 5) Striving to establish the linkages among tourism, environment, agriculture, education, economy etc. By so doing, the audience would be able to view tourism in a more holistic or integrated manner.
  - 6) Being alive to the ethical issues and dilemmas surrounding tourism so that they can be addressed without causing social problems in society.

### **Conclusion**

This paper identified tourism as a major global industry that Nigeria needs to break into. Though the country has formulated a tourism policy, the budget, the infrastructure and security concerns reflect that Nigeria is ill prepared to eat into the global tourism pie. The paper has also shown that whereas much of Nigeria's tourist attractions are in dismal state; the Cross River government has taken the boldest step to place the Cross River tourism circuit in the world map. This paper equally x-rayed the problems facing tourism in Nigeria and pinning its discourse against the framework of Rogers and Dealing's (1987), model of differential agenda-setting, it affirms that through advocacy, social mobilization, communication and community participation; tourism stakeholders can use the folk media, the mass media, little media and outdoor/transit media through their channels and formats, to heighten interest, and promote participation in tourism for sustainable development in Nigeria.

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