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Effectiveness of Selected Communication Media on Tourism Awareness Creation for Rural Development in Ogun State, Nigeria (Pp. 382-392)

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Abstract

Nigeria is a land of variety that possesses favourable weather, wildlife, waterfalls, historical relics, captivating beaches, rock out-crops, rolling hills coupled with hospitable and culturally active people that are capable of making tourism a delight in Nigeria. The study therefore assessed the effectiveness of selected communication media on awareness creation towards tourism for rural development in Ogun State. The findings revealed that among the communication media identified for tourism awareness creation: radio, television, family & friends were rated 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively. The results also revealed that radio ($\chi^2 = 11.8, p < 0.051$), television ($\chi^2 = 16.42, p < 0.05$), and family & friends ($\chi^2 = 21.17, p < 0.05$) were found to have significant relationship with awareness creation for tourism activities. Other motivational factors found to have significant relationship with awareness creation and communication media were entertainments ($\chi^2 = 18.11, p < 0.05$), festivals ($\chi^2 = 23.41, p < 0.05$), and celebrations ($\chi^2 = 08.33, p < 0.05$). The study further revealed some personal characteristics of respondents that influenced their awareness for tourism through communication media as sex ($\chi^2 = 10.21, p < 0.05$), age ($\chi^2 = 16.39, p < 0.05$), and education ($\chi^2 = 17.22, p < 0.05$). Thus, the study recommends frantic sensitisation programme on cultivation of good reading habits among the younger generation to foster and forestall good future for tourism in Nigeria.

Key Words: Communication media, Awareness, Rural people, Development

Introduction

Rural people constitute the greater part of the population of developing countries and often lack access to basic needs such as water, food, education, health care, sanitation and security, leading to low life expectancy and high infant mortality. These conditions considered harsh by a majority of the rural population result in their migration to urban areas, often in search of formal employment, and life social enhancing facilities; electricity, good road, pipe borne water and Information Communication Technologies among others (Fagbola and Adebisi – Adelani, 2007). Assessment of rural livelihood situations according to Gambo (1996) can most appropriately be made with respect to availability, adequacy, accessibility and stability of sustainable economic opportunities. Ekwe *et al* (2008) opined that in a typical rural setting, many such opportunities can be opened up going by the abundant rural resources available but then an enabling environment needs to be created which will essentially empower rural households to utilize their resources efficiently to meet their competition requirements and nutritional needs.

Different information sources reach different audiences, and awareness is created if messages are reinforced by appropriate communication channels. The word communication is somehow abstract and possesses numerous meanings. It can simply be defined as process by which people exchange information or express their thoughts or feelings through oral, written and signal means. It is axiomatic that faith comes only by hearing. According to Cleverger (1991), it is inconceivable that any person cannot communicate. Adebayo and Adedoyin (2005) identified among five main functional requirements for survival that a system of communication through which people could exchange symbol and thus propagate learning at an accelerated rate is important. Communication occurs in context of transferring information. The most common division of communication is along the lines of the number of actors involved in the communication scenario (Adebayo, 1997; Bittner, 1989; Littlejohn, 1999). In this case communication can be intrapersonal or interpersonal, group, organisation and mass. Communication media are the networks through which information flow from one end to another on purpose of achieving knowledge. In tourism, the issue of communication cannot be thought of with levity. The essence of communication exchange media to tourism can be likened to extension services where it involves exchange of ideas, skills or simply information. According to

Adebayo (1997) communication is conceptualized as a process of information flow by which ideas are transferred from a source to a receiver with the intent to change his/her knowledge, attitude and skill. In short, communication is a means to education vis-à-vis education is a means to awareness, without learning, belief and consequent change in behaviour, development cannot be effected. According to Oladeji and Oyesola (2000) education is an important factor in the transfer and communication of information. Hall and Richards (2003) substantiated that involving the community and allowing members of the community to make informed decisions about the course of tourism development requires a free flow of appropriate intelligible and usable information.

According to Iwala (2007), the rural Nigeria has been trapped and indeed entrenched in deep economic doldrums which has been the greatest obstacle to the pursuit of sustainable socio-economic growth of Nigeria. The United Nations Trust Funds for Human Subjects submitted that the poverty rate of Nigeria currently stands at about 70% up from 27% in 1980. The 2004 Human Development Index stands at 0.466 ranking Nigeria at 151 out of 177 countries. The country takes 57th position among the poorest countries in the world. However, Ojo and Jibowo (2002) averred that development in human society involves skill and capacity, greater self reliance, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and material well-being of individuals. It also involves an increasing capacity to regulate all forms of relationship at the level of social groups. In the like manner, rural development further involves the transformation of the conditions of rural dwellers into a desirable one aimed at improving the quality of living of the rural population. Communication on the other hand is a vehicle of development. It brings about changes in income opportunities, social relationship, physical endeavours and spiritual belief. It is not an understatement to say that communication stands the gap between life and death. Yahaya (2003) corroborated that the primary purpose of communication is to promote social change and economic development in nation building. The ability to realise economic benefits from resources largely depends on institutional capacity, especially to understand the changing environment and pursue appropriate action to take advantage of the potentials. Nwanbani, *et al* (2007) alluded that literacy is an important variable in any endeavour. Literacy in this sense refers to awareness which its dearth is presently combating tourism. Hence, people can only desire and buy what they have knowledge of.

Tourism has the potential to provide diversified economic opportunities to the local communities. Popoola (2006) suggested that tourism is a means by which Nigeria's rural landscape can be put to use in engendering economic and industrial revolution. This is by employing the vast resources in tourism development, which has been acclaimed worldwide to be a money spinning business. One begins to wonder why gargantuan natural resources such as beautiful water falls, stone images, beautiful outcrop of rocks in strategic locations, beaches , national parks , game reserves, waterfalls, historical relics, and plateaux among others, refuse to fetch considerable and commensurable prospects. Ayodele (2002) opined that tourism is not an isolated economic activity which benefits the wealthy only, as does the industrial sector for instance, which creates income in the first place for the industrialists. Tourism has the capacity of trickling down the economic ladder. For example, tourism creates income for persons working in hotels, restaurants and cafes; travel agents, tourist guides, craftsmen, local souvenirs sellers, transport enterprises, places of entertainment, hotels, sports and recreation among others, thereby, having a multiplying effect on the rural community and national economy at large.

However, there is a problem of orientation amongst the people. It is imperative that while we acknowledge the responsibility from the government to improve the potentials of our landscape, cultural heritage, diverse background, and interesting climate to unleash development especially in the rural areas, communities have a responsibility. It is pertinent that while looking up to the government to do what is expected, citizens too need to re-orient themselves and turn positive attitude toward how to spend leisure and holidays. Awareness is therefore an important aspect of co-opting the citizens into the tourism world and this is only achievable via a laudable communication process. A clarion call on Nigerians to realize and exploit the potentials inherent in tourism as an antidote to rural development and economic buoyancy through communication media among the fellow Nigerians out of altruistic motive brought about the desire to carry out this study.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Ogun State. The state is popularly called the "Gateway State" due to its location on the Nigerian map. It is bordered by both other Nigerian States and a foreign country. Aside this, Ogun State is noted for her tourism attractions and developments. These attractions compete favourably with the western world.

The population for the study comprised the tourists of diverse socio economic backgrounds from Olumo rock in Abeokuta. Two hundred and sixteen respondents were involved in the study. A purposive sampling technique was employed due to the nature of the study.

Data were collected from the respondents on the 21 - item structured questionnaire. The collected data were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The questionnaire was also used as an interview schedule for non literate respondents. The administration of the questionnaire was accomplished within five working days (Monday - Friday). The choice of week days was aimed at avoiding the weekend or ceremonial rush that accompany tourism events, thus, the respondents were individuals that toured on purpose and ready to attend to questionnaire.

The instrument was face – validated to ensure the appropriateness of the instrument chosen. The services of psychometrics were employed to validate the instruments used. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's alpha .

Distribution and collection of the instrument were done by hand. Out of two hundred and twenty questionnaire distributed, all was collected but only two hundred and sixteen was well completed.

Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. The descriptive (frequencies and percentages) was used to present the data on the socio - demographic characteristics of the respondents and the selected communication media while inferential statistics (chi square) was used to measure the relationship between selected communication media and awareness creation for tourism activities.

Results and Discussion

Socio demographic characteristics of the respondents - This comprised sex, age, education, economic status, occupation and marital status. Seventy-eight percent (78.74%) of the respondents were male while twenty-one percent (21.36%) were female. This evinces the domination of male folk in tourism activities. The combined role of women as home makers and involvement in economic activities is possibly responsible for their low participation in tourism activities. Majority of the respondents (73.14%) fall within their active economic age of 21 – 60 years. This confirms that tourism events require a great deal of verve which only the younger folk possess. A few (12.50%) of the respondents had little or no education while a higher

percentage, 87.50 had school certificate and above. The high and average levels of education of respondents were instrumental to their interest and alertness to tourism related advertisement / news on radio and television and their interaction with family and friends, which consequently result to their awareness. These enhanced their psyche towards benefits inherent in tourism activities and its integration into their schedule despite its cost implications. Education enhances understanding of information on tourism and hastens action and decision making concerning any endeavour. The finding is in line with opinion of Oladeji and Oyesola (2000), education is an important factor in the transfer and communication of information. Hall and Richards (2003) substantiated that involving the community and allowing members of the community to make informed decisions about the course of tourism development requires a free flow of appropriate intelligible and usable information.

Communication Media and Awareness Creation for Tourism

Table 2 presents results of a tested hypothesis. Findings showed that some communication media were effective for awareness creation towards tourism activities such as Radio ($\chi^2=11.81$, $p<0.05$), Television ($\chi^2=16.42$, $p<0.05$), and Family and Friends ($\chi^2=21.17$, $p<0.05$), while there is no significant relationship between Newspapers, Handbills, and Internet and awareness creation for tourism engagement. This could be adduced to poor reading culture of Nigerians and unscrupulous use of handbills that is making people not to give it any serious attention.

Other Motivations and Awareness Creation for Tourism Engagement through Communication Media

Apart from awareness creation for tourism, there were certain motivational factors that enhanced urge for tourism activities. Table 3 revealed that there was significant relationship between awareness creation through communication media and other motivational factors such as entertainment, festivals; proximity, celebration, holiday, excursion and mobility. The findings revealed that other motivational factors such as using tourism as a form of entertainment to welcome visitors/guests; festive periods such as *Ileya*, New Year and Christmas and other celebrations (birthday and anniversaries, commemorations, holiday, which includes weekends, leaves, and excursions) were significant in awareness creation through communication media for tourism engagement. However, motivations such as proximity and mobility were not significant which means that closeness of tourism destination does not enhance urge for tourism activities / events to

the people. Tourists often come from distant places than dwellers of the neighbourhood of tourism host communities.

Selected Personal Characteristics of Respondents and Their Level of Awareness for Tourism through Communication Media

The results of chi square test of the association between selected characteristics of respondents (tourists) and their awareness about tourism engagement is shown in table 4. Results showed that sex, age and education had significant relationship with their awareness about tourism activities while economic class and marital status were insignificant. The contingency coefficient results showed that education and age had strong association with tourists' awareness about tourism engagement while economic status and marital status had weak association. The findings suggest that the higher the education of tourists the higher the level of awareness towards tourism events.

Table 5 revealed the rating of effectiveness of selected communication media for awareness creation for tourists in the study area. Friends and family was rated 1st while Television and Radio were rated 2nd and 3rd respectively. Handbills, Newspaper and Internet were respectively rated 4th, 5th and 6th. This implies that friends and family, television and radio were more effective in creating awareness for tourism among individuals that engaged in tourism activities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that more males engaged in tourism activities than their female counterpart do. Awareness creation for tourism endeavours were found to be effective with radio, television, and family & friends who had convincing prior experience about the destination. The popularity of radio and television for awareness creation for tourism may be adduced to the fact that radio and television have become important appliance in every home in Nigeria while the insignificance in the use of newspaper and handbills could be as a result of persistent illiteracy level and poor reading culture among the few educated citizens. Socio-economic characteristics like sex, age and, education were found to be influential to awareness for tourism. People that had higher education were positively disposed to tourism activities than those with lower education. Some motivational factors had control on awareness creation for tourism; entertainment, festivals, celebration, holiday and excursion while mobility and closeness to tourism site (proximity) were not significant in awareness

creation through communication media. This means that engaging in tourism activities is not inspired by certain conveniences; proximity to the destination and mobility, rather communication influence plays important role in motivating people to patronise tourism market.

It is therefore, recommended that tourism packages should be made attractive to captivate and impress tourists to promote positive image of resources to both inbound and outbound tourists. In addition, mass literacy will be of tremendous assistance to enable individuals to comprehend usefulness of information and need to sensitise people especially the younger generation to cultivate good reading culture.

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Table 1: Socio demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentages%
Sex	Male	169	78.74
	Female	47	21.36
Age	Below 20	54	25.00
	21 – 40	76	35.18
	41 – 60	82	37.96
	Above 60	04	01.85
Education	Below school certificate	28	12.96
	School certificate	36	16.68
	Above school certificate	152	70.37
Economic class	low	22	10.18
	Medium	138	63.89
	High	56	25.92
Occupation	government work	72	33.33
	Companies	34	15.74
	Private	20	09.26
	Self employed	44	20.37
Marital status	Dependant	46	21.29
	Single	62	28.70
	Married	143	65.77
	Separated	09	04.62
	Widowed	02	00.92

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 2: Relationship between communication media and awareness creation for tourism

Communication media	χ^2	df	Decision
Radio	11.81	6	S
Television	16.42	4	S
Newspapers	08.94	6	NS
Family and Friends	21.17	6	S
Handbills	01.23	4	NS
Internet	01.18	4	NS

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 3: Relationship between other motivations and awareness creation for tourism engagement through communication media

Motivations	χ^2	df	Decision
Entertainment	18.11	4	S
Festivals	23.41	4	S
Proximity	02.79	4	NS
Celebrations	08.33	2	S
Holiday (leave, weekends)	08.18	2	S
Excursion	28.15	4	S
Mobility	01.62	4	NS

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 4: Relationship between selected personal characteristics of respondents and their level of awareness for tourism through communication media

Personal characteristics	χ^2	df	Remark	contingent coefficient
Sex	10.21	4	S	0.27
Age	16.39	4	S	0.31
Education	17.22	3	S	0.34
Economic Class	05.87	4	NS	0.09
Marital Status	02.45	2	NS	0.0

Field Survey, 2008

Table 5: Frequency distribution and rating of the effectiveness of selected communication media

Communication Media	Frequency	Percentage	Rating
Radio	116	23.2	3
Television	125	25.0	2
Newspapers	40	8.0	5
Friends and relations	135	27.0	1
Handbills	52	10.4	4
Internet	32	6.4	6

Source: Field Study, 2008