

# Glocalizing tourism in Southeastern Nigeria: residents' perspectives

Afamefuna Paul Eyisi and Emeka Emmanuel Okonkwo

## Abstract

**Purpose** – *The purpose of this paper is to explore and understand the perceptions of residents of Southeastern Nigeria about glocalizing tourism in the region to help improve their support for the sustainability of the industry. Emphasis is laid on their expectations and strategies to maximize the positive impacts while minimizing the negative aspects in a bid to address their specific local needs.*

**Design/methodology/approach** – *This paper adopts an ethnographic approach to explore the perspectives of key stakeholders in Southeastern Nigeria's tourism industry. These include traditional rulers, men, women and youth representatives, chief priests and local security agents. Decision-making theory is adopted to frame the study.*

**Findings** – *The findings identified residents' expectations from glocalizing tourism. They see tourism as an avenue for initiating community projects, creating jobs, patronizing farm produces, reviving cultural practices and addressing religious crises.*

**Research limitations/implications** – *This research focused only on selected communities within Southeastern Nigeria. The implication is that the findings do not represent what obtains in other communities within the region. Future research should extend to these areas to have a deeper understanding of how residents perceive the glocalization of tourism.*

**Practical implications** – *As the government and developers continue to invest in the tourism industry in the study area, glocalization could be a good way to address specific local needs and gain residents' support in the future.*

**Originality/value** – *This paper represents a new research approach for understanding the perceptions of residents about the Nigerian tourism industry.*

**Keywords** Glocalization, Tourism, Residents' perceptions, Southeastern Nigeria

**Paper type** Research paper

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## Introduction

Since 1950, inspired by the advancement in space shrinking technologies (transportation and communication), tourism has contributed to globalization (Niewiadomski, 2020). As an agent of globalization, tourism has become popular in countries within advanced and emerging economies because of the potential for economic benefits to host destinations (Hammad *et al.*, 2017a, 2017b; Ozturk *et al.*, 2015; Ramseook-Munhurrin and Naidoo, 2011; Zhuang *et al.*, 2019). The exponential growth is also associated with increased awareness of tourism's potential to generate socio-cultural and environmental benefits (Brida *et al.*, 2014). As a result, many countries turned to tourism for economic empowerment, poverty reduction, self-determination and rural development (Adu-Ampong, 2017; Dieke, 2000, 2003). That said, such countries did not consider and plan for the negative impacts of tourism on residents and their expectations (Andriotis, 2007; Jafari, 1990). Increased awareness of the importance of understanding residents' perceptions as a precursor for sustainability has led to the advocacy for community participation, explaining why glocalization has emerged in the tourism literature.

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Glocalization has been in the literature for more than 2 decades (see [Robertson, 1995](#)) and combines the ideas of globalization and localization. The origin is traced to the Japanese word “dochakuka”, meaning the agricultural principle of tailoring farming styles to local conditions ([Robertson, 1995](#)). Glocalization is likened to micromarketing global goods and services to fit a specific market ([Robertson, 1995](#)). [Hayes \(2020\)](#) added that glocalization is used to describe the process whereby global services or products are developed, packaged and distributed with conscious awareness to address the specific needs of each local market. This means that the idea of glocalization helps project or product developers to recognize that no one-size-fits-all in terms of what consumers need or expect. As [Grigorescu and Zaif \(2017\)](#) noted, multinational companies have realized that consumers from different countries respond to goods and services differently because of cultural, socio-economic and emotional factors. Thus, there is a need to channel such goods and services to suit local conditions. This awareness has also been recognized in the tourism industry.

In the tourism industry, the idea of glocalization has been explored as a strategy for motivating residents and encouraging their participation. It fosters collaboration for achieving long-term goals, supports the development of business strategies that give preference to local culture and helps to train residents to occupy key positions within an organization ([Soulard \*et al.\*, 2019](#)). Glocalization is a way of increasing residents’ acceptance, minimizing the negative impacts of tourism and encouraging the industry’s sustainability. This implies that glocalization can facilitate and improve residents’ support when the tourism developers and planners consider the expectations and needs of residents. [Soulard and McGehee \(2017\)](#) added that glocalization has three broad aims:

1. Making efforts to adapt organizational structures to the cultural needs of a location;
2. Making efforts to customize services to meet the expectations of residents; and
3. Encouraging residents to transform global services to suit their expectations.

Drawing from this background, in this paper, we discuss residents’ perceptions about the strategies for glocalizing tourism in the underresearched Southeastern region of Nigeria. Given the limited tourism research in the study area and the nature of the research topic, this paper adopts an exploratory, ethnographic approach to identify the key stakeholders and discuss their expectations about developing regional tourism. The following section discusses the literature review to identify gaps in the topic area that the current research will fill. This will be followed by the current tourism trends, a theoretical framework that guides the study, a brief background of the study area, methodology and findings and discussions. The paper ends with a conclusion highlighting the need for further research in the topic area.

## Literature review on glocalization and tourism development

Tourism has been perceived and interpreted in different ways depending on how it influences or can influence stakeholders’ interests. This understanding has led to different tourism platforms (advocacy, cautionary, adaptancy, knowledge-based and public outreach) identified by [Jafari \(2005, 1990\)](#). Some stakeholders can see tourism from the economic aspect, judging the industry based on its capacity to bring positive and negative economic impacts. Others can see it from the socio-cultural and environmental aspects, based on tourism’s ability to impact such dimensions positively and negatively. Whatever be the case, how residents in whose community tourism is taking place see the industry is critical and can support or discourage sustainability ([Ap and Crompton, 1998](#); [Castillo Canalejo \*et al.\*, 2016](#); [Jurowski and Gursoy, 2004](#)). This explains why the interests of residents should be at the centre of tourism development ([Ramseook-Munhurrun and Naidoo, 2011](#)). The point made here is the argument that since the local peoples’ perceptions of tourism impacts and support influence the industry’s development, it is only fair that it is channelled in a way to meet their local needs and address their expectations. This mirrors the point made by [Robinson \(1999, p. 386\)](#) about glocalization meaning “... affirming and reaffirming local cultural identities in a global way”.

Glocalization was coined by [Robertson \(1995\)](#) to highlight the importance of thinking globally and acting locally, especially in terms of tailoring agricultural production to meet local expectations. Beyond agriculture, glocalization has also been used in the accounting literature as a strategy for harmonizing accounting principles. [Alsharairi et al. \(2019\)](#) used the concept to discuss the importance of adopting global accounting standards in a way to suit local needs in emerging economies. This implies that glocalization recognizes the importance of giving preference to the culture and tradition of the local communities. Similarly, [Matusitz \(2016\)](#) reported how Walmart – a USA company – failed in its attempts to establish itself successfully in Argentina using its USA-based blueprint. After years of trials, they adopted glocalization through adaptation to local culture, local taste, style of employment and store design and recorded major successes. This shows that glocalization focuses on long-term collaboration between global merchandize and local philosophy ([Soulard et al., 2019](#)) and recognizes that the world operates in a two-way exchange of ideas between global and local forces ([Soulard and McGehee, 2017](#)). Such exchange is particularly important when we recall that tourism entails travelling from the familiar to the unfamiliar culture and requires interactions between strangers (residents and tourists) whose interactions are paramount for achieving sustainability ([Erul and Woosnam, 2022](#)).

In the tourism clime, glocalization works on the premise that since residents will live with the benefits and hazards of tourism, developers and planners must make efforts to understand how they want it and what they expect from its development. This resonates with the rationale for community participation raised by [Tosun \(2000\)](#), and the social exchange theory tested and confirmed by [Ngowi and Jani \(2018\)](#) in the Kilimanjaro area of Tanzania. This also makes more sense when we understand that residents have disparate expectations and needs that will improve their quality of life. Subsequently, there are variables to consider while advocating for the glocalization of tourism because of the dynamics in political, economic and social differences ([Matusitz and Forester, 2009](#); [Matusitz and Leanza, 2009](#)). One of such variables could be cultural orientations. Some residents in emerging economies have different cultural beliefs and dispositions towards western developments. This argument is crucial in countries with colonial histories, such as Nigeria. For instance, in Bigodi, Uganda, [Lepp \(2008\)](#) found that residents' perceptions of tourism were influenced by events that took place in their community long before it was introduced, leading to fear, suspicion and anxiety. Another variable could be the level of tourism development and understanding; residents of some destinations in advanced economies understand tourism more than those in emerging economies. Thus, the context and nature of glocalization differ from one destination to another.

Some scholars have highlighted the benefits of glocalizing tourism and the strategies to achieve maximum outcomes. For instance, in Finland, [Keyim \(2018\)](#) noted that what rural residents want from tourism might differ from urban residents, as they expect local income generation, employment opportunities, revamping of deteriorating resources, establishing and improving facilities and cultural resource conservation. Besides the findings of [Matusitz \(2016\)](#) about the use of glocalization by Wal-Mart in Argentina, [Matusitz and Forrester \(2009\)](#) and [Matusitz and Leanza \(2009\)](#) highlighted how the approach resulted in massive successes by Wal-Mart in Japan and China, respectively, through some strategies. These include reducing the rack height and store format, conforming to the consumption patterns of the people, adjusting the taste of their products and the size of the shopping bags and employee practices. In Tanzania and the USA, [Muganda et al. \(2013\)](#) and [Aleshinloye et al. \(2022\)](#), respectively, reported that residents should be empowered to take control of what affects their lives because they have attachment with where they live. Such empowerment is a way of glocalizing tourism. Elsewhere, [Eyisi et al. \(2021a\)](#) found that among other benefits expected by residents in Southeastern Nigeria from tourism, they demanded to boost security and revive their culture because of the insecurity and religious challenges in the region. The implication is that these residents would likely support the type of tourism that addresses these issues and antagonize tourism if it worsens the situation.

The empirical findings imply that glocalizing tourism will only be successful when the key stakeholders are allowed to discuss how tourism products and activities are modelled to reflect

local values and address local needs. This means that stakeholder collaboration and community participation are central in the process because people with disparate interests need to express their worries, concerns and expectations early in the process (Jamal and Getz, 1995; Reed, 1997; Saito and Ruhanen, 2017). However, collaboration and community participation in globalization of tourism might be difficult, especially in Africa, where there is a significant gender imbalance, leading to unequal opportunity. There are also elite domination, autocratic governance structure and weak policy implementation (Bassey and Egon, 2016; Eyisi *et al.*, 2021b; Oluwatuyi and Ileri, 2016; Tosun, 2000). In Nigeria, these challenges have affected efforts made at tourism development (Adeleke, 2010; Orekoya, 2018.), explaining why the industry is still in the exploratory stage, despite more than 5 decades of the government's efforts to harness the country's potential. As Nigeria has accepted tourism for economic diversification, foreign exchange, cultural promotion and poverty alleviation (Anyanwu, 2019; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2005) and put up administrative and legislative arrangements, it is important to understand how to globalize the industry for sustainability.

Since tourism is still in the early stages of development in Nigeria, there is limited literature on tourism research, especially as it relates to globalization. It is important to explore globalization in tourism discourse to understand what residents in Southeastern Nigeria want and how best to gain their support. Therefore, this paper aims to discuss the strategies for globalizing tourism through residents' expectations. The paper approaches the topic through ethnographic design to interact with key tourism stakeholders in the region, including the traditional rulers, representatives of the men, women and youth groups, local security officials and chief priests. The paper answers the questions: What do residents in Southeastern Nigeria want from tourism, and how can the industry be globalized to improve their perceptions?

### Current tourism statistics in Nigeria

The Nigerian government leads tourism development. There are numerous resources for cultural, nature and religious tourism that are yet untapped (Abubakar, 2014). Thus, there is limited literature on how residents respond to impacts. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) provided tourism statistics for Nigeria and is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 is a presentation of Nigeria's performance in the global tourism market and gives an idea of tourist arrivals in the country. International and domestic tourism activities in comparison to some countries in Africa are still low. The data also showed that African tourists visit Nigeria the most, followed by "unclassified" visitors, with the Middle East having the lowest arrivals. From Table 1 Nigeria does not receive up to 10 million tourists annually, suggesting that insecurity and poor marketing have affected the industry. The 2012–2016 data confirmed that tourism in Nigeria is still in its early stages. The information in Table 1 also indicated that most tourists enter Nigeria by air transport rather than railway and roads (the railway system in the country is in a sorry state and many roads are deplorable). While there was an increase in travel expenditure between 2012 and 2016, the contribution of tourism to Nigeria's GDP is still low compared to many African countries. In terms of the contribution to GDP, visitor exports and employment, Table 2 provides some insights covering the years 2000–2014.

Table 2 showed that Nigeria's share of tourism receipts is low compared to the global share. In terms of percentage (%) of contributions to the GDP and employment, Abubakar (2014) noted that tourism contributed 4.40–3.10%, and Yusuf and Akinde (2015) placed the percentage at 3.80–2.70% between 2000 and 2014. These figures show a decline in tourism's contributions to Nigeria's GDP and employment, which the authors attributed to the low business confidence in the Nigerian tourism and travel sector. They also highlighted insecurity as an explanation for the decline, including the incessant killings, Fulani-herdsmen attacks, kidnapping, assassination, Boko Haram insurgency and political instability. Abubakar (2014) further noted that while Nigeria does not have accurate documentation of tourism's contribution to its GDP, its earnings cannot be compared to South Africa, Egypt and Kenya, regarded as preferred tourist destinations.

**Table 1** Compendium of Nigeria's tourism statistics from 2012 to 2016

| <i>Cod.</i> | <i>Basic data and indicators</i>                    | <i>Notes</i> | <i>Units</i> | <i>2012</i> | <i>2013</i> | <i>2014</i> | <i>2015</i> | <i>2016</i> |
|-------------|---|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1           | <i>Inbound transfers</i>                            |              |              |             |             |             |             |             |
|             | <i>Date</i>   |              |              |             |             |             |             |             |
|             | <i>Arrivals</i>                                     |              |              |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1.1         | Total   |              | (*000)       | 4,673       | 4,038       | 4,803       | 6,017       | 5,265       |
| 1.2         | * Overnight visitors (tourists)                     |              | (*000)       | 486         | 600         |             | 1,255       | 1,889       |
| 1.3         | * Same-day visitors (excursionists)                 |              | (*000)       |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1.4         | • of which, cruise passengers                       |              | (*000)       |             |             |             |             |             |
|             | <i>Arrivals by region</i>                           |              |              |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1.5         | Total   |              | (*000)       | 4,673       | 4,038       | 4,803       | 6,017       | 5,265       |
| 1.6         | *Africa   |              | (*000)       | 1,092       | 1,281       | 1,267       | 1,584       | 1,745       |
| 1.7         | *Americas   |              | (*000)       | 478         | 241         | 258         | 405         | 310         |
| 1.8         | *East Asia and the Pacific                          |              | (*000)       | 415         | 181         | 168         | 277         | 246         |
| 1.9         | *Europe   |              | (*000)       | 699         | 319         | 357         | 504         | 367         |
| 1.10        | *Middle East  |              | (*000)       | 113         | 62          | 66          | 99          | 81          |
| 1.11        | *South Asia   |              | (*000)       | 221         | 98          | 105         | 171         | 170         |
| 1.12        | *Others not classified                              |              | (*000)       | 1,655       | 1,856       | 2,582       | 2,887       | 2,347       |
| 1.13        | • of which, nationals residing abroad               |              | (*000)       | 1,653       | 1,856       | 2,582       | 2,886       | 2,347       |
|             | <i>Arrivals by main purpose</i>                     |              |              |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1.14        | Total   |              | (*000)       | 4,673       | 4,038       | 4,803       | 6,017       | 5,265       |
| 1.15        | *Personal   |              | (*000)       | 2,341       | 3,224       | 3,238       | 4,311       | 3,671       |
| 1.16        | • holidays, leisure and recreation                  |              | (*000)       | 300         | 910         | 1,234       | 3,273       | 2,095       |
| 1.17        | • other personal purposes                           |              | (*000)       | 2,041       | 2,314       | 2,004       | 1,038       | 1,575       |
| 1.18        | *Business and professional                          |              | (*000)       | 2,333       | 813         | 1,565       | 1,706       | 1,594       |
|             | <i>Arrivals by mode of transport</i>                |              |              |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1.19        | Total   |              | (*000)       | 4,673       | 4,038       | 4,803       | 6,017       | 5,266       |
| 1.20        | *Air  |              | (*000)       | 2,313       | 2,439       | 2,699       | 3,310       | 1,566       |
| 1.21        | *Water  |              | (*000)       | 257         | 319         | 624         | 786         | 329         |
| 1.22        | *Land   |              | (*000)       | 2,103       | 1,280       | 1,480       | 1,922       | 3,371       |
| 1.23        | • railway   |              | (*000)       |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1.24        | • road  |              | (*000)       | 2,103       | 1,280       | 1,480       | 1,922       | 3,371       |
| 1.25        | • others  |              | (*000)       |             |             |             |             |             |
|             | <i>Arrivals by form of organization of the trip</i> |              |              |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1.26        | Total   |              | (*000)       | 4,673       | 4,038       | 4,803       | 6,017       | 5,265       |
| 1.27        | *Packaged tour                                      |              | (*000)       | 348         | 772         | 1,205       | 1,233       | 685         |
| 1.28        | *Other forms  |              | (*000)       | 4,325       | 3,266       | 3,598       | 4,784       | 4,581       |
|             | <i>Expenditure</i>                                  |              |              |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1.33        | Total   |              | US\$ Mn      | 638         | 616         | 601         | 470         | 1,085       |
| 1.34        | *Travel   |              | US\$ Mn      | 555         | 538         | 539         | 412         | 1,067       |
| 1.35        | *Passenger transport                                |              | US\$ Mn      | 83          | 78          | 62          | 58          | 16          |
|             | <i>Indicators</i>                                   |              |              |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1.39        | Average size of travel party                        |              | Persons      |             |             | 6.0         | 6.0         | 5.0         |
|             | <i>Average length of stay</i>                       |              |              |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1.40        | Total   |              | Days         |             |             | 7.00        | 8.00        | 7.00        |
| 1.41        | *For all commercial accommodation services          |              | Nights       |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1.42        | • of which, "hotels and similar establishments"     |              | Nights       |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1.43        | *For non-commercial accommodation services          |              | Days         |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1.44        | Average expenditure per day                         |              | US\$         |             |             |             |             |             |

The author added that the contribution of tourism to Nigeria's GDP is around ₦598.6 billion and represents 1.6% of the total GDP. In 2011, travel and tourism supported 838,500 jobs or 1.4% of employment in Nigeria and is expected to rise by 3.7% annually to 1,289,000 jobs or 1.6% of employment in 2022 (Abubakar, 2014). These statistics imply that the government should not neglect the country's tourism and travel sector anymore.

**Table 2** Economic contribution of tourism to the Nigerian economy from 2000 to 2014

| Period | Total contribution To GDP | % Share of GDP | Total visitor exports | % Share of total exports | Total contribution to employment | % Share of total employment |
|--------|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2000   | 209.09                    | 4.40           | 18.92                 | 0.70                     | 1643.70                          | 3.80                        |
| 2001   | 219.56                    | 4.40           | 18.69                 | 0.80                     | 1700.40                          | 3.90                        |
| 2002   | 356.95                    | 5.00           | 30.87                 | 1.20                     | 1960.90                          | 4.30                        |
| 2003   | 379.48                    | 4.30           | 7.50                  | 0.20                     | 1773.60                          | 3.70                        |
| 2004   | 652.96                    | 5.50           | 6.51                  | 0.10                     | 2349.60                          | 4.80                        |
| 2005   | 832.69                    | 5.60           | 18.25                 | 0.30                     | 2445.60                          | 4.90                        |
| 2006   | 494.11                    | 2.60           | 26.89                 | 0.30                     | 1209.00                          | 2.30                        |
| 2007   | 879.29                    | 4.10           | 42.40                 | 0.60                     | 1988.80                          | 3.60                        |
| 2008   | 1870.4                    | 5.40           | 159.0                 | 1.10                     | 2616.40                          | 4.40                        |
| 2009   | 1686.9                    | 4.40           | 172.2                 | 1.50                     | 2266.60                          | 3.80                        |
| 2010   | 1315.8                    | 2.90           | 149.8                 | 0.80                     | 1583.20                          | 2.40                        |
| 2011   | 1291.2                    | 2.80           | 129.8                 | 0.60                     | 1595.10                          | 2.50                        |
| 2012   | 1460.0                    | 2.90           | 109.0                 | 0.60                     | 1779.50                          | 2.50                        |
| 2013   | 1559.5                    | 3.10           | 107.1                 | 0.70                     | 1836.80                          | 2.70                        |
| 2014   | 1589.6                    | 3.10           | 106.2                 | 0.70                     | 1811.00                          | 2.70                        |

Source(s): World Tourism Council database online cited in [Yusuff and Akinde \(2015\)](#)

## Theoretical framework

### *Decision-making theory*

Theories are abstract constructs that give structure to arguments in the real world. The use of a theoretical framework helps to strengthen academic discussions and guides researchers to relate their research to the broader body of knowledge. This paper is anchored on decision-making theory which explains how individuals should behave in times of uncertainty, risk or pressure. Simply put, this theory is about making the best choice for the management of businesses or organizations in an efficient and most effective manner. The theory has its root in management, marketing, economics, statistics and philosophy ([Lau and Levy, 1998](#)) dating to more than 5 decades ago ([Sirakaya and Woodside, 2005](#)) when scholars such as Herbert Simon, Richard Synder and Chester Bernard employed it to discuss the ways managers and leaders run their organization. A good example is [Turpin and Marais \(2004\)](#), who identified various models of decision-making employed by senior managers in an organization such as the rational model, model of bounded rationality, the incrementalist view, the political view, the garbage can model, naturalistic decision-making, etc. For [Lau and Levy \(1998\)](#), decision-making theory postulates that decision-makers should carefully identify what the problem is, explore alternative ways of addressing the problem, make known their preferences, consider the possible consequences of the alternatives and choose among the alternatives.

In tourism research, many scholars have employed the theoretical framework of decision-making in their studies to explain how different variables and factors influence tourists' choice and decision to visit a destination site (see the works of [Bjork and Jansson, 2008](#); [Karl and Reintinger, 2017](#); [Krakover and Corsale, 2021](#); [Seyidov and Adomaitiene, 2016](#); [Sirakaya and Woodside, 2005](#)). That said, not many scholars have used decision-making theory to explain how residents perceive tourism impacts or the factors that motivate or demotivate them to support or reject tourism. It is important to employ a theoretical lens to explore how residents perceive tourism, the type of tourism they want to see and how they can contribute to making this happen. This assertion represents the two major rationales for community participation in tourism planning and development identified by [Tosun \(2000\)](#). The first rationale is philosophical and the second is pragmatic. The philosophical rationale is that local people have the right to be part of planning projects that affect or are likely to affect their daily lives so they can convey their concerns, worries and interests to the decision-makers. The pragmatic rationale hinges on the belief that projects stand a better chance at



sustainability when the people who will live with their impacts are made part of the planning process. It holds that outsiders (planners and developers) cannot effectively articulate the needs and expectations of residents. These rationales resonate with the views of [Muganda et al. \(2013\)](#) when they noted that local people participate in tourism in two major ways: participating in sharing the benefits of tourism and being part of the decision-making team during planning.

Since research on how decision-making theory has been used to understand residents' perceptions of tourism are extremely limited, it is important to fill this gap in knowledge to strengthen the foundation of tourism research. This theory is particularly important for this research because it is interwoven with glocalization. The theory explains how and why individuals, in this case, local people, should be allowed to decide the type, scale and level of tourism as well as tourists that they can tolerate. It also explains how such decisions could have direct and indirect implications on their livelihood. Therefore, we deem the theory appropriate for the purpose of this research. As used in the paper, a decision-making framework is a strategy for empowering the local people to decide how they want tourism to be developed, the type, and how such development can help to address their local needs.

### The study case

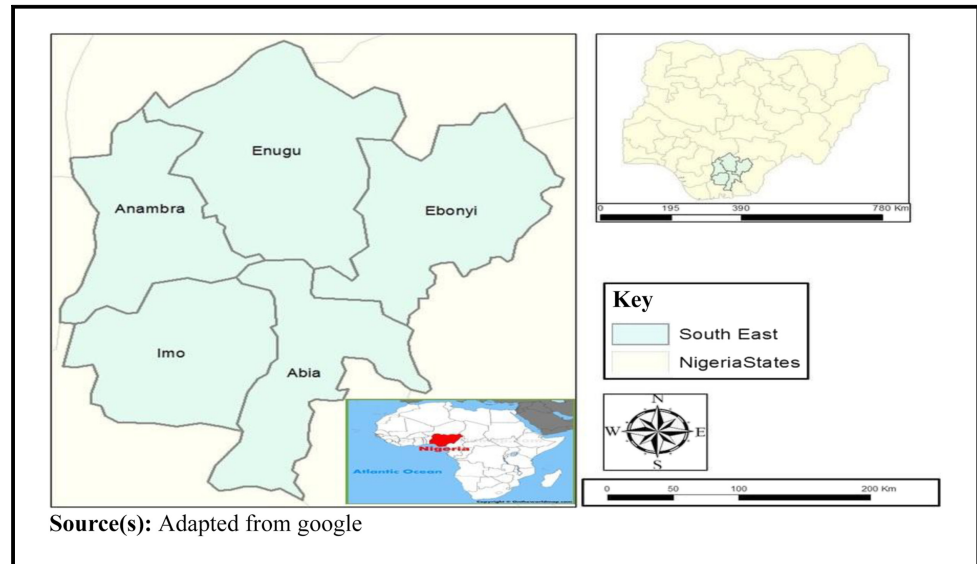
Nigeria has a long history of organized political societies dating centuries before colonialism. The country lies between latitudes 4°N and 14°N and longitudes 3°E and 15°E of the meridian ([Ofomata, 2002](#)). Its boundaries were established because of trade and overseas territorial acquisitions by Western European powers in the 19th century. [Okpoko and Okpoko \(2002\)](#) observed that Nigeria's name came through the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by the British Colonial Government in 1914. Nigeria had an estimated population of 200,788,000 in 2019, a population density of 221 people per km<sup>2</sup> ([Falola et al., 2019](#)) and a projected population of 263,839,000 by 2030. Nigeria occupies a land area of 923,769 km<sup>2</sup> ([Okpoko and Okpoko, 2002](#)) and makes up about 17% of Africa's 1.2 billion population. The Niger Republic borders it to the north, [Chad](#) and [Cameroon](#) to the east, the [Gulf of Guinea](#) to the south and [Benin](#) Republic to the west ([Falola et al., 2019](#)). Nigeria has six geopolitical zones and the southeastern region, where the fieldwork for this paper was conducted, is one of the zones.

Southeastern Nigeria is home to the Igbo-speaking tribe. The word "Igbo" denotes the people occupying the region and their language ([Nwoye, 2011](#)). The Igbo tribe is one of the three dominant tribes in Nigeria, together with the Hausa and Yoruba, who occupy the northern and western parts, respectively. The southeastern region comprises Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo ([Figure 1](#)). These states, with parts of Delta, Rivers, Cross River, Kogi, Benue, Akwa-Ibom and Edo States, make up Igboland. Igboland has an area of approximately 41,000 km<sup>2</sup> and lies between latitudes 4° 45' and 7° 05' North and longitudes 6° 00' and 8° 30' East ([Anyadike, 2002](#); [Nwaezeigwe, 2007](#)). For this research, we selected communities in Anambra and Enugu States because tourism is still in the early stages and the state governments have shown commitment to developing the industry. Thus, there are opportunities for proper planning to support future sustainability. The sites also have enormous potentials that have not been fully harnessed to support tourism in the region. These potentials include cultural festivals, sacred sites and shrines, mystical streams and lakes and heritage/historical sites. Another reason is that we are native to Anambra State and had studied, lived and taught tourism at the university level in Enugu State for more than 20 years.

### Research methods

This research employed a qualitative research design because it is suited to understanding participants' perceptions about a research topic and offered the opportunity for in-depth representation of their voices. The importance of qualitative research lies in empowering researchers to study people's actions to help make the meaning needed to understand the social and psychological world ([Willig, 2017](#)). The design also allows participants to discuss important

**Figure 1** Map of Southeastern Nigeria (within Nigeria and Africa)



points with researcher(s) and encourage strong relationships between researchers and participants. Qualitative research emphasizes individuals' relationships that help to form thoughts and behaviours (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015). As the authors noted:

human beings engage in some forms of 'qualitative research' . . . This is because there is not a context in which humans engage that does not require some process . . . used to make sense of and react to particular situations (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015, p. 1).

Our qualitative design takes an ethnographic approach to understand how participants in Southeastern Nigeria construct knowledge about tourism and strategies for globalizing the industry. The fieldwork for this research lasted for seven months and was conducted with a team of four tourism academics in Nigeria (three male lecturers and one female lecturer) who were readily available and willing to participate in the fieldwork. The fieldwork took place during an academic session in Nigeria. All the team members who were selected had an in-depth understanding of the native Igbo language. We adopted a purposive sampling technique during participants' selection because the aim was to identify and interview knowledgeable people, key position holders and those participating in tourism planning, policy formulation and decision-making. Purposive sampling ensured that we selected people knowledgeable about the research topic (Robinson, 2014). Using a purposive sampling technique, we identified 208 tourism stakeholders who took part in interviews and focus group discussions (Table 3). We targeted group homogeneity; all the participants share attributes of possessing power, holding key positions and are knowledgeable on the topic. We reached the saturation point when these people were identified and interviewed, as adopted by Guest *et al.* (2006).

Through participant observation, we participated in the cultural festivals of the participants and visited their shrines and sacred sites. We also conducted 12 one-on-one semi-structured in-depth interviews with the traditional rulers, 20 focus group discussions with the leaders of the men, women and youth who served as their group's representatives and 8 unstructured interviews with the chief priests and local security agents. Focus group discussion was used for the group representatives because of their number and limited time to execute the fieldwork. Participants were asked to share their perceptions about the type of tourism they expect to see and how best to approach tourism development to address their specific local needs. All the interviews were conducted in the native Igbo language (and later transcribed in English to fit an English reading audience), lasted between 1.5 and 2 h and were audio-recorded. During the fieldwork, we adopted



**Table 3** Participants interviewed during the fieldwork (*N* = 208)

| <i>Stakeholder groups</i> | <i>Anambra state</i> | <i>Enugu state</i> | <i>Age bracket</i> | <i>Educational status and tourism awareness</i> |
|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---|
| Traditional rulers        | 5                    | 11                 | 65–85              | Overall low                                     |
| Representatives of men    | 27                   | 33                 | 60–70              | Overall average                                 |
| Representatives of women  | 27                   | 33                 | 60–70              | Overall average                                 |
| Representatives of youths | 27                   | 33                 | 30–40              | Overall high                                    |
| Chief priests             | 3                    | 4                  | 35–65              | Overall low                                     |
| Local security agents     | 2                    | 3                  | 30–45              | Average   |
| Total                     | 91                   | 117                |                    |   |

ethical protocols by securing the participants' consent. Before the interviews, we presented the information letter, explained what the research is about and what they are required to do. The participants were also encouraged to withdraw at any stage if they felt uncomfortable with the questions. To support anonymity, we assigned pseudonyms to participants derived from the names of their towns and communities.

The data collected through observations, interviews and focus group discussions during the fieldwork formed useful focal points for the data analysis. Data were analysed using the directed type of qualitative content analysis. Using a directed type of content analysis implies that we derived ideas for developing our nodes from the existing literature on residents' perceptions of tourism (deductive approach). For instance, to capture what the residents want from glocalizing tourism, we created the following nodes: expectations of economic benefits, socio-cultural gains, environmental conservation, expectations of community development and religious revival. We created nodes to systematically structure participants' comments that are important to our research. The data were thematically analysed to identify patterns and generate themes needed for answering the research questions. NVivo 11 software enabled us to save time and reduce human errors in the analysis and coding process, which supports the views of [Johnston \(2006\)](#). The use of software impacts tourism research because it is more transparent ([Camprubi and Coromina, 2016](#)) and supports replication. In support of [Andrew et al. \(2008\)](#), we acknowledge that no computer programme can analyse data; the researcher remains at the centre of the analysis. Using the software empowered us to see data from a more critical perspective.

## Findings

Our analysis showed these groups of participants and their perceptions about glocalizing tourism in Southeastern Nigeria: the tourism enthusiasts, the cultural enthusiasts, the community development advocates, the Christian antagonists and the neutralists. As used in this research, these concepts explain how the groups see tourism and how to glocalize the industry. For instance, tourism enthusiasts supported more tourism development because they seem to understand the economic benefits. The cultural enthusiasts were more concerned about reviving their local values and would support tourism if it contributes to cultural revitalization. The community development advocates see tourism as an avenue to introduce projects that benefit their community and improve living standards. The Christian antagonists were concerned about introducing tourism because they believe that as a western phenomenon, just like Christianity, tourism could lead to the further eroding of their cultural values. The neutralists prefer not to express their opinions because cultural orientation disempowers them to make decisions about tourism (mostly the women and youths).

We will now discuss the different groups of participants, their perceptions about tourism and how to glocalize the industry to improve their support. While presenting the findings, we will extract direct quotes from some participants to support the themes derived from the analysis. After each

direct quote, the participants are represented with their position (roles) and state of the interview, such as chief priests E1 (Enugu 1), traditional ruler A1 (Anambra 1), youth representative E2 (Enugu 2) or Women representative A2 (Anambra 2).

### *The tourism enthusiasts*

Participants in this group showed their support for tourism because of its potential to improve their living standards. They believed that tourism could improve the well-being of the local people if appropriately planned. To these participants, appropriate planning requires that those in charge of tourism development collaborate with those in charge of community development to understand what the local people need and how best to achieve maximum results. People in this group were mainly participants in Anambra State, especially from communities where tourism is gradually developing, and they are currently benefitting from the industry. Some participants in this group recounted how the establishment of hotels in the community resulted in skilled jobs for their children, unskilled jobs for the older people and patronizing of farm produce. Additionally, the presence of tourists has also resulted in economic benefits for entrepreneurs of local businesses and for security agents who act as guides to tourists during cultural festivals. One of the security agents in Anambra State made comments about the benefits of tourism and tourists this way:

Many of our people have benefitted from the visitors [tourists] coming into our community, especially during cultural activities, celebrations such as Christmas, Easter, and other traditional ceremonies. During these periods, we are very busy and happy attending to the visitors who want to see interesting places that we have. They make our security job interesting and we always look forward to receiving them (Security Agent A1).

These enthusiasts explained that they want tourism because they have benefitted from it and have witnessed the positive impacts on their local expectations of jobs, income, better living standards and improved security. One of the traditional rulers in Anambra State explained that as the father of the community, it is his responsibility to take care of his people, keep them safe and improve their well-being. He noted this about the benefits of tourism and his expectations:

Any development, including the one you asked me about [tourism] that will benefit my people, will surely get my support because I want the best for them. Whatever the government wants us to do to bring development to our community, we will willingly do so because it will benefit us in many ways (Traditional Ruler A1).

The point taken from this quote is that the traditional ruler is not only in support of tourism, but he is also willing to encourage his people to participate in its planning and sustainability. Therefore, maximizing the local people's positive expectations of tourism and encouraging them to participate is a strategy to glocalize the industry in the area.

### *The community development advocates*

Another group of participants, mainly some traditional rulers, women, men, youth representatives and security personnel, perceived tourism as an avenue for contributing to community development through initiating projects that improve their quality of life. Such projects include fixing the deplorable roads in many communities (especially in Enugu State), poor electricity supply, unstable telecommunication network, absence of standard accommodation facilities, lack of healthcare or poor equipping of existing ones and absence of quality water supply. The participants noted that if the government gets pragmatic in supporting tourism, there will be a need to initiate these basic projects, which they believe will benefit them and the tourists. The participants maintained that the absence of these projects shows the failure of the government to deliver the dividend of good governance. The absence or shortage of these projects is reflected in the comments of the men and youth representatives in Enugu State, as they noted:

Before now, you could not have driven into our community because of the bad roads. You could see while driving in that construction work is still ongoing. We thank our traditional ruler for attracting the

State government's attention to initiate the project, but there is still more to do for us. If tourism can make the government fix our concerns, we are happy to try it out (Men Rep. E1).

We suffer lack of sound internet access to browse, get up to date information or even search for jobs. Before you can get a cybercafé to use the internet, you must board a bus out of this community. The bad roads are also affecting our security patrol vehicles. Our parents equally complain about bad roads affecting the transportation of their farm produce to the market. These issues are complex and need urgent attention (Youth Rep. E1).

The quotes of these participants show that it will not be surprising if they only support tourism when the developers introduce the type that will guarantee good road networks and water supply, boost Internet and telecommunication networks for more accessible communication and functional healthcare centres. Initiating these projects will be part of glocalizing tourism in the study area.

### *The cultural enthusiasts*

The cultural enthusiasts believe that a good way to glocalize tourism is to target the revival of cultural values and practices. Participants who belonged to this group were mainly traditional rulers and chief priests who seemed more attached to the Igbo culture. The participants lamented low patronage of the Igbo culture because of the impacts of modernization, including westernization. Some chief priests complained that many youths who could have taken over from the older traditional worshippers are migrating to urban areas in search of greener pasture because of the decline in cultural appreciation, one of the consequences of colonialism. These participants believe that if tourism could assist in reviving their culture, they would support its development. Some male participants in Enugu State also noted the need for the government to establish cultural centres to help preserve their cultural values and sponsor their festivals. They believe that this will encourage collaboration between the people and the government in harnessing their culture for tourism. This could be a good way to gain the support of the local people and achieve glocalization of tourism in the study area. A traditional ruler in Anambra State supported this strategy, noting that the state government has pledged to fund festivals to boost tourism. As he noted:

It is interesting that the current governor has pledged to support all the communities in the State in organizing the annual New Yam Festival. This will be a good way to partner with them [the government] in reviving our cultural festivals. Beyond that, we are also working with the government to have a state-wide annual New Yam Festival to bring the whole communities in the State and visitors together to appreciate our cultural values (Traditional Ruler A2).

A chief priest in Enugu State equally has this to say about using tourism to revive their cultural values:

The way our culture is perceived today is not funny. Go round our communities and you will find that many youths are not as active in observing our cultural values as they should. It will be good for the state government to support our festivals. They [the government] can also make the position of the chief priest more attractive by placing us on a monthly stipend to help increase our sense of belonging (Chief Priest E1).

These quotes show that developing the type of tourism (cultural or religious) that will contribute to reviving the people's cultural values could be a good way to glocalize the industry because of the importance of culture to the African traditional religion adherents.

### *The Christian antagonists*

Although Christianity is predominant in Southeastern Nigeria, there are many adherents of the African traditional religion. This group of participants comprise some men, youths, traditional rulers and chief priests. The comments of these participants are similar to those of the cultural enthusiasts; they are worried about the possible negative impacts of tourism if it is not adequately planned. They registered their annoyance about the negative impacts of Christianity in Igboland. They recalled that since Christianity was introduced in Igboland, it has impacted their culture.

These participants noted that tourism as a western phenomenon, just like Christianity, might influence the religion and culture of the people. A traditional ruler in Enugu State pointed out with disappointment that in his community, Christians had built churches close to each shrine to challenge traditional worshippers who they see as pagans. He sees this as a significant issue for cultural development and calls for cultural awareness to maintain peace between Christians and traditional worshippers. He puts his views this way:

First of all, we need to ensure peaceful co-existence between Christians and traditional worshippers. In this community, it seems to have become a norm that we must settle dispute between them every month, which is not helping us as a people. I understand that many of my people will be uncomfortable to support tourism for fear of what strangers might do to our culture, but I believe that if we [the planners] do the right thing, we all will be happy at the end (Traditional Ruler E1).

One of the men's representatives in Enugu State was also visibly annoyed because of the negative impacts of Christianity, questioning whether it did them more good than harm or vice versa. His comments captured his perceptions this way:

I understand and respect that people are free to decide their religion. However, the way some Christians go about this is sometimes annoying. They organize crusades and seminars, teaching people that our cultural practices are barbaric and evil. This has led to quarrels, and we do not like it. If tourism does not cause us a similar headache, we have no problem with it. People need to be sensitized (Men Rep. E2).

The point made here is that to support the glocalization of tourism in Southeastern Nigeria, there is an urgent need for the government and tourism planners to create cultural awareness to help address the rift between Christian converts and adherents of traditional religion. They believe that addressing this rift through awareness will help to glocalize tourism.

### *The neutralists*

This group comprised mainly female participants. The people in this group complained that they do not wish to comment on tourism because they believe that their views do not matter. The women noted that in Igboland, men take decisions about any development in the community, including deciding whether or not tourism should be developed, when and how this should be carried out. The point is that there is a cultural orientation that allows men more freedom than women in participating in public administration and decision-making. Alluding to this statement, one of the women representatives in Anambra State gave an example, noting that as part of their culture, a woman cannot be elected as the traditional ruler in their community or participate in sharing of communal land. She noted, thus,

We do not want to comment on how to make tourism successful in our community because the men should be in a better position to supply the answers. They work more closely with our traditional rulers (Women Rep. A1).

Another women representative in Enugu State noted that in some traditional Igbo societies, women who engage in extra-marital affairs must face the wrath of the gods in line with the Igbo culture. However, there is no such strict penalty for men, who are even allowed to marry more than one wife. Concerning tourism, this group of participants are worried that their perceptions about glocalizing tourism will not make any difference in the future. One of the women in Enugu State noted:

What we should be talking about is whether what we think or say about tourism will make any difference in the future. Even though we might have some things to say and what to suggest to help make tourism successful in the future, the decision of the men about any project is final (Women Rep. E1).

The point from the views of these participants is that to achieve successful glocalization of tourism and to make sure that the views of the different stakeholders (including women) are considered, the government, tourism planners and developers should be aware of the influence of the Igbo culture on gender and public decision-making.

## Discussion

This research has discussed the perceptions of tourism stakeholders in Southeastern Nigeria about glocalizing the industry. Some points can be deduced from the findings. Firstly, the findings confirmed that tourism can be glocalized in the study area to address the specific needs of the local people. Secondly, glocalization can hopefully help to gain local support for the tourism industry in the area. Thirdly, the diverse expectations and disparate views of the local people confirmed that a community is heterogeneous, and members respond to tourism differently. Fourthly, decision-making framework can be operationalised in the study area because the local people know what they want from tourism and have ideas of how to approach its development. Fifthly, the findings confirmed that to maximize glocalization in the area, the expectations of the local people should be at the centre of tourism planning. These expectations include considering economic benefits, community development needs, cultural impacts and awareness, gender issues and effects of religion.

Residents' expectation of economic benefits from tourism is consistent with the findings from the literature ([Hammad \*et al.\*, 2017a, 2017b](#); [Ozturk \*et al.\*, 2015](#); [Zhuang \*et al.\*, 2019](#)). The economic impacts of tourism have been the selling point of the industry. Glocalizing tourism through economic benefits will improve local peoples' well-being, generate income and create employment. During the fieldwork, participants alluded to the difficult economic situation in Nigeria, which they claimed worsened under the government that came into power in 2015. Therefore, the struggle for survival could have influenced the participants' expectations from developing tourism. Since glocalization is about adopting development to address local needs ([Robertson, 1995](#); [Soulard and McGehee, 2017](#)), tourism developers and planners in the study area should involve the local Igbo people in decision-making to express their concerns and expectations. This will help to maximize the economic benefits.

Similar to the stakeholders' economic expectations, some participants want to adopt tourism to develop their community by attracting projects that could improve their well-being. An observation is that many communities within the study area, especially in Enugu State, lack the necessary facilities and infrastructures to boost community development. Some of these projects, such as access roads, steady electricity supply, telecommunication networks, functional healthcare centres and modern sources of water supply, will encourage tourism development. Therefore, glocalizing tourism in the region requires planners and developers to initiate these facilities and infrastructures, including accommodation. For instance, in Anambra State, some communities have hotels and better road networks, which have supported tourism development, as noted by the participants in the State. Our finding is consistent with [Keyim's \(2018\)](#) view about the different needs of rural and urban residents from tourism being a precursor for accepting its development. Our finding also resonates with the observations made by [Adu-Ampom \(2017\)](#) and [Dieke \(2003\)](#) about using tourism to support rural development. Drawing from decision-making framework, using tourism to address local community needs requires key stakeholders, including the local people, to be active in deciding the type and how they want it to be developed.

The expectation of the participants about cultural revival is understandable. Being indigenous to the study area, we understand that culture is an integral part of the people, and they will do whatever it takes to uphold it. Although the Igbo people send children to school to acquire formal education, the informal transfer of Igbo cultural values remains an important aspect of their lifestyle ([Nwoye, 2011](#)). Therefore, glocalizing tourism in the region requires adopting the type that leads to the revival and preservation of their cultural values. Cultural, indigenous or religious tourism that requires harnessing local culture as the main attraction and respecting local people's views and participation during decision-making is recommended. These types of tourism place the people and their culture at the forefront of planning, respect their local laws and make them part of the planning process. Our assertion is consistent with the views of [Brida \*et al.\* \(2014\)](#) about tourism having positive socio-cultural impacts on local culture. Similarly, [Eyisi \*et al.\* \(2021a\)](#) found that the Igbo people identified respect for their culture as one of the strategies for gaining their support and participation in tourism. To glocalize tourism in the region, developers and planners need to

understand that the world operates in a two-way exchange of ideas between global and local forces (Soulard and McGehee, 2017).

More so, glocalizing tourism in Southeastern Nigeria will require addressing the misconception held by Christians and traditional worshippers. These two religions are practised in the study area. Presently, the adherents do not seem to tolerate each other, and their misunderstanding has become worrisome to some participants. It suffices to say that adequate planning can help quench the fear of the traditional worshippers about the tendency for tourism to alter their lifestyle, same as Christianity. Such planning requires a long-term collaboration between the anchors of global merchandize (tourism developers) and custodians of local philosophy (the local people) through serious decision-making. When we recall that glocalization focuses primarily on securing and improving residents' perceptions of any products, we will understand the importance of addressing the concerns of Christian antagonists. The instances of Walmart in Argentina, China and Japan (Matusitz, 2016; Matusitz and Forrester, 2009; Matusitz and Leanza, 2009) are pointers to the importance of tailoring tourism to suit the needs of the local people if the industry stands a chance at sustainability.

One more point to make here about the strategies for glocalizing tourism in Southeastern Nigeria is the importance of considering the Igbo cultural influence on residents' perceptions and opportunities for participating in tourism. In the study area, people do not believe in gender equality (Nwoye, 2011); and as a result, men have more freedom than women, especially regarding making public decisions. The implication is that many women representatives in this research were indifferent to tourism. While we are not proposing for tourism planners and developers to alter the peoples' age-long culture, we are simply arguing that women should be allowed to take part in making decisions about tourism in the region because they are indispensable stakeholders. For instance, these women serve as traditional chefs (preparing local cuisine) and perform traditional dances during cultural festivals. They also make meaningful contributions to their communities. Some women in Anambra State recounted how they opened a cybercafé and cassava processing centre in their community to create jobs for their youths. Therefore, we consider these women key tourism stakeholders and encourage that they should be allowed to participate in future decision-making. It is also important to note that some of the key roles played by these women in the tourism industry contribute to tourists' satisfaction.

## Conclusion

This paper has discussed the process of glocalizing tourism in Southeastern Nigeria using selected case studies in Anambra and Enugu States. The analysis identified groups of participants whose perceptions about glocalization formed the focus of the discussion. The findings show that while the government of the two states have identified tourism as an avenue for income generation, job creation, rural development and self-determination, there is still more to do before formal tourism becomes a reality in the region. Therefore, there is still an opportunity for adequate planning and consideration of the strategies discussed in this paper. The findings equally show that tourism planners and developers need to partner with the local people who hold key positions in the area during planning and decision-making to consider and address their concerns and expectations. Such partnership will ensure that the relevant stakeholders are involved and that the type and scale of tourism proposed will address the specific local needs of the people, including those discussed in this paper. The findings further uphold the decision-making framework upon which this study is anchored, meaning that theory can be applied in future studies in the area to understand how residents perceive tourism. Thus, our study makes a theoretical contribution to tourism research.

In terms of the practical contribution of our study, the findings can help inform tourism planners and developers in the region, including the government, on how best to approach tourism development in a way to gain the support of the local people. One final point to make is that our findings cannot be generalized as the Igbo people's perceptions about glocalizing tourism in their region because the discussions focused only on selected communities within two states.



Therefore, more research is needed in the future to highlight other strategies and perceptions of other tourism stakeholders (such as the government and non-governmental organizations) in other states and communities within the region. It is also vital for future research to focus more on residents who do not hold key positions in the communities, such as women and youths who are not empowered, traditional worshippers and those who acquired western education to understand how the Igbo culture, gender and western knowledge have influenced their perceptions of tourism. Future research should equally employ other human behavioural-based theories (such as social representation, growth machine, community attachment or dependency theories) to understand how they can be operationalised in the study area. This paper concludes that considering the economic and cultural benefits, opportunities for community development, religious considerations and cultural influence could help to glocalize tourism and achieve a resident-friendly tourism destination in Southeastern Nigeria.

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