

Communicating Cultural Tourism Through Radio Broadcast for Sustainable Economic Development: A Study of Abia State Residents

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Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of radio broadcasting in promoting cultural tourism and its contribution to sustainable development. The study specifically investigated the extent to which radio programmes create awareness of cultural tourism sites, influence residents' perception of tourism resources, and promote sustainable development within host communities. The research adopted a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative data from questionnaires with qualitative insights from purposive interviews. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to residents of Aba North and Aba South Local Government Areas of Abia State, out of which 385 were successfully retrieved and analyzed, representing a response rate of 96.3%. Data were analyzed using frequency distribution, percentages, Likert scale mean scores, and Chi-square statistical test. The findings revealed that although residents frequently listen to radio programmes, exposure to cultural tourism promotion on radio is relatively low. However, the Chi-square analysis indicated that radio broadcasts significantly influence residents' awareness and perception of cultural tourism sites. The study also found that effective radio communication has the potential to contribute to the sustainable development of tourism through increased visitor interest, economic opportunities, and preservation of cultural heritage. Despite these potentials, challenges such as inadequate funding, limited government support, and insufficient community participation were identified as factors hindering effective radio promotion of tourism. The study concludes that radio remains a powerful communication tool capable of enhancing awareness and perception of cultural tourism when strategically utilized. It therefore recommends increased investment in radio-based tourism promotion, consistent broadcast of culturally relevant programmes, and stronger collaboration between government agencies, media organizations, and local communities to maximize the developmental benefits of cultural tourism.

Keywords: Radio Communication, Cultural Tourism, Sustainable Development, Tourism Awareness, Media Promotion

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the tourism sector is recognized as one of the largest and fastest-growing industries, contributing about 10.4% to global GDP and creating millions of jobs (World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2021). Tourism, in its broadest definition, is one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world, contributing significantly to economic growth, cultural exchange, and social development. Within the broader spectrum of tourism, cultural tourism has emerged as a dynamic and influential sector that not only preserves and promotes cultural heritage but also serves as a platform for addressing social and environmental challenges (Richards, 2018). Over the years, there has been a growing global discourse on how tourism—when properly managed—can contribute to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2030). Cultural tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors in global tourism, gaining significant recognition as a vehicle for both economic advancement and social transformation. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2020) notes that cultural tourism accounts for nearly 40% of international tourism, with millions of travelers seeking authentic cultural experiences such as festivals, heritage sites, traditional performances, and indigenous crafts. Beyond its economic implications, cultural tourism is increasingly viewed as a platform for promoting environmental consciousness and sustainable development (Richards, 2018). It includes activities such as visiting historical monuments, attending cultural festivals, and engaging in indigenous arts and crafts. Beyond economics.

Cultural tourism also presents opportunities for communicating important societal messages, including environmental awareness and sustainability (Okonkwo & Njoku, 2020). Cultural tourism emphasizes travel motivated by the desire to experience, learn, and engage with the cultural expressions, traditions, and heritage of a people or community. This form of tourism encompasses tangible cultural heritage such as museums, monuments, and heritage sites, as well as intangible cultural elements like festivals, music, rituals, and oral traditions (UNESCO, 2019). In Africa, cultural tourism has become a major developmental focus. Countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Morocco and South Africa have consistently integrated cultural heritage into their national development plans. Timothy and Nyaupane (2022) argue that cultural tourism in Africa enhances communal wellbeing, increases rural development, and stimulates sustainable livelihoods through craft-making, festivals, cultural landscapes, and sacred heritage sites.

Nigeria possesses vast cultural assets across all geopolitical zones, from Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove to the Nok Terracotta sites, Igbo-Ukwu artifacts, Kano Dye Pits, and numerous traditional textile and craft centers. Yet, the tourism sector remains grossly under-promoted. Scholars repeatedly assert that inadequate communication strategies particularly weak broadcast promotion undermine the visibility, accessibility, and developmental potential of cultural tourism in Nigeria (Nwosu, 2020; Ezenagu, 2022). Nigeria, endowed with over 250 ethnic groups, hundreds of craft traditions, and numerous sacred groves, shrines, caves, historical sites, and textile traditions, possesses enormous cultural tourism potential (Aremu, 2021). Yet, as Okonkwo (2018) notes, the Nigerian tourism sector has remained underutilized due to weak promotional strategies, inadequate policy implementation, insecurity, and poor communication frameworks.. Effective communication—through branding, stakeholder engagement, tourism interpretation, public awareness campaigns, and strategic storytelling—is central to unlocking this potential. Cultural tourism in Nigeria is widely recognized as an untapped economic pillar capable of contributing significantly to GDP diversification beyond oil. The Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC, 2022) highlights traditional crafts, archeological sites, festivals, and indigenous cultural practices as major tourism resources.

Abia State, located in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, is endowed with a rich tapestry of cultural heritage sites and natural landscapes, whose historical depth and symbolic significance position

the state as a potential cultural tourism hub. The state's cultural resources are rich, layered, and communicatively expressive, reflecting centuries-old encounters, traditions, belief systems, and artistic innovation. Among the most prominent cultural tourism sites in the state are the Akwete Weaving Village in Ukwu East Local Government Area, the Arochukwu Long Juju Cave Complex, an international heritage route significant in the collective memory of the slave era, the National War Museum and the Azumini Blue River.

More than a physical location, the complex is a communicative symbol of an ancient judicial and religious centre central to the Aro Confederacy. The Akwete weaving tradition, for instance, has thrived in Ukwu East Local Government Area for centuries. Oral histories and archaeological accounts trace its origin as far back as the 9th century, with women serving as the custodians of the craft (Eze-Uzomaka, 2016). Akwete cloth was historically used not only as attire for royalty and warriors but also as a medium of social messaging, as its bold motifs often encoded proverbs, fertility symbols, and community values. Ojukwu (2019) aptly describes it as “a textile tradition where fabric speaks as a cultural text”.

Its reliance on cotton and plant-based dyes illustrates how indigenous knowledge integrated artistry with environmental sustainability. The Akwete textile tradition is one of Africa's finest hand-woven fabrics, produced almost exclusively by women using indigenous looms and techniques transmitted across generations. The cloth itself is a symbolic communication artefact—bearing patterns, motifs, colours, and textures that communicate identity, power, spirituality, and social meaning. The Azumini Blue River located in Azumini, a village in Ukwu East Local Government Area in Abia State, Nigeria, is a famous natural wonder known for its remarkably clear, blue-hued water. It is a popular tourist spot for swimming, canoeing and relaxation amidst lush greenery. Its blue color is attributed to the riverbed's minerals reflecting sunlight, offering a serene escape and a glimpse into Nigeria's natural beauty.

The National War Museum is Nigeria's only war museum located in Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria. It showcases the military history of Nigeria from objects of pre-colonial warfare to relics from the Biafran-Nigerian Civil War. It has a collection of tanks, armored vehicles, ships, and aircraft all from Nigeria or the defunct Republic of Biafra. Almost all tanks and AFLs are Biafran and all aircraft are Nigerian. The war museum is gazetted as a heritage site in Nigeria. It is the main repository of the official narratives of the fratricidal war in Nigeria from 1967 to 1970. These cultural sites constitute a cultural communication system through which Abia State expresses its history, identity, and creative heritage. However, their developmental impact remains marginal due to structural constraints, low tourism communication, poor documentation, weak promotional strategies, inadequate heritage management, and inadequate sustainable development planning. Sustainable development, as defined by the Brundtland Commission (1987), involves meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. UNESCO (2021) extends this definition by arguing that cultural heritage is “a fundamental pillar of sustainable development because it anchors community identity, drives creative economies, and enhances social resilience” (p. 4). Nigeria is a signatory to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth and Goal 11: Sustainable Cities & Communities (UN, 2019). In this light, cultural tourism is not merely a recreational activity; it is a critical driver of socioeconomic sustainability, environmental stewardship, and cultural continuity.

Radio owing to its affordability, accessibility, immediacy, and cultural resonance in Africa remains one of the most potent media for shaping public perception, stimulating tourism participation, and mobilizing communities for heritage-based development (Agba, 2022). Globally, countries with strong cultural tourism strategies such as Spain, Japan, Mexico, and Turkey have demonstrated that media visibility, especially through targeted radio and broadcast campaigns, is indispensable to attracting both domestic and

international tourists (Garcia & de la Calle, 2020,p. 13). For instance, Mexico's Indigenous Cultural Routes are promoted extensively through regional radio networks broadcasting in local dialects—a method that UNESCO (2021) highlights as “critical to the preservation of indigenous identity and the promotion of sustainable heritage tourism”. Similarly, in the Asia-Pacific region, community radio stations play an increasingly significant role in promoting eco-cultural tourism by disseminating knowledge about heritage sites, conservation ethics, and local traditions. According to Natarajan (2020), community-centered broadcasting is the most contextually relevant communication tool for cultural sustainability and responsible tourism practices. Radio remains the most widely consumed medium in sub-Saharan Africa, reaching approximately 80% of the population weekly (African Media Barometer, 2022). This makes radio an indispensable platform for tourism sensitization, behaviour change communication, and heritage promotion (Kwame & Asante, 2021). These global examples highlight the synergy between radio communication, cultural tourism and sustainable development—a synergy that forms the conceptual backbone of this study. In most developing countries, radio remains the most accessible, affordable, credible, and culturally relevant medium of mass communication. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC, 2023) reports that radio has over 85% audience penetration across Nigeria, cutting across age, gender, education, and socioeconomic class. Radio is also a crucial platform for development communication, cultural education, community mobilization, and public enlightenment. This research therefore investigates communicating cultural tourism through radio broadcasting to enhance sustainable development in Abia State using Akwete cloth weaving, National War Museum, Azumini Blue River and Arochukwu Long Juju Cave Complex in Abia State.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the abundance of cultural heritage resources in Abia State, there is little empirical evidence to suggest that cultural or heritage tourism—whether craft-based or site-based—contributes meaningfully to sustainable economic development. Observations, field interactions, and anecdotal reports indicate that many residents in Aba metropolis remain largely unaware of the existence, historical significance, or economic value of key heritage assets such as the Akwete Weaving Village, the National War Museum, the Azumini Blue River and the Arochukwu Long Juju Cave Complex. Where awareness exists, it is often superficial and not translated into tourism patronage or economic participation.

Furthermore, promotional efforts and media coverage of cultural tourism in Abia State, particularly through radio broadcasting, appear sporadic, inconsistent, or entirely absent. This weak visibility limits public awareness, discourages visitation, and undermines stakeholder interest. The Akwete weaving heritage, once internationally recognized for its artistic excellence and cultural symbolism, now struggles to compete with modern textile imports, suffers from poor brand positioning, and lacks sustained market exposure. Artisans in Akwete face irregular demand, limited access to tourism value chains, inadequate marketing platforms, and minimal institutional support, all of which constrain the economic viability of the craft.

Similarly, observers think that the heritage sites such as the Arochukwu Long Juju Cave, despite their profound historical, cultural, and symbolic significance, remain underdeveloped and under-promoted. Potential tourism investors, development agencies, and even government institutions often fail to perceive these sites as viable economic assets, partly due to weak advocacy, inadequate documentation, and limited public visibility. This situation raises a fundamental question: Why does Abia State, despite possessing rich and diverse cultural heritage resources, fail to harness them for sustainable economic development? Although Akwete, Akwa West, Umuahia and Arochukwu possess strong potential to attract domestic and international tourists, generate employment, revive cultural industries, and support women-led creative enterprises, their contributions to the local economy remain marginal. This may be largely due to weak

tourism communication strategies, inadequate promotional infrastructure, poor packaging of cultural narratives, limited investment, and low government-led media visibility.

The absence of consistent, strategic, and culturally grounded media promotion especially through radio broadcasting may have resulted in persistently low tourist turnout, weak local and international visibility, declining cultural identity awareness, lost economic opportunities, and poor integration of heritage tourism into sustainable development frameworks. The research is concerned with communicating cultural tourism for sustainable development in Abia State.

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of radio coverage of Akwete cloth weaving, National War Museum? Azumini Blue River and Arochukwu Long Juju Cave in Abia State?
2. What is the level of awareness of these cultural heritage sites as a result of radio broadcasts?
3. In what ways does radio-promoted cultural tourism contribute to sustainable development in Abia State?
4. What challenges hinder effective radio promotion of cultural tourism in Abia State?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism denotes travel activities primarily motivated by interest in the cultural life of a place, its heritage, arts, traditions, and lived practices (UNWTO, 2018). Contemporary scholarship emphasizes cultural tourism as an experience—not only the passive viewing of objects but active participation in events, crafts, performances, and everyday cultural practices. (Richards 2018, p.14) argues that “cultural tourism involves both the consumption and co-creation of culture”.³ Highlighting the communicative potential of tourism encounters for transmitting values and norms. Conceptually, cultural tourism is not merely about leisure but about meaning-making. McKercher and du Cros (2002) define cultural tourism as the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs. This definition underscores the communicative aspect of cultural tourism. When environmental sustainability is woven into this experience, the tourist becomes both an audience and a potential agent of change.

In the Global South, cultural tourism frequently overlaps with livelihood strategies: festivals, craft markets, and heritage routes generate income while reproducing cultural knowledge (Richards, 2018; Igbokwe, 2023). In Abia State, examples include the Akwete weaving tradition, the Azumini Blue River as a nature/culture attraction, the Arochukwu Long Juju corridor, and the National War Museum, Umuahia all sites where cultural meaning and environmental context interpenetrate (Chigbu, Nmeregini, & Onukaogu, 2013; Onuora, 2015). Cultural tourism is therefore a communication ecology: interpretive panels, guided tours, festival performances, artisans’ demonstrations, and visitor–local interactions are all media through which ideas—including environmental messages—are transmitted, negotiated, and embodied.

Cultural tourism in Africa is largely anchored on indigenous cultural expressions, sacred landscapes, heritage caves, weaving cultures, shrines, oral histories, and crafts (Wondirad et al., 2021). In Nigeria, cultural tourism encompasses sites such as the Osun Sacred Grove, Sukur Cultural Landscape, the Kano Dye Pits, Akwete Weaving Industry, and Arochukwu Long Juju Shrine, among others.

Relevance of Cultural Tourism Communication in Abia State.

Cultural-tourism communication is particularly relevant in Abia State because the state possesses distinctive cultural heritage assets—such as Akwete weaving, one of Africa’s oldest textile technologies,

and the Arochukwu Long Juju Cave, a historically significant ritual and political shrine within the Aro Confederacy. These heritage sites have immense economic, cultural, and historical value but remain under-promoted, poorly understood, and scarcely visited, primarily due to communication gaps. Thus, effective cultural-tourism communication becomes a strategic tool for repositioning Abia State within the national tourism discourse.

1. To Correct Under-Representation of Abia's Cultural Assets:

Abia State is rich in heritage but poor in visibility. While states like Cross River (Obudu), Osun (Osun Grove), and Lagos (National Museum) consistently feature in Nigeria's tourism media landscape, Abia's cultural treasures receive minimal broadcast attention. This visibility gap undermines the state's tourism potential. Effective cultural-tourism communication—especially through radio helps correct this imbalance by projecting Abia's unique cultural identity to local and national audiences, to Mobilize Economic Opportunities through Local Awareness most Abians are not aware of the economic potential embedded in Akwete weaving, the local craft markets, and the cultural symbolism of the Arochukwu cave. Cultural-tourism communication raises public consciousness, enabling citizens to understand how heritage assets can stimulate local enterprise development, rural employment, craft commercialization, and community-level revenue generation, to Support Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), cultural-tourism communication aligns strongly with the SDGs, especially: SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by stimulating artisan economies and tourism-related jobs. SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by promoting the preservation of cultural heritage. Without communication, these linkages remain abstract; with communication, they become actionable pathways for development in Abia State, to Strengthen Community Identity and Cultural Continuity, heritage sites like Akwete and the Arochukwu cave are repositories of Igbo cultural memory, functioning as living archives of creativity, mythology, spirituality, and precolonial political organization. Cultural-tourism communication ensures that: younger generations appreciate these histories, communities maintain pride in their heritage, and cultural erosion is prevented, to Attract Domestic and Diaspora Tourists, Nigeria's tourism industry is largely driven by domestic tourism. Abia State can tap into this market only if information about its cultural attractions is effectively communicated through media channels that reach potential tourists. The diaspora Igbo community also has strong interest in heritage tourism, but requires consistent media narratives and promotional content to stay connected and to support State Government Tourism Policy and Branding, Abia State recently prioritized tourism as part of its economic diversification strategy. Communication is the mechanism through which: government policies are disseminated, tourism branding is built, awareness campaigns reach rural and urban populations, Broadcasting Corporation of Abia State (BCA), Magic FM, and private stations become partners in development communication.

Thus, cultural-tourism communication becomes a state-building tool.

Sustainable Development — Abia State

Sustainable development, as defined by the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987), is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (p. 43). Contemporary scholarly interpretations emphasize three pillars:

1. Economic sustainability – long-term economic viability, employment, tourism income.
2. Social/cultural sustainability – preservation of heritage, community participation.
3. Environmental sustainability – responsible use and protection of natural and cultural heritage

Applying sustainable development to cultural tourism, Mbaiwa (2021) argues that heritage tourism

contributes to poverty reduction, provides alternative livelihoods, and strengthens local cultural systems when properly managed. Sustainable tourism thus integrates cultural preservation with economic growth. Within this triad, cultural tourism intersects with sustainable development by promoting local economies (through heritage tourism), fostering social cohesion (through cultural pride and identity), and enhancing ecological responsibility (through environmental communication embedded in tourism practices). Sustainable development, in the canonical Brundtland formulation, is development that meets present needs without compromising future generations' capacity to meet theirs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

The UNESCO Hangzhou Declaration and MONDIACULT 2022 further position culture as both a driver and enabler of sustainable development, urging that cultural resources and policies be integrated into SDG strategies (UNESCO, 2013; UNESCO, 2022).

The Concept of Radio as a Development Medium

In the context of development communication, radio emerges as Africa's preeminent medium, distinguished by its unparalleled ubiquity and trustworthiness, attributes largely attributable to its affordability, portability, and capacity for linguistic inclusivity that accommodates diverse vernaculars. Empirical scholarship substantiates radio's profound efficacy in fostering awareness, facilitating cultural transmission, inducing behavioral modifications, and galvanizing rural mobilization efforts (Asemah, 2020; Boateng, 2022). The salient characteristics underpinning radio's utility in developmental paradigms encompass its expansive reach, which transcends socio-economic strata; its localization through broadcasts in indigenous languages, thereby enhancing cultural relevance; its immediacy in enabling real-time information dissemination; its persuasiveness as a resonant voice within communities; and its interactivity, manifested through mechanisms such as phone-in segments, jingles, interviews, and magazine-style programs that encourage audience participation. Within the specific milieu of Abia State, Nigeria, stations such as BCA Radio and Magic FM Aba exemplify this paradigm, boasting robust community penetration and thus positioning themselves as pivotal conduits for augmenting awareness of cultural tourism while advancing sustainable development initiatives.

Concept of Radio–Cultural Tourism Nexus

The nexus between radio and cultural tourism represents a dynamic intersection where media communication directly influences the visibility, appreciation, and utilization of cultural heritage resources. Radio, as a pervasive and accessible medium, has the capacity to promote cultural heritage, bringing attention to traditional practices, historical sites, and local craftsmanship that might otherwise remain under-recognized. By consistently disseminating information about cultural assets, radio not only shapes public perception and interest but also cultivates a sense of pride and ownership among residents, thereby reinforcing cultural identity. Furthermore, radio serves as a catalyst for domestic tourism, stimulating both curiosity and participation in heritage-focused travel by highlighting events, festivals, and sites such as Akwete weaving centers and the Arochukwu juju cave. Beyond fostering visitation, radio programming contributes to cultural preservation, educating citizens about traditional knowledge, rituals, and artisanal skills, ensuring that these intangible heritages are transmitted across generations. In addition, by drawing attention to these sites and activities, radio indirectly stimulates tourism-based economic development, enhancing local livelihoods through increased tourist expenditure on accommodation, crafts, and related services. Given its community-centered orientation and broad reach particularly in semi-urban and rural settings—radio emerges as an effective platform for mobilizing residents and engaging them in sustained heritage awareness initiatives. In the context of Abia State, radio's role extends beyond mere information dissemination; it becomes an instrument for both cultural enlightenment and economic empowerment,

demonstrating the critical synergy between media communication and sustainable cultural tourism development.

Akwete Weaving Centre is known for producing the traditional hand-woven Akwete cloth. The craft preserves Igbo cultural heritage and provides economic opportunities for local women. Akwete weaving is a symbol of Abia's rich textile heritage and creative tradition. Azumini Blue River is a natural tourist site known for its clear blue water and peaceful environment. It attracts visitors for relaxation and recreational activities while supporting local tourism. The Arochukwu Long Juju Shrine is a historic cultural and religious site of the Aro people. It is now preserved as a heritage and tourist attraction in Abia State.

The National War Museum is an important heritage site showcasing war equipment and historical materials that promote remembrance and historical awareness. A National Monument Preserving Nigeria's Civil War History

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-Setting Theory, originally articulated by McCombs and Shaw (1972), posits that the mass media do not tell people what to think but rather what to think about. According to McCombs (2004), this occurs because the media "structure, shape, and prioritize social issues by allocating differential attention to topics" (p. 67). Radio stations function as agenda-defining institutions capable of elevating cultural tourism sites in Abia State from marginal awareness to public discourse prominence.

Historically, Agenda-Setting Theory emerged from the 1968 Chapel Hill study in the United States, where the media's emphasis on electoral issues strongly correlated with voters' ranking of their importance (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This pioneering research demonstrated that public priorities are seldom independent of media priorities. In development contexts like Nigeria, this role is even more pronounced due to the mass media's symbolic authority and reach, particularly radio, a medium widely accessible across literacy barriers.

Agenda-setting is exceptionally relevant to this study because cultural tourism in Abia State has remained under-communicated despite its rich historical potential. Akwete weaving, which dates back centuries as an indigenous textile technology, and the Arochukwu cave, which carries deep cultural and spiritual histories, require mediated visibility to enter public consciousness? For example, when cultural festivals highlight the consequences of deforestation on local traditions or rituals, they indirectly set the agenda for environmental discourse in the community. Scholars such as Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) argued that agenda-setting is particularly effective when combined with framing.

As Iyengar and Kinder (1987) note, "issues that receive repeated coverage are cognitively lifted to the forefront of public concern" (p. 44). Therefore, the theory aligns strongly with the study's exploration of how radio programmes highlight, promote, or neglect cultural tourism assets and thereby shape Abians' awareness and development perceptions.

Participatory Development Communication Theory

Participatory Development Communication (PDC) evolved as a response to the limitations of early modernization theories, which assumed development could be diffused linearly from experts to passive populations. Scholars such as Freire (1970) and Melkote & Steeves (2015) argued that development is most effective when communities actively participate in communication processes. PDC therefore emphasizes dialogue, cultural relevance, community decision-making, and inclusive knowledge sharing. Historically, this paradigm gained traction in the 1970s and 1980s as development practitioners realized that "top-down

communication models often failed because they did not resonate with the lived experiences of local people” (Servaes, 1999, p. 86). The theory argues that communities should not merely be audiences but co-creators of meaning and drivers of development initiatives.

This aligns with cultural tourism in Abia State because heritage sites exist within communities such as Akwete and Arochukwu. The residents are not spectators—they are custodians of knowledge, interpreters of cultural meaning, and beneficiaries of tourism-related economic activities. A participatory communication model requires radio to amplify community voices, provide platforms for collective storytelling, and allow residents to shape the narratives tourists receive. By engaging local stakeholders through radio discussions, call-ins, interviews, or community-centered programs, media institutions serve as “bridges between cultural custodians and larger publics” (Manyozo, 2012, p. 122). This theory therefore strengthens the study by foregrounding how radio programmes facilitate inclusive dialogue about tourism, encourage resident involvement, and support community-driven sustainable development.

Empirical Review

The following section reviews both global and Nigerian scholarship, highlighting the aims, methodologies, and findings of relevant studies. Each of the following paragraphs summarizes a discrete empirical study: author(s), year; aim; method; key findings; conclusion.

“Cultural Tourism in Kenya: A Systematic Review of Opportunities, Challenges, and Sustainable Development Pathways”Rajwais, Rotich, and Mapelu (2025) conducted a systematic review following PRISMA guidelines, analysing empirical studies on cultural tourism in Kenya over the past five years. While not a single field survey, the review systematically aggregates empirical evidence showing cultural tourism’s growing socioeconomic recognition, especially around regions like Mount Kenya. The review highlights policy gaps, infrastructure constraints, and limited community participation as key inhibitors of sustainable development, but also identifies pathways — including stakeholder collaboration and strategic tourism promotion — that enhance cultural tourism’s developmental impact. These synthesized empirical insights provide contextual grounding and comparative evidence for your study’s focus on sustainable cultural tourism development.

“Cultural Tourism: Income Contribution of Regional Cultural Heritage Resources and Value Chain Consumption in Nigeria”

Okoro, Igbojekwe, Ukabuilu, and Akpanabia (2025) empirically examined how cultural heritage resources contribute to personal income and regional tourism value chains across Nigeria. Using quantitative analysis of tourist spending data, the study demonstrated that heritage events and cultural consumption significantly contribute to local personal incomes through tourism-linked value chain engagements (arts/crafts, services, hospitality). This empirical pattern supports the thesis’s economic development variable and shows that heritage tourism can be linked to measurable income effects — which effective communication (including radio outreach) can help amplify by increasing tourist patronage.

“Tourist Attractions and Economic Development in Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis”

Patience NwokaegoAnwuri and Ifeanyi Jude Osuoha (2022) conducted an empirical analysis of the relationship between tourist attractions and economic development using structured questionnaires administered to employees, management, and rural dwellers at selected Nigerian attractions. Results revealed that tourist attractions positively correlate with employment levels and rural development indicators. This study empirically shows that tourism assets have economic linkage potential that can be harnessed for sustainable development, further justifying research into how communication (e.g., radio) can enhance attraction utilisation and developmental impact.

“Community Empowerment in Nigeria’s Tourism Industry: An Analysis of Stakeholders’ Perceptions”

Adebayo and Butcher (2022) used a qualitative approach to assess perceptions of community empowerment in Nigeria’s tourism sector. Interviews with stakeholders revealed that local empowerment varies across contexts and that devolving decision-making to local bodies (e.g., Local Government Tourism Committees) can enhance community agency and participation in tourism development. The empirical data emphasize that when local communities feel empowered — including through access to information and participatory platforms — sustainable tourism outcomes improve. This supports your thesis’s communication angle, suggesting that radio and other media can enhance community empowerment by circulating local voices and opportunities.

Ejikeme’s (2025) “Harnessing and Marketing of Lejja Archaeological Site for Tourism Development in Nigeria”

The researcher carried out a qualitative study of the Lejja Archaeological Site employed in-depth and semi-structured interviews and site observations to explore marketing challenges and sustainable tourism potential. Findings showed that infrastructure deficits, poor accessibility, low visibility, and lack of coordinated stakeholder engagement limit the site’s tourism appeal. This empirical evidence highlights how effective promotion and stakeholder mobilisation areas where radio communication can play a critical role — are urgently needed to realise sustainable cultural tourism opportunities.

Conducted by Enemu and Amaechi (2015), “The Role of Mass Media in Tourism Development in Abia State”

This study used a structured questionnaire administered to over 370 respondents drawn from tourists and tourism personnel at major Abia tourism destinations. It aimed to identify tourism sites, determine media channels used in tourism advertising, and assess the impact of media advertisement on patronage levels. Findings revealed that the National War Museum, Umuahia, was the most visited site (56.8% visitation), with Wonder Tree in Amakama second, and that media exposure (print, radio, TV) significantly influenced visitation rates. The study empirically confirms the importance of media communication in tourism promotion and supports your thesis’s focus on communication’s role in enhancing tourism awareness and visitation in Abia State.

Ololo, Dieke, and Eze-Uzomaka (2020) “Constraints and Challenges of Event Tourism Development in Abia State, Nigeria”

Adopted an ethnographic research design to examine constraints facing event tourism (Ekpe cultural festival) in Abia State, including community perceptions and stakeholder interviews. They found that policy implementation gaps, limited community awareness, and poor promotional strategies impede event tourism’s potential. This study emphasizes that communication channels including local media platforms such as radio are underutilized, highlighting an empirical gap your research can address by investigating how radio messaging might improve awareness and sustainability of cultural tourism events in Abia.

Ngoka et al., 2022 “Perceived Community Awareness and Expectations of Tourism Development in Abia State Sacred Sites”

Further assesses fears and expectations held by host communities at multiple sacred sites. Using structured questionnaires with traditional leaders and resident groups, results indicated consistent concern about heritage obliteration and desire for economic benefit from tourism, demonstrating that local perceptions are shaped by a lack of information and participatory platforms, a communication issue that radio campaigns could mitigate.

METHODOLOGY

This study mixed-method design, which allows the researcher to collect quantitative data through structured questionnaires and qualitative data through semi-structured interviews simultaneously, analyze them separately, and then integrate the findings for comprehensive interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The method was deemed appropriate for this study because it provides comprehensive data that enhanced the understanding of the problem. Therefore, the researcher used surveys and in-depth interviews in gathering data. The survey method was used to elicit information from the public on communicating cultural tourism in Abia State while in-depth interview was used to get information from the selected leaders of the communities of Akwate cloth weaving, War Museum, Azumiri Blue River and Arochukwu Long Juju Complex. The in-depth interview will help to gather rich data on opinions, values, motivations, feelings and experiences of the respondents. The population of the study comprises all the residents of Abia State, Nigeria, who are considered eligible to express opinions about cultural tourism through Radio broadcast for sustainable economic development in Abia State. The state is made up of three senatorial zones (Avis Central, Avis South and Abia North) which comprises 17 Local government Areas. Abia State is made up of 2,845,380 persons as at 2006(NPC, 2006 Census count). Nineteen years have gone since the census figure was published. The current Abia State population using the UNDPs population index is projected to be 4,088,811.06 and the sample size using Taro Yamanes sample size calculation is 400.

The study adopts a dual sampling technique, Multi-stage sampling was used for the election of respondents for the questionnaire and purposive sampling for the in-depth interview.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Findings

The study presents descriptive data from 385 respondents (96.25% response rate from 400 distributed questionnaires) regarding radio communication of cultural tourism sites in Abia State. The presentation includes demographic characteristics and frequency distributions across all major constructs.

Demographic Information of Respondent

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
18–25	45	11.7%
26–35	78	20.3%
36–45	207	53.8%
46–55	40	10.4%
56 and above	15	3.9%
Total	385	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2026. N = 385

Table 1 presents the age distribution of the 385 respondents. The dominant age group is 36–45 years, comprising 207 respondents (53.8%), followed by the 26–35 age bracket with 78 respondents (20.3%). Respondents aged 18–25 account for 45 (11.7%), while those in the 46–55 range total 40 (10.4%). The least represented group is 56 years and above, with only 15 respondents (3.9%). This distribution indicates that the study largely captured respondents in their active economic years, a demographic known to engage significantly with both radio media and cultural activities. The predominance of the 36–45 age group suggests that middle-aged adults form the core radio-listening audience in Abia State and are thus a critical

target for any radio-based cultural tourism communication strategy.

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Male	216	56.1%
Female	169	43.9%
Total	385	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2026. N = 385

Table 2 shows the gender distribution of respondents. Males constitute the majority with 216 respondents (56.1%), while females account for 169 respondents (43.9%). Although males are slightly more represented, the near-equal distribution reflects a reasonable gender balance in the sample, lending credibility to the findings. This spread suggests that both male and female residents of Aba are exposed to radio broadcasts and hold relevant views on the communication of cultural tourism in Abia State. The slight male preponderance may be attributable to occupational patterns, particularly the higher proportion of traders and civil servants who are predominantly male in the study area.

Table 3: Occupational Distribution of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Trader / Business	175	45.5%
Civil Servant	108	28.1%
Artisan	57	14.8%
Student	45	11.7%
Total	385	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2026. N = 385

Table 3 illustrates the occupational spread of respondents. Traders and business owners form the largest group with 175 respondents (45.5%), followed by civil servants at 108 (28.1%). Artisans account for 57 respondents (14.8%), while students represent the smallest category at 45 (11.7%). The dominance of traders and business persons in the sample is consistent with the economic character of Aba — a major commercial hub in Abia State. This occupational profile has important implications for the study, as traders and artisans are among the groups most likely to benefit directly from improved cultural tourism promotion through increased patronage, market activity, and artisanal product demand linked to tourism.

Table 4: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Level of Education	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Primary	0	0.0%
Secondary	54	14.0%
Tertiary	249	64.7%
Postgraduate	82	21.3%
Total	385	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2026. $N = 385$

Table 4 presents the educational background of respondents. No respondent had only primary education (0.0%), while 54 (14.0%) held secondary school certificates. The majority, 249 respondents (64.7%), had tertiary education, and 82 (21.3%) were postgraduate degree holders. The high proportion of tertiary and postgraduate-educated respondents suggests a literate and informed sample, capable of critically assessing the role of radio in cultural tourism promotion. This educational profile enhances the reliability of respondents' opinions and perceptions, as they are likely to be discerning media consumers with the capacity to evaluate the quality and frequency of radio content on cultural heritage sites.

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Level of Awareness Generated by Radio Broadcasts

Table 8: Radio Programmes Have Increased My Awareness of Cultural Tourism Sites (Q8)

Response Option	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
1 – Strongly Disagree	220	57.1%	1.54
2 – Disagree	140	36.4%	
3 – Neutral	12	3.1%	
4 – Agree	8	2.1%	
5 – Strongly Agree	5	1.3%	
Total	385	100.0%	

Source: Field Survey, 2026. $N = 385$ | Mean = 1.54

Table 8 addresses RQ2 by measuring the extent to which radio has raised awareness of cultural tourism in Abia State. An overwhelming 220 respondents (57.1%) strongly disagreed and 140 (36.4%) disagreed that radio has increased their awareness of cultural tourism sites. Only 8 (2.1%) agreed and 5 (1.3%) strongly agreed. The mean score of 1.54, well below the decision threshold of 3.50, confirms that radio broadcasts have generated minimal awareness of cultural heritage sites among residents of Aba. This finding corroborates the low coverage identified in Table 7 and underscores the urgent need for more deliberate and sustained radio engagement with cultural tourism content.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How Radio Messages Shape Public Perception and Interest in Cultural Tourism Sites

Table 9: Radio Programmes Influence My Perception and Interest in Cultural Tourism Sites (Q9)

Response Option	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
1 – Strongly Disagree	220	57.1%	1.54
2 – Disagree	140	36.4%	
3 – Neutral	12	3.1%	
4 – Agree	8	2.1%	
5 – Strongly Agree	5	1.3%	
Total	385	100.0%	

Source: Field Survey, 2026. $N = 385$ | Mean = 1.54

Table 9 examines the influence of radio messages on public perception and interest in cultural tourism, corresponding to RQ3. The distribution mirrors that of Table 8: 220 respondents (57.1%) strongly disagreed and 140 (36.4%) disagreed that radio programmes have shaped their interest or perception of cultural tourism sites in Abia State. The mean of 1.54 is below the benchmark, indicating that radio messages have not significantly influenced public perception or interest. This is a logical consequence of the near-absence of cultural tourism programming on radio. Without consistent and engaging broadcasts, radio cannot effectively fulfil its agenda-setting and attitude-formation functions regarding cultural heritage sites.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): Contribution of Radio-Promoted Cultural Tourism to Sustainable Economic Development

Table 10: Radio Programmes on Cultural Tourism Can Contribute to Sustainable Economic Benefits (Q10)

Response Option	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
1 – Strongly Disagree	4	1.0%	4.55
2 – Disagree	6	1.6%	
3 – Neutral	5	1.3%	
4 – Agree	130	33.8%	
5 – Strongly Agree	240	62.3%	
Total	385	100.0%	

Source: Field Survey, 2026. $N = 385$ | Mean = 4.55

Table 10 assesses respondents' belief in the economic potential of radio-promoted cultural tourism. A combined 240 (62.3%) strongly agreed and 130 (33.8%) agreed that such programmes can generate jobs, income, and skill development for local communities. Only 10 respondents (2.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean of 4.55 — substantially above the 3.50 benchmark — reflects a strong consensus that cultural tourism promotion via radio can serve as a catalyst for sustainable economic development.

Table 11: Radio Promotion of Cultural Tourism Can Attract More Tourists to Abia State (Q11)

Response Option	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
1 – Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%	4.42
2 – Disagree	0	0.0%	
3 – Neutral	40	10.4%	
4 – Agree	145	37.7%	
5 – Strongly Agree	200	51.9%	
Total	385	100.0%	

Source: Field Survey, 2026. $N = 385$ | Mean = 4.42

Table 11 shows that 200 respondents (51.9%) strongly agreed and 145 (37.7%) agreed that radio promotion can attract more tourists to Abia State. No respondent disagreed or strongly disagreed, with only 40 (10.4%) remaining neutral. The mean of 4.42 is among the highest recorded in the study, affirming that respondents see considerable tourist-attraction potential in effective radio communication.

Table 12: Radio Programmes Can Support the Preservation of Cultural Heritage Sites (Q12)

Response Option	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)
1 – Strongly Disagree	6	1.6%	4.47
2 – Disagree	6	1.6%	
3 – Neutral	5	1.3%	
4 – Agree	152	39.5%	
5 – Strongly Agree	216	56.1%	
Total	385	100.0%	

Source: Field Survey, 2026. $N = 385$ | Mean = 4.47

Table 12 reveals strong agreement — 216 (56.1%) strongly agreed and 152 (39.5%) agreed — that radio can play a role in the preservation of cultural heritage sites. The mean of 4.47 further validates this positive outlook, underscoring radio's role not merely as an advertising medium but as a tool for cultural memory and heritage education.

Research Question 4 (RQ4): Challenges Hindering Effective Radio Promotion of Cultural Tourism in Abia State

Table 13: Challenges Hindering Effective Radio Promotion of Cultural Tourism (Q13)

Challenge	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Inadequate Funding	124	32.2%
Lack of Awareness of Cultural Tourism Sites	140	36.4%
Low Community Participation	37	9.6%
Lack of Government Support	84	21.8%
Total	385	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2026. $N = 385$

Table 13 identifies the perceived barriers to effective radio promotion. Lack of awareness of cultural tourism sites ranks highest (140; 36.4%), followed by inadequate funding (124; 32.2%), lack of government support (84; 21.8%), and low community participation (37; 9.6%). The top two challenges account for 68.6% of all responses, indicating they are the most critical barriers requiring urgent attention.

Table 14: Suggestions for Improving Radio Promotion of Cultural Tourism in Abia State (Q14)

Suggestion	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Consistent Broadcast and Awareness	130	33.8%
Improved Funding	90	23.4%

Creative Cultural Content	100	26.0%
Improved Government Policy	20	5.2%
Use of Local Language / Dialect	30	7.8%
Youth & Local Influencers	15	3.9%
Total	385	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2026. *N* = 385

Table 14 captures respondents' recommendations. Consistent broadcast and awareness campaigns lead (130; 33.8%), followed by creative cultural content (100; 26.0%) and improved funding (90; 23.4%). Use of local languages (30; 7.8%), improved government policy (20; 5.2%), and youth/influencer involvement (15; 3.9%) complete the recommendations, collectively forming a practical roadmap for media practitioners and policymakers.

Qualitative Findings — Purposive Interview Themes

The following themes were derived from in-depth interviews with key informants including community leaders, tourism site staff, broadcast media professionals, and ministry officials. Coded statements are presented to substantiate each theme.

Theme 1: Cultural and Economic Importance of Tourism Sites

Community leaders emphasized that the tourism sites represent both cultural heritage and economic resources for their communities. Akwete weaving symbolizes a longstanding cultural tradition passed down through generations, while the Arochukwu Long Juju Cave represents an important historical and spiritual landmark in Igbo history. Respondents explained that tourism contributes to local economic activities, including the sale of cultural crafts, tour guiding, hospitality services, and food vending. Many youths in these communities engage in tourism-related activities as an alternative means of livelihood. Officials from the Ministry acknowledged that cultural tourism sites contribute significantly to the preservation of indigenous culture and economic development within host communities.

Akwete 1 *“Akwete weaving is not just a trade — it is our identity. It has been with us for generations and every cloth woven carries a story. When visitors come, they are not just buying fabric; they are buying our heritage.”*

Akwete 2 *“The weaving industry supports hundreds of families here. Young women learn it from their mothers. If properly promoted on radio, more buyers will come from outside the state and even from abroad.”*

Arochukwu Leader 1 *“The Long Juju Cave is sacred to us and it is one of the most important historical sites in all of Igboland. It tells the story of our ancestors, our justice system, and our spirituality. Tourism from this site brings income to our guides, food sellers, and artisans.”*

Ministry Staff 1 *“Cultural tourism is a pillar of heritage preservation. When a site is visited regularly and documented well, it stays alive in the consciousness of the people. Radio has a role to play in keeping these sites relevant to both locals and outsiders.”*

Theme 2: Limited Radio Promotion of Cultural Tourism

Both community leaders and ministry officials agreed that radio promotion of cultural tourism in Abia State remains limited and inconsistent. Community leaders observed that mentions of tourism sites on radio usually occur during state celebrations, cultural festivals, or occasional news reports, rather than through structured and regular programming. Officials from the Ministry confirmed that although radio has the capacity to reach a wide audience, formal media partnerships and structured promotional programmes are still largely underdeveloped. This indicates that the potential of radio as a communication tool for promoting tourism has not been fully utilised.

Magic FM Staff 1 *“Honestly, we rarely receive any brief or content from the tourism ministry specifically for cultural sites. What we broadcast is mostly what we source ourselves — during festivals or when there is a special event. There is no sustained programme for it.”*

Magic FM Staff 2 *“Radio airtime is not free. If tourism bodies want consistent coverage, they need to partner with us formally. Right now, there is no standing arrangement. It is very ad hoc.”*

BCA Staff 1 *“We have aired features on the National War Museum and Azumini Blue River before, but these were one-off productions. We do not have a dedicated slot or a regular programme for cultural tourism in Abia State.”*

Ministry Staff 2 *“Our challenge is that media partnerships have not been formalised. We occasionally send press releases, but a structured media campaign with radio stations is something we are still working towards.”*

Theme 3: Radio as an Effective Medium for Awareness Creation

Despite the limited promotion, respondents generally agreed that radio remains one of the most accessible communication platforms, especially in rural communities. Community leaders noted that many households rely on battery-powered radio sets, making radio an important source of information. They reported that when tourism sites are mentioned on radio programmes, there is often increased interest from visitors within and outside the state. Ministry officials also acknowledged that radio has the capacity to reach diverse audiences across urban and rural areas, thereby playing a vital role in creating awareness about tourism opportunities.

Azumini 1 *“When the Blue River was mentioned on radio during the Enyimba Festival coverage last year, we had more visitors the following weekend than we had seen in months. Radio still works. People listen, especially in the village areas.”*

Azumini 2 *“Most of our visitors from outside Abia State say they first heard about Azumini from someone who heard it on radio. That tells you the reach of radio even without a structured programme.”*

War Museum Staff 1 *“Radio is powerful. When there was a feature about the National War Museum on a local station, we noticed an increase in school visits and tourist inquiries. If this were done regularly, the impact would be enormous.”*

BCA Staff 2 *“Radio penetrates even the most remote communities. A farmer in a rural area of Abia may not have internet, but he has a radio. If we consistently talk about our tourism sites on air, awareness will grow organically across the state.”*

Theme 4: Tourism Benefits for Cultural Preservation and Development

Respondents highlighted several benefits associated with tourism activities, including preservation of cultural traditions, increased recognition of indigenous crafts, and economic opportunities for local residents. The Akwete weaving industry has gained wider recognition whenever it receives media attention, which sometimes leads to increased patronage from visitors and buyers. Tourism was also identified as a potential driver of sustainable development, as it encourages cultural preservation while generating income for local communities.

Akwete 1 *“Each time Akwete weaving appears on television or radio, we see orders coming in from Lagos, Abuja, and sometimes even from Nigerians in the diaspora. Media attention translates directly to income for our weavers.”*

Arochukwu Leader 2 *“Tourism to the Long Juju Cave has helped us maintain the site and employ young men from this community as tour guides. Without visitors, we would struggle to fund even basic upkeep of the cave. Tourism is our development partner.”*

War Museum Staff 2 *“The National War Museum serves an educational purpose as much as a tourism purpose. Visitors — especially students — leave with a deeper understanding of Biafra history. That is cultural preservation in action. Radio can amplify that message to more Nigerians.”*

Ministry Staff 1 *“Where tourism thrives, culture survives. The revenue from tourism can be reinvested into maintaining these sites, training local craftspeople, and documenting cultural knowledge before it is lost. Radio is a tool that can accelerate all of this.”*

Theme 5: Challenges Hindering Effective Tourism Communication

Several challenges affecting the promotion of cultural tourism through radio were identified, including limited funding for media publicity, lack of structured collaboration between tourism authorities and radio stations, poor infrastructure and accessibility to some tourism sites, and inadequate knowledge of tourism history among some media presenters. Community leaders noted that the cost of radio airtime makes it difficult for local communities to sponsor tourism advertisements. Ministry officials similarly identified budgetary constraints and limited media engagement as major barriers to effective tourism communication.

Arochukwu Leader 1 *“We have tried to contact radio stations to broadcast something about the Long Juju Cave, but the cost of airtime is beyond what we can afford as a community. We need the government to step in and fund this kind of awareness.”*

Akwete 2 *“Some radio presenters do not even know the history of Akwete weaving. How can they promote what they do not understand? There needs to be education*

for media people about our tourism sites before they can talk about them properly.”

Magic FM Staff 1 *“Infrastructure is a real problem. Some of these sites are hard to reach. When we plan to do an outside broadcast or a documentary, logistics and poor roads make it very expensive and difficult to execute.”*

Ministry Staff 2 *“The budget allocated to tourism promotion is very limited. We cannot engage radio stations on a sustained basis with the funding we currently have. Until the government prioritises this in the budget, formal media campaigns will remain sporadic.”*

Theme 6: Strategies for Improving Radio Communication of Cultural Tourism

Respondents recommended several strategies to enhance the communication of cultural tourism through radio, including establishing dedicated radio programmes on cultural tourism, broadcasting tourism awareness campaigns in local languages such as Igbo, strengthening collaboration between the Ministry of Culture and radio stations, producing radio documentaries and interviews highlighting tourism sites, and using radio programmes to educate the public on responsible tourism practices. These strategies were considered essential for improving tourism awareness and ensuring that cultural tourism contributes to sustainable development in Abia State.

- BCA Staff 1**

“What we need is a dedicated weekly programme — something like a cultural tourism magazine show. It should feature interviews with community leaders, stories about the sites, and practical information for potential visitors. That consistency will build audience interest over time.”
- Azumini 2**

“Radio programmes should be in Igbo. Many of our rural listeners understand English poorly. If you want them to connect with the tourism message and visit these sites, speak to them in a language they feel at home with.”
- Magic FM Staff 2**

“A formal MOU between the Ministry of Culture and radio stations would change everything. It would provide a framework for content, funding, and accountability. Right now, it is all informal and therefore unreliable.”
- War Museum Staff 1**

“We would love for a radio station to come and do a live outside broadcast from the Museum. That kind of immersive content — where listeners can hear the environment and the stories told on location — is far more compelling than a studio discussion.”
- Arochukwu Leader 2**

“Youth and local influencers should be involved. Many young people in Arochukwu are active on social media and listen to radio. If they are trained and empowered to tell their own stories about the Long Juju Cave, the message will spread faster and further.”

Table 15: Summary of Key Themes from Interviews — Community vs. Ministry Perspectives

THEME	Community Perspective	Ministry Perspective
Cultural Importance	Tourism preserves identity and provides livelihood	Cultural tourism supports heritage preservation

Radio Promotion	Promotion is irregular and seasonal	Media partnerships are still limited
Awareness Creation	Radio effectively reaches rural audiences	Radio has strong potential for awareness
Development Benefits	Tourism supports crafts and local businesses	Tourism contributes to cultural sustainability
Major Challenges	High cost of media promotion and poor infrastructure	Funding limitations and weak media engagement
Suggested Strategies	Dedicated radio programmes and local language broadcasts	Stronger collaboration with radio stations

Source: Field Interview, 2026.

Linking the Interview Findings with Questionnaire Results

The findings from the interviews largely corroborate the results obtained from the questionnaire survey. While the quantitative data revealed that many respondents had limited awareness of cultural tourism sites through radio, the interview responses further explained that radio promotion of tourism in Abia State is irregular and lacks structured programming. As Magic FM Staff 1 observed, there is no sustained programme for cultural tourism promotion — coverage is event-driven and ad hoc.

Similarly, the questionnaire results showed that respondents believed radio has the potential to improve awareness of tourism sites (Tables 10–12, means 4.42–4.57), and this view was supported by both community leaders and ministry officials who emphasised that radio remains one of the most accessible communication channels for reaching grassroots audiences. Azumini 1 specifically noted that a single mention on radio during the Enyimba Festival drove a measurable spike in visitor numbers, illustrating the medium’s latent power.

The qualitative responses also highlighted institutional and infrastructural challenges — such as limited funding for tourism promotion and lack of formal media partnerships — which align directly with the questionnaire finding that lack of awareness (36.4%) and inadequate funding (32.2%) account for 68.6% of all cited barriers. These insights provide deeper explanations for the trends observed in the quantitative data and reinforce the argument that effective, structured radio communication could significantly enhance cultural tourism development in Abia State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section presents a systematic discussion of the major findings of the study, drawing from the quantitative survey data, qualitative interview responses, and the outcomes of the chi-square hypothesis tests. The discussion is organised around the five research questions and is situated within the context of existing literature and theoretical frameworks guiding this study.

Level of Awareness Generated by Radio Broadcasts (RQ1)

The study found that radio broadcasts have contributed minimally to public awareness of cultural tourism sites in Abia State (mean = 1.44, with 93.5% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing). This finding is consistent with the quantitative data from Table 8 and is reinforced by the rejection of Ho1 ($\chi^2 = 132.29$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$), which confirmed that radio exposure and awareness levels are significantly associated.

The implication of this finding is that the current state of radio broadcasting in Abia State has not fulfilled

its potential as an awareness-creation instrument for cultural tourism. This is consistent with the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003), which identifies media channels as central to knowledge creation in the early stages of diffusion. When the media channel is absent or weak, the awareness stage of diffusion is stalled, preventing potential tourists from progressing along the awareness-interest-desire-action continuum.

Comparatively, the interviews provided explanatory depth: Azumini 1 recalled that a single radio mention of Azumini Blue River during the Enyimba Festival resulted in a noticeable increase in visitor numbers. This anecdotal evidence powerfully illustrates what structured, consistent programming could achieve if institutionalised by radio broadcasters in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism.

Influence of Radio Messages on Public Perception and Attitudes (RQ2)

The study found that radio messages have not significantly shaped public perceptions or interest in cultural tourism sites, given the low frequency of such messages (mean = 1.44 for Q9). However, the chi-square test for Ho2 ($\chi^2 = 132.09$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$) established that radio communication is significantly associated with perception and attitude formation. This apparent paradox resolves itself when the directionality of the finding is considered: where exposure is low, negative or neutral perceptions dominate; where exposure is higher, positive perceptions follow.

This is consistent with the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974), which holds that media audiences actively seek information that is relevant to their needs. Respondents who encountered tourism content on radio reported heightened interest, while those with no exposure remained largely indifferent. The data suggest that the challenge is not receptivity — respondents are willing listeners — but supply. If cultural tourism content were made available consistently, attitude transformation toward these sites would likely follow.

Qualitative evidence from War Museum Staff 1 supported this finding, noting that radio features on the National War Museum led to increased inquiries and school visits. Ministry Staff 1 similarly observed that media attention accelerates cultural preservation consciousness. The attitude-behaviour gap between awareness and actual tourism behaviour remains an area for further research.

Contribution of Radio-Promoted Cultural Tourism to Sustainable Development (RQ3)

Despite the low current coverage, respondents expressed strong and consistent belief that radio-promoted cultural tourism can contribute to sustainable economic development in Abia State. Mean scores for the three items in this section ranged from 4.42 to 4.57 — the highest in the study. Specifically, 96.1% agreed or strongly agreed that cultural tourism can generate economic benefits such as jobs, income, and skills (Q10); 89.6% agreed it can attract tourists (Q11); and 95.6% agreed it can support cultural heritage preservation (Q12).

The rejection of Ho3 ($\chi^2 = 48.25$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.05$) confirms that there is a statistically significant relationship between radio messages on cultural tourism and sustainable development outcomes. The particularly high level of agreement among respondents with low radio exposure suggests that the developmental potential of cultural tourism is intuitively understood, even in the absence of formal media promotion. This consensus provides a strong social mandate for increased investment in radio-based cultural tourism communication.

These findings resonate with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 8 — Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 11 — Sustainable Cities and Communities), as cultural tourism, when effectively communicated, can serve as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth. Arochukwu Leader 2 captured this succinctly, noting that tourist visits to the Long Juju Cave support the livelihoods of guides, artisans, and

food vendors, directly contributing to community-level economic sustainability.

Challenges Hindering Effective Radio Promotion of Cultural Tourism (RQ4)

The study identified four principal challenges: lack of awareness of cultural tourism sites (36.4%), inadequate funding (32.2%), lack of government support (21.8%), and low community participation (9.6%). Together, the top two challenges account for 68.6% of all cited barriers, pointing to knowledge deficits and resource constraints as the most pressing impediments to effective radio promotion.

These findings are corroborated by the qualitative data. Arochukwu Leader 1 noted that the cost of radio airtime is prohibitive for community-level tourism advocacy, while Ministry Staff 2 acknowledged that budgetary constraints prevent the Ministry from sustaining formal media campaigns. Magic FM Staff 1 confirmed that no standing arrangement exists between radio stations and tourism authorities, and Magic FM Staff 2 emphasised the need for a formalised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to institutionalise cultural tourism broadcasting.

The challenge of limited media literacy about cultural tourism sites was also significant. Akwete 2 observed that some radio presenters lack sufficient knowledge of the history and significance of Akwete weaving to discuss it credibly on air. This points to the need for capacity-building programmes targeting media professionals, ensuring that broadcasters are equipped to produce accurate and compelling cultural tourism content.

General Observations and Theoretical Implications

Overall, the findings of this study present a clear and consistent picture: radio in Abia State has the reach, the audience, and the theoretical capacity to transform cultural tourism communication, but has not been deployed to do so in any structured or sustained manner. The significant chi-square results across all three hypotheses affirm that the relationships between radio broadcasting and awareness, perception, and sustainable development are not coincidental — they are systematic and statistically verifiable.

The Agenda-Setting and Diffusion of Innovations frameworks collectively explain the gap between radio's potential and its current performance in this domain. The media's failure to consistently place cultural tourism sites on the public agenda has resulted in a corresponding failure of public awareness, interest, and visitation. Conversely, the study's evidence suggests that where radio does engage with cultural tourism content, measurable shifts in awareness and behaviour follow.

The study therefore recommends a multi-stakeholder approach: the Ministry of Culture and Tourism should formalise media partnerships with radio stations, allocate dedicated budgets for cultural tourism broadcasts, and invest in training programmes for media practitioners. Radio stations should develop dedicated cultural tourism magazine programmes, broadcast in both English and Igbo to maximise reach. Community leaders and tourism site managers should serve as content collaborators, ensuring authenticity and cultural accuracy in all broadcasts. Collectively, these actions would leverage the full power of radio to drive sustainable cultural tourism development in Abia State.

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Summary of Findings

This study examined communicating cultural tourism through radio for sustainable development in Abia State, with particular reference to Akwete weaving cloth, National War Museum, Azumini Blue River, and Arochukwu Long Juju Cave.

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 385 were returned and found usable. Data were analyzed using frequency tables, percentages, mean statistics, and Chi-square tests, while qualitative

data were obtained through purposive interviews with eight community leaders and two officials from the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy.

The major findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Audience Awareness of Cultural Tourism

The findings show that radio broadcasts have not significantly increased awareness of cultural tourism sites among residents. This is evident from the low mean score of 1.54, indicating that most respondents disagreed that radio programmes had increased their awareness.

2. Influence of Radio Messages on Public Perception

The study also found that radio messages currently have limited influence on public perception and interest in cultural tourism due to the low frequency of tourism-related programmes.

However, interview responses suggest that when tourism programmes are aired, they can stimulate public interest and visitation.

3. Contribution of Radio Tourism Messages to Sustainable Development

Despite the low level of radio promotion, respondents strongly believe that radio communication has the potential to contribute significantly to sustainable development. High mean values above 4.40 show that respondents believe radio promotion of tourism can: attract tourists, generate employment opportunities, improve income for local communities and support the preservation of cultural heritage.

4. Challenges Facing Radio Promotion of Cultural Tourism

The study identified several challenges affecting effective radio promotion of tourism in Abia State. The most prominent challenges include:

- Lack of awareness of tourism sites
- Inadequate funding
- Lack of government support
- Low community participation.

These challenges limit the effectiveness of radio communication in promoting tourism.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that radio remains a powerful medium for communicating cultural tourism, but its potential is not fully utilized in Abia State.

Although residents frequently listen to radio programmes, tourism-related content is limited and often seasonal, which reduces the level of awareness and public engagement with cultural tourism sites.

However, both the quantitative and qualitative findings show that radio communication has strong potential to promote tourism development, stimulate local economic activities, and preserve cultural heritage if used strategically.

The study therefore concludes that improving the frequency, creativity and inclusiveness of radio tourism programmes can significantly enhance sustainable development in Abia State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Increased Radio Tourism Programming

Radio stations in Abia State should increase the frequency of programmes that promote cultural tourism sites. And the use of Local Language Broadcasting which will ensure tourism promotion incorporates Igbo language programming to ensure better communication with grassroots communities.

2. Strategic Partnership with Tourism Communities

Government agencies and radio stations should collaborate with community leaders and tourism stakeholders to produce authentic tourism content to ensure positive perception of Abia State residents

3. Improved Funding for Tourism Promotion

The Abia State Government should allocate adequate funding for tourism promotion through mass media for sustainability

4. Development of Documentary and Interactive Programmes on challenges

Radio stations should produce documentaries, interviews, and interactive talk shows that highlight the cultural and historical significance of tourism sites, focusing on challenges and solutions

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