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#### Article

**Citation** (please note it is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work)

**Adebayo, AD ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6920-025X> and Butcher, J ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1861-701X> (2021) Constraints and drivers of community participation and empowerment in tourism planning and development in Nigeria. *Tourism Review International*.**

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## CONSTRAINTS AND DRIVERS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT IN TOURISM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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It has been argued in the contemporary academic discourse on tourism planning that community participation in the planning process creates a mechanism to mitigate negative impacts and to satisfy at least some of the needs of the community. In this context, this article analyzes the underlying factors that constrain community participation and empowerment in decision-making in South West Nigeria. It also seeks to identify factors that can drive such processes in tourism development. The research adopts a qualitative approach to gather data from stakeholders in the Nigerian tourism sector. Findings from the research show that three factors constrained local community participation and empowerment. These factors are mainly intangible and relate to the political culture in Nigeria. They include community awareness and education, issues of trust, transparency, and accountability, hence making the community members feel a sense of alienation from the process. It is thus recommended that the Local Government Tourism Committees should be given the capacity to function in order to aid participation and empowerment at the local community level.

**Key words:** Community participation; Empowerment; Tourism planning;  
Decision-making development; Nigeria

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### Introduction

Research in tourism planning has highlighted the need to involve the local community in the planning process (Saufi et al., 2014; Scheyvens, 1999; Tosun, 1999, 2000; Xu et al., 2019). Further, Mowforth and Munt (2016) indicated that,

often, it is the local people who are being left out of decision-making relating to tourism development planning, hence the term local or community participation. Local participation involves direct participation of community members in tourism decision-making, and as a result benefit from such interactions.

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By developing a process that allows the local community to participate in every aspect of tourism planning is a step towards creating a mechanism to mitigate negative impacts, and to develop an approach to tourism that can satisfy at least some of the needs of the community (Cheng et al., 2019; Reid et al., 2000). Community participation and empowerment should be a consideration in tourism planning and development as they play important roles in residents' attitudes (Josiam & Spears, 2018). Empowerment rejects the unbalanced top-down decision-making and recommends the bottom-up approach where the poor are active participants in development planning (Calvès, 2009; Holden & Novelli, 2011).

In recent times, some state governments in South West Nigeria have prioritized tourism development as an avenue to enhance their economy. Hence, such governments allocate the necessary budgets to tourism development and coordinate the processes. However, tourism policy and planning activities now necessitate collaborations with other stakeholders, including the private sector and community groups (Cooper, 2016). Further, the long-term success of tourism development largely depends on the host community's support (Mair, 2015). Excluding community members from development processes may lead to resentment and negative impacts in local communities and the resources that they host (Marzuki & Hay, 2013; Stone & Nyaupane, 2020). This has been the case in some communities in some states in South West Nigeria, where residents have threatened to stop tourism development projects in their communities because they feel excluded from such processes.

Trust is the underlying factor for the functioning of both formal and less formal institutions and channels, their decision-making processes, political, social, and community relations (Edwards & Nunkoo, 2015; Nunkoo, 2017). Tourism institutional structures should involve the local communities in such arrangements to enhance trust. When communities participate in policy development, and in designing development interventions, it can enhance trust between those who decide, those who implement the decisions, and the population at large (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2014). Active trust is necessary for public

participation processes, policy, planning and in community engagement since it enhances collaboration in such processes (Edwards & Nunkoo, 2015). Further, good governance supports transparency and accountability to the people (Odo, 2015; Ogundiya, 2010), these may facilitate active local community participation in tourism planning (Garrod, 2003), thereby reducing possible suspicions about the motives of planning authorities or other stakeholders (Bello et al., 2016).

In developing countries, the governments play prominent roles in tourism development and management (Nyaupane et al., 2006). In Nigeria, decision-making on tourism development and policy formulation is addressed by the government; however, tourism development mostly occurs at the local community level (Esu, 2013, 2015; Mustapha, 2001), and little is known about the extent to which tourism governance involves community groups in the policy formulation process or constraints to such participation.

Most of the previous research has focused on constraints to community participation (Bello et al., 2017; Garrod, 2003; Tosun, 2000, 2005; Tosun & Timothy, 2001); however, the concept of empowerment of community in tourism development, especially in Third World countries, has rarely been explored, as well as the factors that can promote such empowerment.

Recent studies on community participation have focused on other contexts—for example, Kastoria, Greece (Dragouni & Fouseki, 2018), Lombok, Indonesia (Saufi et al., 2014), and two communities Nanshan and Tangfeng in Hainan, China (Xu et al., 2019). Research into the case of tourism development planning in Nigeria—an emerging tourist destination in West Africa—can add to our understanding of community participation and empowerment.

This article examines community participation in the tourism sector in South West Nigeria. It explores the constraining factors to community participation and empowerment in Nigeria and identifies factors that can drive community participation and empowerment. This article responds to the need for further research that analyzes issues in community participation in the developing world (Jenkins, 2015; Saufi et al., 2014), and strategies to adopt in such processes in tourism development.

### Community Participation in Tourism Development Planning

Participatory approaches function to involve the local people, who are often marginalized, to find out about their local context and life (Chambers, 2008). Chambers (1994) advocated participation, which developed and became popular through the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in the 1990s. It was first used to investigate at the village level in Kenya and India in 1988; however, there was an explosion of PRA innovation and its applications in Nepal and other parts of the world by the 1990s. Indeed, the 1990s were the decade of participatory planning and development (Mowforth & Munt, 2016). Since then there has been an increase in research on participatory planning approaches. This approach recognizes local stakeholders as essential partners in tourism development. For example, Xu et al.'s (2019) longitudinal research that explored the evolution of community participation in Hainan, China. Likewise, Marzuki and Hay's (2013) research in Langkawi Islands, Malaysia, and also Tosun's (2006) research in Urgup, Turkey.

The participatory planning approach places emphasis on involving the local community in tourism development through participation in decision-making and benefit sharing. According to Willis (2011), the development that takes place in the grassroots and that involves local people is frequently called *participatory*. This approach advocates that there is a need for a higher level of control by the community over their own destiny, as opposed to control coming from outside the community (Butcher, 2007; Mair & Reid, 2007; Timothy & Tosun, 2003). Community participation also manifest when communities have control over local tourism resources (Saufi et al., 2014). Such control can manifest through direct and active involvement in the decision-making process. By following this approach, local people may have the opportunity to participate in planning any development project in their community. The participatory planning approach acknowledges that diverse stakeholder groups including public, private, the host community and business representatives are interdependent actors that should work together to resolve strategic tourism issues in a complex

tourism domain (Pastras & Bramwell, 2013; Timothy & Tosun, 2003).

Arnstein's (1969) work classified community participation into three categories: nonparticipation, tokenism, and citizen control. These were further categorized into eight rungs. From Arnstein's typology of participation, local community empowerment can manifest at the topmost rung through citizen control where local community members have the opportunity to be actively involved in the decision-making process. Delegated power also allows for the active participation of community members. At the level of partnership, decision-making power is shared between the citizens and planning authorities. At the lower end is nonparticipation, often used as a substitution for real participation, as well as a degree of citizen tokenism where citizens can say their views, but often lack the power to ensure they are used in decision-making. This is still prevalent in developing countries, since participation is merely used to comply with international standards (Timothy, 2007; Timothy & Tosun, 2003; Tosun, 2000).

A seminal work by Murphy (1985) popularized community participation in tourism research, where he emphasized the potential roles of residents in decision-making. In some developing countries, community participation is often limited to low participation in decision-making and hence little benefits accrue to them.

In the past, various forms of planning approaches have been discussed in the literature to support community involvement. For example, participatory planning (Bello et al., 2016; Mair & Reid, 2007; Timothy, 1999; Tosun, 2000, 2006), which advocates a bottom-up approach (Dela Santa, 2015; Garrod, 2003; Nyaupane & Timothy, 2010), and community-based approaches to planning (Jamal & Stronza, 2009; Mair & Reid, 2007; Novelli, 2015; Okazaki, 2008), and, finally, collaborative tourism planning (Bramwell, 2004; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Healy et al., 2012; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002).

The recognition of participatory approaches to planning is also linked to getting local knowledge and perspective in tourism development. Such knowledge signifies the power that the local community has, which may not be shared by other stakeholders in tourism development. It is believed that

community involvement is necessary because they have the local knowledge needed to support tourism development in any given destination (Bramwell, 2004; Garrod, 2003; Sebele, 2010; Sutawa, 2012; Tosun & Jenkins, 1998). Through collaborative processes, valuable information about local people's practical awareness and local knowledge could be drawn from, which will align tourism development with local community priorities and aspirations (Bello et al., 2017; Bramwell, 2004; Sutawa, 2012).

It is unlikely that tourism development without a considerable involvement of the local government and community members will be successful, since tourism planning needs local support (Ogonna & Igbojekwe, 2013; Timothy, 1999) due to the local knowledge they possess (Timothy, 1999). Also, they are more likely to know what will work and what will not in local conditions (Timothy & Tosun, 2003). Local knowledge is essential to economic development because it gives certain advantages to indigenous people in projects that require specialized knowledge (Berkes, 2012; Sebele, 2010). This is also reflected in a wider recognition of the importance of local knowledge in development generally.

Research in tourism planning has highlighted the need to involve the local community in the planning process (Josiam & Spears, 2018; Murphy, 1985; Scheyvens, 1999; Tosun, 1999, 2000). Often, it is the local people who are often being left out of decision-making relating to tourism planning (Mowforth & Munt, 2016). Community participation in tourism planning can support decision-making and offer benefits to tourism development (Marzuki & Hay, 2013; Timothy, 1999).

For example, community participation enables local community members to have a voice and profit from tourism development. Some research has highlighted that empowerment emphasizes active participation. Community-based tourism (CBT) has been used to empower local community members in tourism planning and development. Further, it offers enormous opportunities for marginalized communities to be able to participate in tourism development (Bramwell, 2010; Halid & Abdul, 2018; Spenceley & Meyer, 2012), generates income for the local community, preserves local culture, provides educational opportunities, and reduces the negative impact that characterizes tourism development (Hamzah & Khalifah, 2009; Xu

et al., 2019). CBT can help to avoid the economic and psychological anxiety that local communities often feel over tourism development (Reid, 2003). For Novelli (2015), CBT departs from mere "community involvement" to more profound claims of local "community engagement." Such engagement allows the community to be empowered and benefit from alternative livelihoods, economic gains, and participation in decision-making.

As promising as community participation may appear, however, past studies have highlighted that the process is often confronted with particular challenges. Timothy (1999) identified that in trying to involve community members in the tourism planning process in developing countries, difficulties exist since government officials, private groups, or community members have little experience in the tourism industry. Tosun (2005) admitted that it is not an easy task due to the complexities in developing nations such as political instability, lack of transparency, lack of data and information on developmental issues, and other undemocratic circumstances that make it difficult to highlight tourism and local participation concurrently. Authors have also commented on other obstacles that relate to political powers being centralized (Bello et al., 2017; Cole, 2006; Timothy, 1998; Tosun & Timothy, 2001). Previous empirical research in an Indonesian study demonstrated that education and training for tourism operators, state tourism agencies, and poor coordination among government agencies were hindrances to local community participation (Saufi et al., 2014).

As noted by Mowforth and Munt (2016), although it is essential that tourism development ideas or control come from the community, equally important is the fact that local communities can benefit from or need the assistance of national government to get the resources to coordinate and establish their ideas. Local communities may lack the resources, skills, finances, and educational resources required and they often depend on the central government for assistance (Bello et al., 2016; Mowforth & Munt, 2016; Reid, 2003; Sofield, 2003). In developing countries, public sector and professional organizations need to support and work with the local people to allow them to interact with the other stakeholders on a more equitable basis to negotiate on issues that affect their lives (Akama & Kieti, 2007).



Some studies have discussed the strategies for improving participation and empowerment in communities, such as providing information and creating awareness about tourism to local community members (Dieke, 2000; Murphy & Murphy, 2004; Timothy & Tosun, 2003; Xu et al., 2019). This is to better qualify them to make knowledgeable decisions about tourism in their communities (Mair, 2015; Timothy, 1999). This is because knowledge about tourism is a necessary precursor for local people to participate in the decision process in tourism planning and management (Cole, 2006). In this way, they can be seen as equal partners by other stakeholders (Reid, 2003).

Community participation has been established to contribute positively to tourism development. However, for Cooke and Kothari (2004), power can influence such processes negatively. This is because community participation may not be able to challenge existing top-down approaches in development processes. Cooke and Kothari (2004), pointed out that even when local communities formally participate, they may not feel empowered in such processes. Participation could sometimes be tokenistic (Mak et al., 2017; Mosse, 2001; Tosun, 1999), while empowerment happens when the community feels that they are active in tourism development projects (Cole, 2006; Scheyvens, 2002).

Empowering local community groups to participate actively in policy formulation and implementation is vital to contributing positively towards tourism development, especially given the history of governmental control in policy formulation in developing countries (Inskeep, 1991; Tosun & Timothy, 2001), and given that it is the government that coordinates the other stakeholders in such processes (Morrison, 2019). Having relevant legal frameworks that empower local communities is crucial to any participatory tourism development approach (Sofield, 2003; Tosun, 2005), which can give them both the right and the means to participate (Okazaki, 2008; Timothy, 2007).

Considering the need for further research raised by Jenkins (2015) and Saufi et al. (2014), and the dearth of evidence available in the Nigeria context, empirical research is needed. This is to gain a deeper understanding of constraints to local community participation and empowerment and factors that can drive such processes in future tourism development.

Research aimed at understanding community participation in tourism planning and development can benefit from qualitative methodological approach to obtain in-depth data from participants' experiences. This is discussed in the next section.

### Research Methodology

Given the focus of this research to explore the constraints of community participation and empowerment in tourism governance in South West Nigeria, a qualitative approach was used. This study was exploratory in nature, in order to get a good understanding of the research objective. Qualitative research provides flexibility in exploring the phenomena under research (Wilson, 2014). The South West region consists of six states including Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, and Ondo. Four of these states (Ogun, Osun, Ekiti, and Ondo) were selected for this research. This is because the tourism projects and attractions in those states are located in rural communities.

The research combined the analysis of policy document [Nigerian Tourism Development Master Plan (NTDMP)] and 23 semistructured interviews from stakeholders in the Nigerian tourism sector, conducted between August and October 2017. In exploring community participation, qualitative semistructured interviews enabled the researchers to examine stakeholders' experiences, and the realities, in tourism development planning.

The stakeholders interviewed comprised of local community members, academics, nongovernmental organization, public and private sector agencies. These stakeholder groups are central to tourism development in Nigeria. The purpose of targeting the different groups of stakeholders was to understand their perspectives regarding community participation in tourism development. People who live in the tourist destination may have different opinions on tourism and community empowerment from the other stakeholder groups who live outside of the locality.

The interviewees were selected through purposive and snowballing sampling (Myers, 2013), based on their position or roles and the knowledge or experience that they have about tourism development in Nigeria (see Table 1). The researchers started the data gathering process with purposive

Table 1  
Stakeholders in the Nigerian Tourism Sector Interviewed

Stakeholders	Sample
<b>Government/public sector</b>	
Federal Ministry of Information and Culture	1
State Ministries of Culture and Tourism	5
Nigerian Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR)	3
Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC)	1
<b>Private sector</b>	
Hotel manager	1
Event manager	1
Tour operator	1
<b>Academics</b>	
Higher Education Institutions	5
<b>Civil society organizations</b>	
Local NGO	1
Community representatives	4

sampling and then built on this by asking the stakeholders to recommend other key informants within their network, thereby adopting the snowball approach. For the community interviews, the researchers identified areas with potential for tourism development and approached the communities directly because of their relevance to the research. The interviews allowed the interviewer to engage with key stakeholders’ views, and they provided a nuanced understanding of the issues explored. Interviews can lead to generating innovative policy ideas (Majchrzak & Markus, 2014). The interviews lasted between 25 min and 2 hr.

The face-to-face interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. This data corpus was used for analysis in addition to the fieldwork notes and policy document (NTDMP). Both the primary and secondary dataset were analyzed using the qualitative research data analysis as suggested by Saldana (2016). The four-step process is organizing the data for easy coding, sorting, synthesizing, and theorizing the data (Saldana, 2016). This process allowed for full exposure of all stages of coding and categorization of the interview data to obtain the final themes for the findings of this research. Data analysis focused on building up broad themes that relate to the research objectives to explore constraining factors to community participation and empowerment in Nigeria as well the factors that can drive such processes. Direct quotes from the interview transcripts were used to support the discussion, and participants were referred to anonymously throughout the analysis process. After that, the interpretation of the data was done and supported with existing literature.

Research Findings

The findings present two main emergent themes and five subthemes, which relate to two broad categories that limit and drive community participation and empowerment, as depicted in Figure 1. The analysis presents the constraints, as stakeholders currently view them, as well as the way forward to

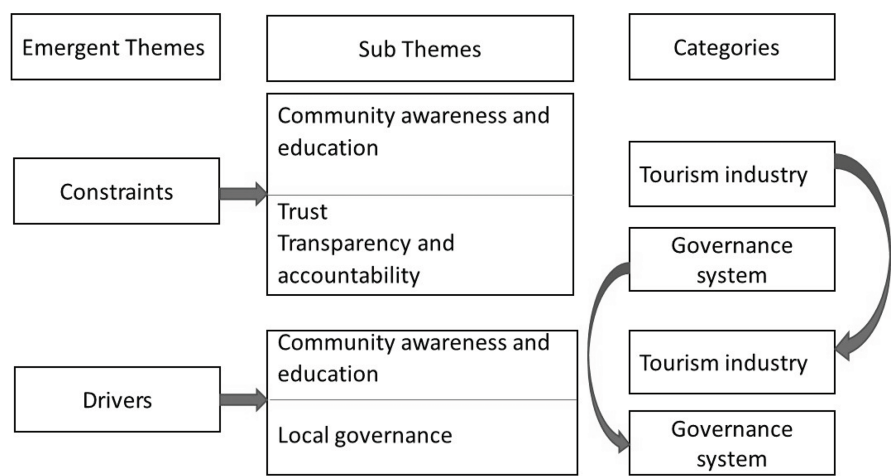


Figure 1. Emergent themes on constraints/drivers of community participation and empowerment in tourism development in Nigeria.

community participation and empowerment. The constraints are lack of community awareness and education, issues of trust, transparency, and accountability. These issues are mainly intangible, and they relate to the political culture in Nigeria. Political culture refers to ways in which people perceive, think, and feel about politics, their attitudes toward government, and the social relations shared by the majority of the population (Gberevbie & Lafenwa, 2007). Stakeholders further identified creating awareness and education as well as strengthening the local governance system as factors that could drive community participation and empowerment.

#### *Factors That Constrain Community Participation and Empowerment*

*Lack of Education and Awareness.* For many of the participants interviewed, a central underlying influence or obstacle to community participation and empowerment is ignorance, the lack of awareness and education on the part of the local community members regarding tourism, the manner of operations of the industry, and the benefits of tourism development. The knowledge of the community members in tourism is capable of affecting their participation (Bello et al., 2017; van der Duim et al., 2006).

The responses from the participants suggest that the local community cannot participate in the tourism development and decision-making process because of ignorance, lack of education, and awareness. This is because community members see most of their cultural and natural resources developed into tourist attractions as sacred or inherited from “their forefathers.” As a result, they attach a lot of importance to the resources and are usually concerned about maintaining the legacy of such heritage. Exemplary quotes from the interviewees are cited below:

Awareness and education are barriers because most of them are not educated, most of them believe that some of those things are from their forefathers and you should not come near them. (S2, State)

The participation is poor because there is no enlightenment, no proper education about tourism at the local community as a whole. (P3, Private)

In agreement with the other stakeholders, evidence from the community representatives’ perspectives disclosed that generally there is a lack of knowledge about tourism within communities. An exception is the elites or the educated members of the community. Typical views are expressed in the following statements from the community representatives:

Not everyone [has knowledge]. But the elites know, I mean the educated ones. (C2, Community)

They don’t even know when you talk to them about tourism . . . because the publicity is not enough . . . the only thing they understand in tourism is just where people come here and go up the hills and come back. (C5, Community)

These extracts from the communities’ perspective suggest that the education and awareness about tourism development is low, and thus affects participation. This affirms a view commonly argued in the literature (Holden et al., 2011; Reid et al., 2004; Tosun, 2006).

Further, human capital constraints in the industry also affect creating awareness in the local community. When personnel who work in tourism are not trained, they find it challenging to direct joint decision-making (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002). Instead of scholars criticizing community participation for the high operation costs involved, what is lacking is instead experience or education among planners on how to engage local communities in tourism development (Lindström & Larson, 2016).

Some federal government stakeholders further stated that it is not only the local people who are not knowledgeable in tourism, but some employees in tourism also lack important knowledge. The latter makes it difficult for them to pass the knowledge on to the local community members who are often illiterate, or to lead participatory decision-making process that involve the local community. The following quotes illustrate such views:

Inadequate education, because, it has to do with knowledge, the person coming to talk about tourism to the community doesn’t even know what tourism is about, so how do you want to teach somebody what you don’t know . . . , how will you teach the community what to do, when you don’t even know yourself. . . . Because in most of the



tourism attractions in Nigeria, or some of them, the host community are always illiterate. So, you not knowing what to say, how do you explain to the person in their own language. (F1, Federal)

Just like the popular saying that the blind cannot lead a blind man. The people who do not have the information on tourism, who do not know what tourism entails, some of them do not even know how to define tourism. They are the ones heading tourism . . . , the man or the person at the top who is trying to do the business does not even understand the business. (S3, State)

It is pertinent to note that though the community members do not have the knowledge of tourism (expert knowledge) as expressed by participants, they however have knowledge of their local environment (local knowledge) that can assist tourism development. Such local knowledge is based on their past/history and current practices that can support tourism development. For example, key information about the attraction and the traditions of the community can only be gotten from the locals.

The community is being called upon by the government when the development of the tourism resource is confronted with a problem, either caused by the community or other issues relating to tradition, and the government feels they are the only people who can help resolve it:

If the resort is facing any problem, they contact us, or any indigenous decision that has to do with traditional they contact the community. (C2, Community)

Further, the local people are more knowledgeable about their resources because they know their history well:

the people they brought from the state [government] are people who don't even know anything about the community. They will take my booklet for example and read it, they believe they know everything about the place, and they can't explain everything. (C5, Community)

As such information provided to tourists in the form of interpretation of the attraction can be gotten from the community members.

Further, community members can contribute to ensuring the safety and security of tourists:

The security of tourists who visit such communities is still in their hands. (S3, State)

Building on these positives would be a good basis to cultivate greater local community empowerment.

*Lack of Trust.* A further important factor is that of trust. This emerged from the opinions of some participants across all stakeholder groups, who saw lack of trust as a barrier to community participation and empowerment in tourism governance. For the government institutions to engage with community members and empower them, the government need to build a relationship with the communities. As authors rightly put it, citizens trust government institutions that perform well, and the opposite happens when they do not (Nunkoo et al., 2012). Also, because the intentions of the government for developing tourism are not often stated explicitly (Nyaupane & Timothy, 2010), but rather are hidden from the local community members, this leads to distrust in the government. Local community members' experiences and thoughts are shaped by the actions or inactions of the governmental agencies in tourism development, which can lead to trust or distrust in those institutions.

Most of the participants were of the view that the community members do not trust the government because what usually happens is that the government will go to community leaders (Kings and Chiefs) to let them know they have found a significant tourism resource that they want to develop. The government will then make promises to the community. Such an instance is best quoted in these statements:

Then another set came again [government representative], he too said he wants to do these that he wants to do that, nothing has happened since they left. Then another group took it over again, they promised they want to do park, chalets and they want to make the place a tourist attraction that people will be visiting, and they will do cable cars, they said they have planned it, they showed us; nothing happened. (C1, Community)

They believe that the government is taking over that thing from them, and they will not benefit from it again, so they will want to resist. Until you promise them that as we are coming here, we want to develop this place for you, 40% of

their people will be employed, and the others will be employed by the government that is the only time that they will consider you. Initially, they would, most times they will resist you. (S2, State)

As the latter part of the extract from participant S2 revealed, the communities sometimes do not trust the government, and they have already formed the opinion or attitude that the government will not do anything for them. The participant used the word “resist,” which is often the case when the communities do not trust the government. Consequently, they may not want to release their tourism resources to them to develop because of their past experiences. The participant stated, however, that there may be exceptions where the community has signed legal agreements with the government.

Yet, signing formal agreements is no guarantee of government action, as one community representative explains:

When the MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] was about to be signed, it was signed with the Idanre community as the primary owner of the place, and the MOU stipulated that we should be the primary beneficiary of the place, then the state and the federal government. But meanwhile, it has not been materialised the way we have planned it, but we only have it on paper and people are getting very wary about that kind of agreement and people were telling me why did we sign that type of thing. (C5, Community)

This community above signed an agreement with the government for their heritage to be developed as a tourist attraction. At the time their representatives signed the deal, the condition was that they would be the primary beneficiary of the tourism development. However, the opposite is being experienced currently, and that has led the community members to question their representatives on why they signed an agreement that has not yielded the expected impact. So the community has not seen the benefit of tourism development to them as the extract revealed; some are unhappy about the fact that the agreement has not yielded the expected results and trust has been betrayed.

The reason for such disappointments experienced by the communities from the government is illustrated by the participant:

A lot of people see themselves as opportunists. They say okay I am in a position now, it is time for me to take care of myself and my family. So, it becomes difficult even for the local people to trust them . . . because the last person they trusted have betrayed them, so they say it is government, they can do what they like at any time. (F3, Federal)

This extract suggests that those in power are acting in their own self-interest, not the broader interest of those they represent. Therefore, individual benefit takes precedence over the collective interest of the community, leading to a growing distrust of the community members towards the government.

These research findings revealed there are issues of trust in tourism development planning. The community members lack confidence that tourism development through the government can meet their needs. With trust in community participation and the decision-making process, it can help reduce the tensions between local communities and government institutions in tourism governance.

*Lack of Transparency and Accountability.* Another factor that stakeholders believe is a constraint to community participation and empowerment is the lack of transparency and accountability in the tourism governance system. These issues are central to the debate of governance; they are considered here in the context of their role as obstacles to community participation. Many of the participants in the categories of community, academics, and private stakeholders were of the opinion that the government is neither as transparent nor as accountable to the local communities as they should be. Corruption and unaccountable governance characterize African countries at all levels, and these are central to the way things work (Nelson, 2012). Scholars have argued that in a democratic government there should be transparency and accountability to the people, and this supports the principle of good governance (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Odo, 2015; Ogundiya, 2010). Besides, to earn the trust of the community members, there must be accountability (Sutawa, 2012).

As discussed earlier, it is difficult for a host community to participate in the process of tourism development because of the information and knowledge gaps that exist between the central authorities

and local communities (Cole, 2006; Sofield, 2003; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008; Tosun, 2000). A crucial point emphasized was the issue of transparency—an orientation towards openness, and a sharing of knowledge and information in the governance process. For instance, local community representatives noted that they did not know anything about the tourism development going on in their community, which makes it difficult for them to participate:

The fact that they are hiding it from people, including the statistics, shows that it is not transparent. So, they hide everything. You ask them sometimes, they don't tell you, they say it is classified, something you have to ask from the government including how many people have visited the place. They don't want you to know, how much are they collecting for a year, as if you want to collect it, they won't tell you. So, it's not transparent really, we don't know how much they are making, we don't know how many people are visiting the place. Statistically we are empty. (C5, Community)

As shown in the quote, the government officials at the local community level managing the attractions believe that information such as the amount of money made from tourism development and the number of tourists visiting the attractions should be kept confidential. The participant regarded information as being "classified." The quote further revealed that the community deal with civil servants who are not helpful; in terms of revealing information, the latter advised the community "to ask from the government." Since they are representatives of the government, they should be able to provide the information. It then means that the community do not have access to such information because of the communication gap that exists between the government and the ordinary citizens.

Another participant concurs on the issue of lack of transparency, and adds more to this as it relates to his local community:

There is no transparency, when they said they want to give the community some money from the proceeds they get from the waterfall, they will just send the money. . . . I learnt that they now agreed to give 12% of the proceeds to the community. If they are transparent, they are supposed to put the proceeds on the table. This is the amount collected, this is the labour cost . . . this is the remaining proceed to be shared; then we share it. Okay!

You are going to get 50%; someone who is to take 10%, 12% we work out what the amount will be, then we share it. . . . But for this, they are not transparent. They just send it to the bank and say this is the amount. (C1, Community)

This quote comes from a community that gets a percentage of the money derived from tourism development. Yet, they are not sure the government is giving them enough, since they do not know how much the government is making in total or the amount that makes up the 12% given to them. As the extract indicates, the community representative believe that the government should be open to them, by telling them the amount made and then they can calculate together the proportion that should rightly come to the community.

However, another community representative referring to a different community's case expressed that the government is transparent to them:

they are doing open policy there, they are not hiding anything from us. (C3, Community)

Academics interviewed are in agreement with some of the community representatives' views, as they noted the lack of transparency in tourism planning and development. The participants discussed how the government conceals specific information from the community members so that they do not know what the real situation is as regards tourism planning and development projects in their communities:

Government being who they are, there are some sensitive issues that they might not really want to reveal. (A2, Academic)

When you have decisions solely made by those in the helm of affairs and then it's not that transparent enough you understand they wouldn't want to bring the community dwellers into such. (A4, Academic)

Closely linked to transparency is the issue of accountability, which is discussed here. From the private sector's perspective, the public sector pursues national macroeconomic goals of earning foreign exchange through tourism at the expense of the local people, culture, and resources, which demands that the community needs to speak for

itself (Reid, 2003). One participant, referring to a case in Erin-Ijesha as an example of communities speaking for themselves:

Erin-Ijesa, at the beginning I think when the state government intended to develop Erin-Ijesa, a lot of propaganda was going on and the community were hoping. For a particular period of time, the propaganda was not coming forth, so the community put it on them that this is our community, we own this environment, that we will decide what we want to do with these particular tourism resources. So, they end up chasing the government staff on the site . . . there is no accountability for it, there is no proper documentation. (P1, Private)

As the extract shows, the state government made promises to the local community on tourism development in order to influence them to allow the government to develop tourism. They did not fulfill them, and they were not also accountable to the community in the management processes. As a result, the community members got provoked into forcefully taking over the management of the place by chasing away the government staff at the attraction site.

This community was bold to confront the state government to take over control of managing the attraction themselves until a resolution was reached. This resulted in the government promising to give them 12% of the economic benefit from tourism development in their community. As expressed by participant C1 earlier, even though the community does not regard this to be enough, it is at least a better experience than what the case was before and compared to what is happening in some other communities referred to by the participants.

The case resonates with a statement made by another participant that:

the destiny of a man is in the hands of a man and until a man discovers that his destiny is in his hand, every community member should take their destinies in their hands. They [local communities] can do that by telling the people [government] that this thing belongs to me and I will participate in it. (P3, Private)

These instances express a strong neopopulist sentiment to be part of the processes that impact the community.

When tourism planning is not governed by transparency and accountability, it may result in

resentment from community members, as evident in participant C1's community. In a similar incident where tourism resulted in conflict in Maasai Mara Kenya, the local people threatened to kill the animals used for tourism unless officials resolved the issues by agreeing to include the local community in tourism planning and enterprise, so that the community could realize more benefits and encourage their participation in the development (Reid, 2003). Unlike the case of the local Maasai in Kenya, the conflicts in participant C1's community were resolved to give them some percentage as a benefit. The resolution only addressed economic empowerment, as it did not include involving them in the decision-making process.

Conversely, the state government stakeholders argue that they do not have to account to the communities but should only be accountable to the government who they represent and who employs them. So accountability is seen as important between employer and employee, government and civil servants, but not between governmental structures and communities:

Accountable? We are only accountable to the government. However, we always consider them because it is top to bottom, we are accountable to the governor. (S2, State)

But in terms of accountability, the civil servant is accountable to the government that employs him/her. But mind you, civil servants should protect the image of the government as good before the community members. If not, such a civil servant wants the fall of the government. (S6, State)

Here the participants expressed surprise about the issue of downward accountability to the community because this is not common in tourism development given the culture of the way things are done in Nigeria. Remarkably, the extract from participant S6, who is a Deputy Director of one of the state Ministries of Culture and Tourism, expressed that the interest or identity of the government needs to be protected by them as civil servants. Indeed, Daloz (2005) highlighted that in Nigeria's politics civil servants' loyalty is seldom pledged to their administration.

Participant P2 disagreed with this practice and noted that the government regard themselves to be



the utmost and they don't believe they should render account to the communities because they have the power:

no, government is all in all, then people that run government also believe they are all in all too. So, they don't have anything to do with anybody because they have the powers, so there's no accountability anywhere to the locals. (P2, Private)

Peculiarly, some federal government participants expressed that the public sector, which they represent, ought to be accountable to communities but this is not so in practice and thus results in problems in tourism development:

They [the government] are supposed to be accountable to them [the community] but are they really accountable to them? I don't think so, because of course the state of things will not be bad as it is now if they are really accountable to them. So that is the issue, everybody in a position see himself as an opportunist in this country very little people are really there to serve the people. (F3, Federal)

Though Nigeria is a democratic country, there is a lack of transparency and accountability to the people at the local community level on tourism development. Commonly, as noticed from the cases of two communities, government officials avoid providing answers to the local community members' demand for accountability, which is a crucial characteristic of good governance. Odo (2015) recommends that citizens of Nigeria should be enlightened and empowered to demand report of accountability from their elected representatives.

#### *The Way Forward: Drivers to Community Participation and Empowerment*

Two key themes were further established as strategic options that could mitigate the barriers to local community participation and empowerment in tourism planning and development as determined by the stakeholders.

*Education and Creating Awareness.* Education and awareness creation were proposed as a remedy by stakeholders for improving the chances of local

community members' participation and empowerment. This simple and straightforward point is affirmed in the literature (Dieke, 2000; Murphy & Murphy, 2004). Cole (2006) noted that a significant precursor to participating in decision-making for tourism, or in planning and management, is knowledge of tourism and tourists. That is a first step to empowering local communities to make appropriate decisions about tourism development.

Typical views on this from the participants are expressed below:

So that's the first thing, take tourism to the grass-roots, that is how to improve the participation. When you take the tourism activities to the grass-roots, educate them, let them be aware of the significance of tourism with reference to the Nigerian economy, with reference to environmental impact with reference to regional and state development so when you educate them on all these things, I think local participation will surely improve. (F4, Federal)

educate them more and make them see reasons why they should be involved in their community. It's their own, you need their involvement and participation. (F1, Federal)

To ensure that community members are equipped with the knowledge they need to participate, programs should be organized and designed to increase the awareness of tourism among the community members on the development taking place around them. This is to ensure that they not only hear about tourism development in their community, but that they also have basic knowledge of the tourism industry to be able to participate in the development planning.

*Local Governance.* The Local Government Tourism Committees (LGTC) at the third level of governance in the tourism institutional arrangement in Nigeria have the responsibility "to cultivate and sustain public interest and support for tourism"; "promote community involvement"; "preserve and maintain historical monuments and museums in their areas" (NTDMP, 2006, pp. 171–172). Nevertheless, some participants comment implied that this only exists in theory and not in practice.

For instance, it is the local government who can coordinate participation efforts at their level:



Within [our community], for example, the local government should be the focal point where we can coordinate. . . . (C5, Community)

However, they do not have the capacity to lead such processes:

They have not empowered the local government properly the way they should empower them to take action at the grassroots so effectively nobody is effective. (A1, Academic)

Empowering the LGTC may facilitate dialogic communication that would lead to generating local knowledge from the community members for the benefit of tourism development. When citizens have control over policy, they can input their local knowledge through their active involvement (Banyan, 2007; Koutra, 2010). Such participation is essential to local community empowerment not only to share their local knowledge but also to promote transparency and accountability in such processes. Indeed, this may be able to address some of the issues that relates to governance.

Participants further stressed the need for the local governance system to be strengthened, to enable community participation to be possible. This is because tourism itself is a local phenomenon. Indeed, authors have commented on power structures (Jordan et al., 2013; Wan & Bramwell, 2015; Xu et al., 2019) and the importance of strengthening local governance in decision-making (Çetinel & Yolal, 2009; Xu et al., 2019). Further, the local governments are an important stakeholder in a destination (Bramwell & Lane, 2010). Tosun (2000) pointed out the relevance of having a governance institution at the local level to help tourism development. This is also given that local communities desire to govern itself without having to share power and institutions because they can trust their own people who are closer to them (Daloz, 2005).

The bottom-up approach was used by most participants to express their aspirations for greater community engagement in tourism development. Insights from the literature on tourism policy have noted the relevance of a bottom-up approach, in encouraging community participation and policy implementation (Ezeuduji, 2015; Rodríguez et al., 2014).

In particular, some of the participants suggested the community-based planning approach. In CBT most of the tourism activities are developed and operated by the local community members (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Views on this approach are illustrated below:

So, what would have enabled the issue would have been community-based tourism. Let the community take ownership of the development, in that way once they see it as their own they are bound to support it more. Community-based management would have also made provision for key economic roles to be taken by members of the community so, in that way, the economic leakage that would have occurred will be reduced. (A5, Academic)

Further, international bodies such as UNESCO have an interest in long-term planning and community involvement in managing heritage sites. Researchers have also pointed out that community involvement play a key role in tourism development (Nyaupane et al., 2006; Scheyvens, 1999, 2002; Timothy, 1999). One participant discussed a tourist attraction that is currently on UNESCO's World Heritage tentative list (see also Adebayo, 2017), which is being controlled by both the state government and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments a federal government parastatal. The heritage attraction was rejected from being a World Heritage Site because the governmental institutions that are in control of the attraction do not have a long-term plan that would involve the community in the management of the heritage site:

In fact, let me even say that UNESCO rejected Idanre Hills as a World Heritage because of lack of proper management setup. . . . for the management of the place, they should have this committee in place which UNESCO was very very unhappy about that there's no community-based management committee together with the state government. Because unless you have one that is going to transform the place, whether one government comes or the other comes that could not be removed. Because when you base it on which government comes, on their whims and caprices, you definitely cannot have a stable tourism project in place in a place like that. So, we need a permanent body that is going to stand there with the state government representative, community representative, the federal government representative, and outsider business people who will be able to invest

their money and so on. If we have a permanent committee like that, I think the place can be sustainable. (C5, Community)

This extract also highlights the need for community-based management, governed by a local level committee that is responsible for managing the tourist attraction. A relevant point to note is the considerable potential role of community participation in providing a degree of continuity and sustainability in policy and governance. This is irrespective of the government in power, and whether or not they support tourism development projects in the community. For tourism planning and development to be sustainable they must allow host community resident input, and improve their lives (Adebayo, 2017; Jordan et al., 2013; Mowforth & Munt, 2016).

### Discussion

The empirical findings reveal that the low level of education that characterize local communities and their lack of awareness of tourism constrained their empowerment and participation in tourism governance. This has been affirmed in other studies on community participation (see Bello et al., 2017; Cole, 2006; Tosun, 2000). Further, on awareness, another key finding relates to issues of human resources. The research findings showed that some of the employees in the tourism industry in Nigeria who should lead a participatory planning approach and educate the local community members on tourism do not have such knowledge themselves.

Additionally, certain principles of governance that have been discussed by authors (Eagles, 2009; Qian et al., 2016; Wan & Bramwell, 2015) were introduced as hindrances to community participation in practice: trust, transparency, and accountability. Tourism governance can benefit from trust (Nunkoo, 2017), transparency, and accountability as dimensions of good governance (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Odo, 2015; Ogundiya, 2010). This research has found that the variables above are not only important to governance but pertinent to viable community participation and empowerment in tourism planning and development.

As implied in the study findings, in most cases the government does not provide community members with sufficient information on tourism

development projects in their communities. Also, it appears that accountability operates in terms of employer/employee and government/civil servant. However, without accountability to the communities, this remains technocratic accountability rather than democratic accountability (e.g., accountability between policy-making machinery that excludes democratic aspirations).

Through community participation the issue of transparency and accountability in the tourism development process can be improved. When the tourism planning process is transparent, it reduces possible suspicions about the intentions of the planning authorities as well as other stakeholders (Bello et al., 2016). Also, specific plans about the management of attractions should be made available to the community members and the public to enhance accountability and transparency.

Community participation is characterized with local benefits and participation in decision-making (Saufi et al., 2014; Spenceley & Meyer, 2012). However, as this research findings suggest, most of the promises made by tourism planners to the communities in regard to benefits from tourism projects were not fulfilled. When community members do not benefit from tourism development it may lead to resentment (Marzuki & Hay, 2013; Stone & Nyaupane, 2019). In this study, the Erin-Ijesa case demonstrates this, as community members forcefully took over the management of the attraction site from the government.

The coordination effort of the state government is not seen to be as effective as that of the local government is perceived to be, as that is the level where tourism development occurs. The findings demonstrate that stakeholders noted that a bottom-up approach to tourism development could result in more positive outcomes and enhance community participation in such processes. The CBT approach may allow for more profound community engagement (Novelli, 2015), and offer opportunities for the local communities to participate in decision-making for tourism development (Bramwell, 2010; Halid & Abdul, 2018; Spenceley & Meyer, 2012). Additionally, it could allow the local communities to generate income from tourism, preserves their local culture, and provide educational opportunities for them (Hamzah & Khalifah, 2009; Xu et al., 2019).

### Conclusions

This article explores the constraining factors and drivers of community participation and empowerment. It further provides some insights into factors that can drive the process in future tourism development. As Babalola and Oluwatoyin (2014) argued, there is a lack of trained personnel much needed in the Nigerian tourism industry. This raises the issue of human capital development throughout the industry. Human capital is an orientation towards receiving training or education to develop knowledge or skills (Wright & McMahan, 2011). The tourism sector should determine the areas where there are skills gaps among employees, and then the National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR) can design and organize training to address the deficient skill areas. Academic institutions can also support such initiatives to educate both personnel's who work in the industry and local community members on tourism.

Although previous studies (Saufi et al., 2014; Tosun, 2000) have confirmed that the knowledge of the tourism industry is necessary for participation in such development planning. Nevertheless, a positive finding in this research points to the fact that local communities possess local knowledge that can help such planning processes. In the Nigeria context, localities where attractions are located are still very much connected to their traditions. As such, the decision-makers need to recognize the gap that only the community members can fill in tourism of governance and involve them in such processes to contribute their local knowledge.

The issues discussed in this article are mainly a function of the political culture in Nigeria. First, local people are not regarded as able, or not trusted to participate in decision-making. They in turn experience alienation from the decision-making processes. Second, communication and cooperation among stakeholders in the way they relate to each other is low. As a result, the government does not provide the community members with enough information on tourism development in their community, and that affects the level of trust in the tourism governance system. Also, the tourism governance system is not regarded as being transparent and accountable to the local community members on tourism development.

In order to facilitate community participation and empowerment in the Nigeria tourism industry the federal government need to empower local community governance institutions through the Local Government Tourism Committees. This is as stated in the Nigerian Tourism Development Master Plan, but it is not the case in practice. This institution should be given a political mandate and resources to develop tourism. Such an institution can be a viable mechanism for community participation that can facilitate the community members to be empowered through tourism.

Some of the findings from this research validate previous study in other contexts, that there is a need for greater coordination within tourism agencies who should establish clear guidelines for empowering local communities in tourism development (Dela Santa, 2015; Saufi et al., 2014). However, within the context of Nigeria, strengthening local governance has been seen as an avenue for community empowerment. This is because within the Nigeria governance arrangement, it is at the local level governance that can lead such processes, as they are closest to the people.

### Limitations and Future Direction

This research involved a small sample of host communities in Nigeria, which may not represent an indicative perspective of other samples in the developing world. Notwithstanding the fact that the samples in this study were carefully selected based on their relevance to the research, they may not represent a comprehensive picture. Future study should explore different developing country contexts to extend the current understandings of the research area.

In a developing country such as Nigeria, where tourism has been established as a source of economic development, local communities expect to get benefits through tourism. Future research should not only focus on how to involve local communities in decision-making but should also examine the suggested drivers to community participation.

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