

HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ONITSHA

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Abstract

Past research on heritage tourism has recommended a set of general guidelines to develop sustainability in heritage sites and tourism development, but these lack details on implementation and future challenges, especially in developing countries. This research studies the practical application of sustainable heritage tourism (SHT) in Onitsha. In particular, it investigates the challenges facing tourism development of the Ime Obi heritage site, and proposes a framework of action. The growing challenges are associated to two key aspects: community (e.g. close urbanization and development) and management (lack of adequate funding). The study found that the essential and most significant factors are those related to management. The suggested framework of actions summarizes objectives, related actions and execution responsibilities. The accomplishment of the full set of actions would improve the ability of Onitsha to conserve heritage, promote tourism, develop local community and help in facing the challenges to Sustainable Heritage Tourism development. By and large, this study is a stride to a better understanding of how Sustainable Heritage Tourism could be achieved in developing countries. It also gives relevant insights to researchers, practitioners, policymakers and etcetera.

Keywords: Heritage, Tourism, Management, Development, Sustainable, Onitsha.

Introduction

Heritage tourism is one of the most salient and largest forms of tourism in the world today, with more than half of all domestic and international trips worldwide involving elements of living culture or built heritage (Timothy, 2015). Heritage tourism provides much of the development potentials for tourism destinations as hundreds of millions of visits are made each year to museums, historic sites and cultural events like festivals and cultural carnivals, which results in billions of dollars in spending by tourists (Timothy, 2011). This form of tourism is very important because it is one possible development strategy for local communities in developing countries like Nigeria, as it provides economic support and improves communities quality of life by providing employment and other economic opportunities including better infrastructures (Madden and Shipley, 2012; United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) 2005). However, heritage tourism development may cause negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts. It may represent a threat in terms of potential

degradation of heritage, which can in turn impact upon dispossessing communities of their cultural integrity and resources, as well as the benefits of tourism themselves (Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, 2005; Nasser, 2003).

Guttormsen and Fageraas (2011) regard heritage sites as “resources to achieve social goals”. Other scholars (e.g. Cheape, Garden, & McLean, 2009; Harvey, 2001) consider heritage development as the process of stakeholder engagement associated with Lowenthal’s (2005) notion of heritage. The development of tourism at heritage sites can be either a blessing or a curse, depending on how tourism development is implemented and managed (Ghanem & Saad, 2015). Tourism development brings a concentration of public use to places where this was never contemplated historically. The need to both protect and present sites generates significant challenges for all parties in the complex and challenging balance of competing or overlapping goals and responsibilities. Carefully coordinated planning and cooperative decision making are required. Clear objectives for both conservation and tourism must be formulated between the parties and supported by all stakeholders in the process (Brook, 2008).

Managing rapid tourism growth is a time-consuming process demanding clear policies, ongoing dialogue with stakeholders, and constant monitoring. Tourism activities require environmental impact assessments (EIAs) and procedures for minimising impacts. At heritage sites with limited budgets and staff, growing tourism can stretch scarce resources and take managers away from protection efforts (Pederson, 2002). While tourism can contribute to protection and restoration efforts, the right balance between economic gain and undesirable impacts can be elusive. The manager of heritage sites especially World Heritage sites are aware that a tourist attraction destination must be occasionally improved to remain competitive. Heritage tourism requires effective partnership in order to grow up visitation. Since the managers of World Heritage sites are aware that they are under an international obligation, they do everything possible to maintain or restore the heritage sites to its original value.

Many researchers have focused on different aspects of heritage tourism, but one area that needs crucial attention is inclusive planning for heritage tourism development. Recent planning models, however, have suggested a more democratic and sustainable method to manage sites, personnel and visitors (Fyall et al., 2003; Shackley, 2001). Thus, benefiting from the opportunities of developing tourism

while preserving the cultural heritage sites has driven many researchers (e.g. Garrod & Fyall, 2000; Kausar, 2012; Landorf, 2009; Nasser, 2003) as well as international organizations (e.g. the UNESCO World Heritage Centre (WHC) to attach paramount importance to sustainable heritage tourism (SHT) development. This intends to minimise the negative impacts of tourism on local communities and the environment while maximising its positive contribution to local economies and the conservation of heritage. Researchers asserted that if heritage tourism is sustainably managed it can contribute to the development of the local community and the management and conservation of heritage sites for future generations (e.g. Hughes & Carlsen, 2010; Lindberg, Molstad, Hakins, & Jamieson, 1999; UNEP, 2005). This is because it can help increase financial support for conservation from governmental institutions as well as national and international tourism parties and donor agencies, raising awareness among visitors and local communities (UNEP, 2005) and encouraging indigenous people to value their local culture (Nasser, 2003). Tourism development can then help reduce unsound management of natural, cultural and built resources and promote heritage conservation efforts. This study aims to explore the sustainable management of heritage sites for tourism development in the historic town of Onitsha.

Considering Onitsha historic town, rich in its diversity of heritage resources, cultural history, environment and tourist attraction, its heritage sites need to be protected for posterity. Onitsha is known to possess its history which expresses an identity, a symbol and an image, the heritage sites and resources which have become an essential economic attraction drawing large numbers of tourists and money to Onitsha, must be protected to attract more tourists and ensure further visitations for future generations. In doing this, many stakeholders must have been involved because their need and opinion is taken into account.

This study identifies heritage sites in Onitsha and focused on Ime Obi Palace. It examines the sustainable management of the heritage site and investigates the impact of the sites in the promotion of tourism in Onitsha. It further determines the involvement of the stakeholders in the decision making of the heritage site and identifies challenges facing the site, after that, suggests a framework of action for sustainable management of heritage sites leading to sustainable tourism development. It is anticipated that sustainable management of the heritage sites will identify specific lessons to assist historic

towns in managing their heritage sites for sustainable tourism development. This article introduced the study and after that, presents heritage sites and tourism development by giving a brief historical background of Onitsha and identified some heritage resources in Onitsha. The management of heritage sites was reviewed and the data methods and analysis presented. It then suggests the framework for sustainable management of the heritage sites and concludes the study.

Heritage Sites and Tourism Development in Onitsha

According to some authors, "heritage" consists of those objects and processes which society recognises as being essential to be passed from the present generation to future generations. Davidson (2000) acknowledged that heritage is something that we must 'preserve' or 'save' rather than something to be 'created' or 'built'. Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge, (2007) assert that heritage is what human beings inherit from the past and utilises in the present. It comprises tangible objects and sites such as buildings, archaeological sites (groves, monoliths and rock shelters) and museum's collections, (terracotta, wood carvings, objects for body ornaments) and intangible elements such as music, dance, beliefs, folklore, cuisines, language, foodways, handicraft skills, oral histories, familial relations and social mores (Timothy, 2015). These are priceless, most valued and irreplaceable possessions, of which their loss constitutes an impoverishment of the heritage of all the people in the world (UNESCO, 1995 in Eborieme, 2000). The cultural significance of these heritage items and sites qualifies them for conservation and preservation which serve multi-purpose goals embodied in tourism. Heritage sites make essential contributions in sustaining human society primarily through conserving the world's natural and cultural heritage. They also provide an opportunity for rural development and rational use of marginal lands, for research and monitoring, for conservation, education and recreation and tourism.

Tourism, as we know, has been promoted as a development tool for Indigenous communities and a significant force in the economy of the world for achieving international understanding. It facilitates contacts between natives from distant parts of the world, people of diverse languages, races, beliefs, the political class and social standings; tourism brings them together. It leads to social integration through which people understand attitudes and beliefs which were incomprehensible to them because they were different.

Tourism is the most excellent interpreter and exhibitor of cultures. It is a necessary and desirable human activity deserving the praise and encouragement of all peoples and government (Aremu, 2014). Governments and non-governmental organisations have been developing and supporting this strategy to improve socio-economic indicators amongst Indigenous populations. Tourism is vital to the existence of nations because of its direct effects on the social, cultural, educational and economic sectors of societies.

Globally, tourism has been acclaimed the fastest growing industry because the global demand for it continues to be high despite international violence, accidents, conflicts, poverty, and the increase of deadly diseases. Although the year 2015 did see a slight drop by 3% (based on limited available data) in Africa, there is an increase of 4.4% in international tourist arrivals in the world over. Therefore, tourism remains the largest and perhaps most powerful industry in the world with 1,184 million recorded international travellers. It is expected that by 2020 the number of person travelling will rise to an astounding 1.56 billion (World Tourism Organization, 2006). Examples of nations where tourism is their mainstay include South Africa, Kenya, Brazil, Isreal, Saudi Arabia, Most countries in Asia, the Caribbean, etcetera.

Nigeria has recognised the potentials in tourism, it creates employment and now part of the solution and future of Nigeria as the nation looks beyond crude oil to harness its richly endowed natural, historical and cultural resources. These resources are capable of attracting numerous visitors to a destination if preserved. Nigeria heritages have been used to stimulate the national and local economies for decades. Since the nation is rich in cultural heritage, heritage tourism is promoted to generate revenues for the country. Tourism is now seen as a potential source of the country's income, especially in Onitsha, where this study is focused.

However, understanding the importance of heritage sites among Onitsha people begins with understanding the origin of this quintessential historic town in Anambra State, Nigeria. The oral and documented historical evidence showed that the city of Onitsha originated from Benin. Chima being the arrow-head led the migration as a result of power tussle. He only sighted the Promised Land across the River Niger as he died in Obior near Asaba town. Oreze, one of Chima's sons now led the group after defeating the Oze people. Onitsha maintains its status as the commercial nerve center of the south-east and south-south regions of Nigeria, with the largest

market in West Africa (Main Market). The modern-day city lies at the significant east-west point of Niger River with over 1,000,300 people. Nkwelle surrounds Onitsha on the north, Odekpe on the south, Ogidi, Nkpor and Obosi on the east and River Niger on the west. Being a densely populated and ethnically diverse Igbo town, Onitsha is known for its intercultural harmony and unprecedented economic success.

Moreso, Onitsha is one of the earliest destinations of the early missionaries in Nigeria. The Anglican missionaries came in 1857 with the head-quarter at All Saints Cathedral, while Catholic came in 1884 with headquarter at the Cathedral Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity, Onitsha. The first schools were Dennis Memorial Grammar School, and the Christ, the Kings College, founded in 1925 and 1933 respectively. Onitsha have equally produced notable people and are referred to as hospitable people.

This historic town has a rich cultural history and unique kingship institution since the 16th century. The pleasant cultural climate in Onitsha gave room for the people to develop a good relationship with neighbouring towns. This supports the fact that man cannot live in isolation but needs the co-operation of his fellow man in order to build a dynamic social order. Indeed, Onitsha people's natural trait; their culture, honesty, sense of humour, hospitality, fear of God, integrity, commitment and sense of pride, contributed in attracting tourists to the historic city. The people attracted commercial development, social and political advancement, modern civilisation, business and religious tourists because of their hospitable nature.

Onitsha with a very high appeal, high attractiveness and high capacity to cope with tourism development and accommodate a large number of visitors has benefited from travel and tourism. This has created a landmark which provided the infrastructure that enabled Onitsha town to assume a premier place among the towns in Igbo land. These have equally stimulated enormous investment in new infrastructure and tourism development like the recent renovation and restoration of sanity and security at Upper Iweka Onitsha. Having benefited from increasing tourist arrivals, Onitsha is yet to set an apex on the number of visitors. The historic city is forecasted to be one of the top emerging destinations in Nigeria expected to experience rapid growth in tourism.

One of the assets Onitsha has and can use to sustain economic growth is found within its people and the multiplicity of cultural

pasts found in Onitsha. The growing tourism industry regards all forms of cultural heritage as assets that can be marketed and sold – meaning that they can be transformed into cultural products for consumption, leading to a real heritage industry (Edson, 2004). Several cultural tourism heritages are underway which have the potential to raise awareness of Onitsha town and make some progress toward identifying what it means to be an Igbo. This form of tourism can be a vehicle for Igbo nation-building whereby local inhabitants involved in the development of cultural heritage tourism attractions become increasingly familiar with shared pasts of the variety of Igbo people who make up an Igbo nation.

Among the well-known heritage sites is Ime Obi Palace, which has and continuously contributed to the economic revival of the residents and created a platform for social integration, heritage studies and research. The famous Ofala Festival celebrated in Ime Obi heritage site in Onitsha is another unique example of festivals that bring people and organisations in large numbers to Onitsha annually. It promotes tourism significantly in Onitsha by patronising various hospitality sectors, transport sectors, businesses and heritage sites. This has helped to promote communal peace, exposed the potentials and culture of Onitsha globally. It continues to open new panorama and re-emerges new feeling in Onitsha. It is one of the most significant types of heritage tourism in terms of visitors and attractions, involving hundreds of millions of people every year. Capital asset referred to as “cultural capital” is inherent in this heritage tourism. Owuwaji festival also known as the new yam festival has remained the most famous festival and holds great promise for tourism in Igbo land (Okpoko and Okpoko, 2002) and Onitsha people in particular. Yam is given significant importance and most important food crops in Onitsha and Igbo society. This is celebrated annually in October in the Ime Obi Palace.

The All Saints’ Cathedral is the mother church of the Diocese on the Niger Anglican Communion and the seat of the Bishop on the Niger. It is a holy place and part of an African Heritage Site (www.allsaintscathedral.org). Also, the Basilica of Holy Trinity Onitsha, the first cathedral east of the Niger is a pilgrimage site. It was built on the land donated to the first missionaries by Onitsha people in 1886. The heritage site holds the relics of Blessed Cyprian Iwene Tansi, Bishop Joseph Shanahan, Charles Heerey and Stephen Ezeanya.

Ani Onicha is a sacred grove that sits in the middle of urban Onitsha (Otu Onicha) just north of Old Market Road. This is the protective deity of Onitsha people and serves as one of the heritage sites being taken care of by Mgbelike people of Onitsha. The Chimedie Museum is a cultural heritage project in progress with significant cultural importance in Igbo land which has the potential to raise awareness of Igbo national heritage and make some progress toward identifying what it means to be an Onitsha and Igbo with Sophisticated Political Culture. National identity and significance are revealed when the Igbo nation uses aspects of their unique history and cultural heritage to draw in international tourists. This museum will help in no small measure to project the rich cultural heritage of Onitsha and Igbo people. It will also be positioned for relaxation, heritage preservation, exhibition, research, education and as a tool for tourism development and economic recovery.

Moreso, the Inosi Onira Estate is a heritage site in Igbo land, Nigeria and Africa. It can be established as Zik's Heritage Centre for leadership research and studies in Onitsha. The historical building is where the foremost national leader lived and it holds excellent architectural value in Igboland. This Zik's Heritage conservation centre will be dedicated to re-educating Africans and increasing awareness between the youths for reviving the dream of Africa. Therefore, Zik's Heritage is a valuable possession which, when lost and or damaged, will be monumental lost to Nigeria, Africa and the world at large. It is believed that the development of Zik's Heritage to a tourist center would in no small way serve as a hub for tourism explosion in Igbo land and would form a platform for economic rejuvenation of the people.

Apart from these, the Historic city offers a wide variety of tourist attractions such as the River Niger and the River Niger Bridge (Niger Bridge). The Niger Bridge holds significant historical importance in Onitsha. River Niger is the sacred banks of God's river upon which Onitsha is strategically found. It is a natural heritage site upon which Cruise Tourism along the shore-line itself can offer beautiful scenic attraction, if well harnessed. It is believed that if harnessed, Igbo land would experience a new lease of life in terms of economic empowerment for the teeming youths in the region that would be gainfully occupied and think less of violence because an idle mind is the devil's workshop. Hence the youths in the absence of any viable source of economic empowerment would take to all kinds of youth restiveness and criminality including kidnapping,

hooliganism, robbery, pickpockets, gambling, and drug abuse. Although many economic activities are going on in the river, it has not been fully developed for the maximum benefits of its potentials.

Management of Heritage Sites

Management is often referred to as conservation or preservation of heritage. Sarah Staniforth (2000) and Vinas, (2005) opined that sustainable conservation entails passing on and maintaining the maximum significance of heritage to the future generation. Historic sites and attractions that have been handed down by previous generations may be considered to be free, although costs are, of course, incurred in protection, upkeep and management of all tourist attractions and resources, whether natural or human-made (Sharpley, 2015: 12). According to Okpoko and Okonkwo (2005:80), a tripartite relationship exists among heritage management, conservation, and tourism. Proper heritage management ensures that tourism and conservation complement factors in the management of heritage sites.

Today, the rate of land development and neglect of ancient heritages is perceived to influence the efficient management of the heritages. The location, conservation and preservation of cultural and natural resources of archaeological sites are of paramount importance to the level of success for a given area in attracting cultural heritage tourism (Olukole, 2007). Akinade (1999) posits that the excessive loss, theft, and pillage of cultural property in Nigeria are the bulks of the cultural setback. This study supports the fact that management is *sine qua non* to the sustainability of cultural values. This is mainly because well-managed heritage site increases financial support, attracts tourists and encouraging indigenous people to value their local culture.

Tourism is essential to Onitsha's economic vitality, sustainability, and profitability. Its development can then help reduce unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and promote heritage conservation efforts. Recent planning models, however, have suggested a more democratic and sustainable method to manage sites, personnel and visitors (Fyall et al., 2003; Shackley, 2001). In the context of heritage, inter-sectoral cooperation is particularly important. Collaboration or partnerships between private, public and non-profit sectors, tourists, as well as between destinations, is crucial in achieving and promoting the principles of sustainable development (Boyd & Timothy, 2001; McKercher & du Cros, 2002).

Better planning can be achieved when different agencies, owners and service providers work together to set common goals and do not function at cross-purposes.

The second aspect of general management, related to the first, is cross-border cooperation in planning for heritage tourism. Cooperation between autonomous political entities is critical in establishing common standards of conservation and use, as well as to share information about the site itself and tourism-related data (Boyd & Timothy, 2001; Timothy, 1999b). Brook (2008) asserts that domestic and international visitors to a heritage place have the potential to be its greatest champions for safeguarding its *Spirit of Place*. Visitors and local people who experience a place and absorb its *Spirit* often develop a keen interest that extends well beyond their actual visit.

The third form of general management is stakeholder participation. Indeed, local stakeholder involvement has become an essential issue in the field of heritage studies. The local stakeholder engagement and empowerment appear to be an essential ingredient for heritage site management and tourism development. This includes participation in decision making and planning, as well as participation in the economic and social benefits of tourism.

The importance of such stakeholder engagement is also considered to be an essential element in contemporary approaches to sustainable tourism development. It is essential to state that such development efforts are more likely to succeed if local stakeholders are meaningfully engaged throughout decision-making processes. Byrd (2007) in his references to Gunn's (1994) work, argues that "one main key to the success and implementation of sustainable tourism development in a community is the support of stakeholders (e.g. citizens, entrepreneurs, and community leaders)". In addition to government officials, stakeholders in the realm of heritage tourism include site managers, landowners, destination residents, business owners and the tourists themselves. All of these groups have important roles to play in heritage tourism development, and each person should be empowered enough to be able to make contributions (Aas et al., 2005; Mattsson & Praesto, 2005; Timothy, 1999c).

Ways in which various stakeholders can be more involved in tourism planning and heritage conservation and management are problems facing planners all over the world. Although both developed and developing countries struggle to achieve efficient preservation of the past, the developing countries show to face

exceptional challenges (Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009). Many of these challenges are economical and are related to the lack of adequate funding, which generally creates problems in terms of training and heritage conservation (Timothy, Wu, & Luvsandavaajav, 2009). Also, among the challenges of sustainable management of heritage tourism in developing countries is the lack of proactive legislation (Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009) and policies that take into account the issues of sustainability (WHC, 2012a).

Furthermore, the majority of less-developed countries provoke problems regarding the empowerment of people in a collaborative development process (Timothy *et al.*, 2009) that takes into account consideration of stakeholders' needs and/or establishment of a practical discourse between them (WHC, 2012a).

It is of paramount importance that the Onitsha people, government and bodies concerned with heritage and tourism-related matters should attach overriding importance to the development of sound and sustainable tourism policies and practices to ensure that tourism activity contributes to the protection and conservation of heritage sites and the Onitsha or any other community that sustain them. It is a recognised fact that Ime Obi heritage site and other heritages cannot be successfully conserved without proactively responding to the challenges of increasing tourist visitation in the sites and the broader humanitarian context. Such challenges need to be observed and controlled in the planning and implementation process.

Challenges related to the development of stakeholders' collaboration could be attributed to the added cost to the planning and development process (Aas *et al.*, 2005), the identification of legitimate stakeholders (Hampton, 2005), and the capacity of the latter to participate in the decision-making process (Aas *et al.*, 2005; Tosun, 2000; WHC, 2009). As for the challenges of community involvement, particularly in developing countries, Tosun (2000) found that the actual local community participation in the tourism development process may suffer many operational (e.g. lack of co-ordination and information), structural (e.g. lack of expertise, lack of appropriate legal system and lack of trained human resources) and cultural challenges (e.g. low level of awareness in the local community). It was suggested that in order to tackle such possible challenges and enable community involvement, some steps need to be taken. First, Tosun (2000) argued for a total change in socio-political, legal, administrative and economic structure. These, in addition to specific

strategies at local, national and international levels, should be developed to handle the outlined challenges successfully. Second, genuine public participation should intend not only to keep the local community informed but also to actively solicit and value their opinions and participation as well as their contribution to the improvement of the environment and its heritage-based tourism activities (Camp *et al.*, 2009).

Also, the UNESCO WHC (WHC, 2012a) added that local communities need to be seen as partners in the tourism management of heritage sites; the work of the local authorities needs to be integrated with the local communities in order to make the sustainable development of heritage sites successful (Ghanem *et al.*, 2015). Brook (2008) declared that there need for a broader approach within the conservation community away from just managing heritage places primarily as self-contained physical space to one which includes the whole range of contemporary social, political, intellectual and economic forces that shape modern life - to a sort of social-cultural landscape, rather than just a physical-cultural landscape. These influences are inevitably not confined to a local level. There is a need to look beyond the site to the national and even global level to examine contemporary tourism as one of the critical social, economic and political forces that converge on heritage landscapes. There are important initiatives to make tourism more sustainable in heritage sites; these include:

- Raising global Heritage awareness to build community support for conservation
- Economic, education and employment opportunities derived from tourism
- Empowering of local communities in decision making and conservation activities
- Poverty Alleviation, particularly in the communities that sustain heritage places
- Capturing diverse and innovative funding sources for site conservation
- Building the capacity of Heritage Site management in tourism related issues
- Developing tools and techniques for tourism management at Heritage sites.
- Integrating comprehensive tourism management with the Operational Guidelines of the Heritage Sites.

This set of initiatives demonstrates the broader socio-economic and development context in which the relationship between heritage conservation and tourism is regarded at the international and domestic level. Several development agencies are genuinely interested in the potential for heritage and tourism to contribute to the social and economic objectives. There is a need for a deep engagement with the stakeholders and tourism sector, especially the community involved and private tourism sector. This engagement is required to find mutually suitable solutions to site management problems and to utilise the stakeholders and tourism sector to safeguard and sensitise visitors and their personnel on Heritage site management issues. Full involvement and participation are also essential to help aid local tourism enterprises in supporting heritage sites management for tourism development. Providing communities in and around the Heritage sites with enhanced livelihoods from tourism can reduce threats to heritage values and build local management communities.

Research Methods

A qualitative case study approach is adopted to investigate the experience of heritage site management and tourism development in Onitsha. The pairing of case study design and qualitative methods is well established in the scientific literature (e.g. Stake, 2010) and is especially appropriate in complicated settings where little prior research has been conducted (Patton, 2002). The researcher used participant observation, documentary review and in-depth interviews which serves to add to the richness of the empirical material collected. Unstructured exploratory interviews were conducted with stakeholders of Ime Obi's Palace heritage site, some residents and tourists. The exploratory interviews helped to explore the history of Onitsha, grasp initial ideas about the relationships between the various stakeholders, identify key stakeholders that can provide the study with rich information and clarify some important issues that needed further investigation during the field study. The fieldwork study was conducted in the period between September 2017 and August 2018. Purposive sampling technique was used to determine whom the study units are based on the potential study units knowledge base with the study focus (Jennings, 2010).

Given the exploratory nature of this study, the emphasis is placed on understanding how Ime Obi's Palace, a heritage site in Onitsha is sustainably managed to attract tourists and develop

tourism in Onitsha. Triangulation across the three sources of data was used to enhance the validity of the explanatory themes and the associated model. Data analysis was performed using a content analysis approach. The interpretation of the data was done using objective and subjective methods. This helps to explain the nature of the textual interactions and their consequences and interpretation (Jennings, 2010). The analysis began with a set of general themes that emerged from the groundwork literature review and the exploratory interviews. In this study, the researcher interprets the content in its holistic form and setting so that the empirical data reflect the real-world setting. The analysis presented in the following section is illustrated with data mainly drawn from interviews conducted with the stakeholders, host residents and tourists because of their essential role in the strategic decision-making associated with the Ime Obi Palace, Onitsha.

Results

The Ime Obi's Palace is one of the heritage tourism attraction site in Onitsha. It is safely located in Awka Road on a vast expanse of land, easily accessible in Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria. The palace credibly represents the cultural heritage and property of outstanding unique heritage of value in Onitsha and Igbo land. The palace is well fenced to avoid inappropriate infrastructure development near or at the Ime Obi heritage site. It is also decorated with a historical art gallery of sorts with statures of past Obis dotting the palace and other artworks of cultural importance displayed about in the palace. The artistic and architectural beauty of the palace depicts the pride of the kingdom. An indigenous knowledgeable tour guide is always around to guide tourists, researchers and people navigate around the palace and view its arts and beauty. The site is currently well planned with large carrying capacity and controlled tourism activities. There are newly innovated sitting out galleries and ample outdoor space where people gather during festivals to celebrate with the Obi.

Indeed, Ime Obi Palace is a world-class palace and the site for a lot of festivals and events, as well a significant tourist attraction in Anambra State, Nigeria. The famous Ofala festival celebrated in the Ime Obi palace is done once a year in October which coincides with the traditional New Yam festival held in many parts of Igboland. The festival has been the identity of Onitsha kingdom since the days of their ancestors and currently had gained global recognition, therefore

has become a major tourist attraction in Anambra State, Nigeria and the world (Erokwu, 2015). Onitsha people celebrate Ofala festival as a way to keep the heritage of the land alive. This historical event presents an occasion for the Obi of Onitsha to present himself publicly to his people who also reaffirm their allegiance to him. During this festival, all the stakeholders are fully involved in the pre-planning stage, event proper and post-event evaluation stage.

The Ofala Festival usually starts with twenty-one-gun salute followed by all-night Ufie music and other cultural activities. On the second day, thousands of men and women are gathered at the palace of the Obi dressed in traditional attire. Before the gathering of the crowd, all the *Ndichie* (Red Cap Chiefs) adorned in ceremonial dresses congregate at the Ime Obi's Palace and proceed to the Obi's throne in order of seniority. The *Agbalanze* (*Ozo* title holders), and other participants also ornamented in traditional dresses and accompanied by special musical groups, gather at the Ime Obi's palace for this festive event. The highlight of this event is the arrival of the Obi in his royal regalia to the hailing of the crowd. The festival which is also an occasion for the Obi to honour individuals with chieftaincy titles, has served as a unifying force and it attracts dignitaries (Emirs, Chief, Monarchs, Ambassadors, Governors, Ministers and Commissioners) from far and near, including Onitsha indigenes, non-indigenes and tourists both domestic and international tourists. Lots of exciting activities such as colourful carnival by the youths, colourful outings by the Obi, other exciting side events, like Ofala Special Glo SIM promotion, Ofala Age Grade Carnival Competition, etcetera.

Ime Obi heritage site has served as the location for effective communication through indigene awareness creation of preserving heritage which has increased peoples support and involvement in its development and sustainability. The Obi of Onitsha is doing everything virtually possible to ensure long term sustainable tourism through collaboration with national authorities' on-site conservation and in line with tourism policy of Nigeria. Effective conservation of the heritage site is still needed because it demands adequate funding, the involvement of skilled archaeologists and the need to determine the carrying capacity to avoid adverse impact on resources or visitor experience, thereby avoid depletion of the site.

Lots of capacity building seminars and workshops are organized from the Ime Obi Palace for indigenes, especially for the youths. This has strengthened and enhanced the knowledge, skill and behaviour of Onitsha people, especially with those with direct

responsibilities in decision making and management of the heritage site.

Community Involvement

Onitsha people ranging from the Obi-in-Council-Chiefs, Ndi Diokpa, Ogbosoachiani, Agbalanze, Agbaniregwu, Ikporor Onitsha, Otu Ogbo Administrative Groupings, Onitsha Quarters and Families are fully involved in the planning and implementation processes of activities going on in the heritage site. The culture and customs of Onitsha are strengthened by the clear hierarchy and demarcation of responsibilities among traditional administrative cadres. The Obi-in-Council comprises of Obi as the apex, levered by the strong support and collaborations of distinct institutions, led by Nd'ichie who play defensive and advisory roles in major decisions the Obi takes in the Kingdom. The *Ndichie Ume* (First Class Red Cap Chiefs) are the top hierarchy and are six in number, namely; Onowu Iyasele, Ajie Ukadiugwu, Odu Osodi, Onya Ozoma, Ogene Onira, Owelle Osowa. They are followed by Ndichie Okwa (Second Class Red Cap Chiefs) and Ndichie Okwaraeze (Third Class Red Cap Chiefs). Their primary function is to act as Obi's representative, maintain law and order, uphold the propriety of religious and customary practices, dispense justice according to equity and laws of the land, promote social welfare and defend the land against aggression.

The Ndi Diokpa are the spiritual heads of the different quarters and clans in Onitsha; they help to guide the Obi-in-Council, offering wise council and providing exemplary participatory democracy. *Ogbonachiani* are men of an age grade group appointed by the Obi of Onitsha to help in general administration. *Agbalanze* society is a socio-politico and religious all-male group that is also highly revered in Onitsha traditional society. The *Agbalaniregwu* are the ordinary citizens who are the strength of Onitsha democracy. *Ikporo Onitsha* is a society of mothers/women of Onitsha that deals with all matters that affect Onitsha women. *Otu Ogbo* are age-grade societies - an association of men and women born within a specified period usually three years intervals. They are the vanguard in giving flesh and meaning to the declaration from the royalty.

The involvement of these traditional institutions has positively influenced holistic development, especially tourism development in Onitsha. Based on this, the community has some sense of ownership and attachment to the heritage site. Their responsibilities help them to ensure that the heritage site is well safeguarded and always clean.

Onitsha community has reaped a lot of economic, social and environmental benefits from tourism activities in Ime Obi heritage site.

Stakeholders' Participation and Commitment

In the management of heritage sites like Ime Obi Palace in Onitsha, several stakeholders are fully involved; Obi - in - council, titled men and women, *umuada* (Onitsha daughters), age grades, domestic and diaspora indigenes, youths and the government agencies, private sector, non-governmental organisations friends and well-wishers. As stakeholders of these cultural heritages, the author identified the following roles as part of management issues of the cultural properties; proper protection of the site (in the form of a secure fence), routine preservation, observation of usual praise for sustainable identity, sustaining the cultural/traditional identity of the ancient structures, washing/sweeping of the site consistently, repair of the house, observation of annual/seasonal festivals, financial commitment of assignment, security of the site, marketing / public awareness through the conduct of multi-media services. The foregoing roles have been played by the stakeholders directly or indirectly in the historic city of Onitsha.

The management responsibilities are normatively the collective roles of all the stakeholders of these unique service properties, which even extend beyond the concept of mere conservation. There are full stakeholder's involvement and collaboration in the political and cultural activities in the Ime Obi Palace. The stakeholders such as the traditional institutions, Host residents, government officials, private firms, non-profit organisations, tourists, landowners etcetera have participated in Ime Obi cultural activities. The government and private sector participate actively by bringing support in tourism development especially during the Ofala festival. Commitment and support of top management in both the Federal, State, Local, Ministry, Private and indigenes in the diaspora are found to influence Onitsha's tourism development and heritage conservation significantly. The quintessential current Obi of Onitsha, Igwe Alfred Nnaemeka Achebe being a true custodian of Igbo culture, has played a significant role in promoting peace and tranquillity, mobilising and utilising available resources for the physical and cultural development of Onitsha. He has represented and projected the true Igbo identity to the world by attracting domestic and international tourists to Onitsha which promotes sustainable tourism development in Igboland. Many

stakeholders confirm that there is sound communication among stakeholders. The evidence is the peace and tranquillity that is being experienced now, stakeholders' participation in decision making and planning, as well as participation in the economic and social benefits of tourism. Having shown exemplary participatory democracy in administration, Onitsha has sustainably managed the Ime Obi heritage site and in so doing is benefiting from the opportunities derived from preserving the cultural heritage site.

Impact of the Heritage site

The heritage tourism activities in Ime Obi's Palace have strategically brought economic, social and environmental development in Onitsha. It has been used to stimulate the national and local economies for decades by providing economic support and improves Onitsha people's quality of life through employment and empowerment especially for the youths and other economic opportunities including better infrastructures. Revenues have been generated for Onitsha historic town through heritage tourism.

Indeed, the site has made significant contributions to the understanding of Onitsha identity, history and cultural revolution in Nigeria. The heritage site also yields a symbolic or spiritual value for modern people in Nigeria. It has been used to create group or community identities, especially during Ofala festival. The heritage site is transmitting lots of informational values and meanings of heritage in Igboland and to the public at large. The statues of past Obi in Ime Obi is passing lots of information about the past and serves as a major source of information for the interpretation of Onitsha, Igbo and national history. The heritage values exhibited at the site are integral to national identity and international perceptions of Onitsha and Igbo identity. The site acts as a source of information for the mass media during the Ofala festival. There are increasing numbers of mass media presentations dealing with the heritage site for public audiences, including TV series, radio programs, newspapers, magazines and representations in other media like websites, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blog spot etcetera.

Challenges facing Heritage Site Management

The heritage site is faced with many challenges such as the influence of modernisation, Christianity, commercialisation, civilisation, social change, development, religious dogmatism and iconoclasm among others. Social change implies an alteration,

modification or shift in behaviour, attitude, social institutions and social structure. Some people view everything done in the palace as a fetish. The Nigerian social institutions and structures such as family, marriage and kinship systems are threatened by the wave of modernisation, technological developments and globalisation. For instance, the value system has gradually been eroded as issues like respect for elders, chastity, integrity and morality are considered archaic, while wrong values like disrespect, disobedience, bareness, fraud, abducting, dishonesty are taken to be fun.

The empirical findings demonstrated that being surrounded by modern towns, the Ime Obi Palace heritage site is substantially prone to damage because of the pollution caused by the neighbouring urbanisation. Pollution resulting from close urbanisation: The environmental pollution caused by the crowded urban districts near the monuments aggravates the issue; the exhausts emitting from the workshops, restaurants and traffic congestion raise the range of temperature and humidity in the air, causing different damaging aspects such as salinity, weak fence and cracks at the site. Many of the stakeholders suggested moving the heritage site to another location more spacious and outside much distraction.

Also, discussions of stakeholders revealed that the absence of top managers' commitment is attributed to unstable strategies for sustainable development of heritage sites in Nigeria, which in turn negatively influence the development of tourism and some heritage sites like the building of Zik's Heritage Center in Onitsha. Full Commitment and support of top management in both the federal, state and local tourism Ministry and the Ministry of Antiquities are found to influence Onitsha's tourism development and heritage conservation significantly. According to stakeholders, support of top management is critical to formulating sustainable plans as well as supportive decisions and legislation. Many local community groups expressed their annoyance towards official authorities in this regard. Also, such groups stated that there is barely any sound communication between the local community and the top management. They said that many of the suggestions they presented to enhance tourism and community life were met with considerable degrees of unresponsiveness and lack of interest. The projects which many people propose to the governorate officials are usually neglected and kept in drawers forever. There are many discussions and promises, but no action is taken on the ground. The problem lies in the lack of funds and proper decisions to take proper actions.

Inadequate knowledge and skills represent a difficult challenge that calls for adequate training programs for governmental managers and staff. It is worth mentioning here that the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has already arranged for training programs, but these, as indicated by employees in the Tourism Ministry, were shockingly found not to be suitable for the sustainable management of heritage sites or the skills and knowledge needed for implementation, posing more critical questions about the proficiency of the decision-makers themselves.

Funding has been affirmed by the stakeholders to have naturally had a slightly negative influence on tourism development and heritage conservation in Onitsha, especially the Zik's heritage center. Thus, securing fund for the constant management of Ime Obi Heritage site is of paramount importance. Several renovations works have been done to make the site a world-class befitting heritage site. Huge sums of money were invested; therefore, finance is one of the challenges facing the heritage site. Though lots of funding support is obtained from the government, indigenes within and in the diaspora, non-indigenes and business firms, more funds are required for safety and security of the heritage site as well as proper maintenance, conservation and preservation of the heritage site. The security system in the heritage site needs to be fortified to avoid the incidents of antiquities' thefts.

In Nigeria, the government recognised chief agent for the management of heritage resource sites as the Federal Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation. In the states, some Ministries and Boards manage Culture and Tourism. They have financial and human resources to carry out their managerial duties for cultural and tourism development. They have the power to sanction offenders which, helps to preserve the resources under their control. Their impact and contributions to the management, growth and development of tourism in Onitsha are yet to be experienced. Several years of its existence and operations would have facilitated the development of important heritage site in Onitsha especially the Ziks heritage centre.

Lack of interest for continuity in cultural Heritages" sustainability is as a result of the absence of sustainable planning for heritage sites. Although Ministry of Tourism Culture and National Orientation recognised the importance of adopting sustainable plans for the promotion and development of heritage sites, the results asserted that there are only general objectives and policies without

detailed strategies and plans to reflect such policies in practice. Neglect of Cultural Properties Management and the Economic Impact have also resulted in large set back in heritage management like the negligence in conserving Zik's Heritage.

The Human Factor, through the construction of roads, office and market blocks, affects heritage site management; an example is the Ani Onicha heritage groove. Level of education, religious belief, financial constraint, emerging urban renewal or redevelopment which erodes and destroys heritage sites, looting of heritage resources for money, lack of substantial inter-national involvement in the management of heritage sites in the region, lack of effective management plan/strategies, poor documentation of existing heritage sites, National economy trauma which erodes concentration are all challenges facing heritage management for tourism development in Onitsha. While heritage tourism needs to be carefully managed to ensure that sites are not adversely damaged by overcrowding and excessive wear and tear, the effect of heritage tourism is generally a beneficial one. The activities of the Youth Service Corps should be well managed to avoid specks of dirt in and around the site during their youth service activities and programmes in and around the heritage site.

Facility provisions are vital components of tourism and heritage management. The value of hotels in and around the vicinity of tourism sites is significant. There should be controlled development of modern structures within the vicinity of heritage sites; there should be no encroachment upon the integrity of the cultural heritage sites. Indeed, planning is inevitable in the sustainability of tourism and heritage management. There should be comprehensive planning which should consider all tourism resources, organisation, markets and programmes within a given region. Regular monitoring of heritage tourism sites to maintain and improve their condition will help to determine the carrying capacity. Carrying capacity levels at heritage tourists' sites should be set with the objective of sustaining the resource and social conditions that complement the purpose of the heritage site, its management objectives, the significance of the site and the quality of heritage resource and visitor experience. In Ghana, the carrying capacities of some of their ecotourism sites were calculated and the required numbers of visitors to each one per day were set. This example should be considered in Onitsha especially at Ime Obi's Palace.

A Framework of Action for Sustainable Management of Heritage Sites Leading to Sustainable Tourism Development

Based on the results of the field study the researcher suggested that adopting an integrated long-term sustainable plan that takes a holistic approach to management, tourism and local community development is a key to sustainable heritage site management and tourism development. Such a plan should be supported by adequate policies, legislation and development strategies that include a continuous cycle of monitoring and evaluation efforts on heritage sites. A framework of actions is suggested to tackle the challenges mentioned above and enhance the development of sustainability in management and tourism development in Onitsha. These actions would help achieve development in three main areas: (1) management improved process (2) community development geared towards the improved economy and increased benefits to the local community, and (3) heritage site management which presents ways of reducing the negative impacts on Onitsha's heritage sites and tourism development. Therefore, several stakeholders need to be actively engaged in the actions set out in this framework. Responsible parties for implementation have thus, been identified for each of the suggested actions.

Management-Related Issues

Results on the challenges of heritage site management and tourism development in Ime Obi's Palace Onitsha underscored the significant influence of management-related issues on sustainability. The management-related issues, for example, the limited fund for heritage management and environmental pollution which can lead to deterioration of structures. With the priorities of the present government mainly directed at diversifying of the economy through tourism as an economic activity requires creative answers to the limited funding will be adequately handled. Decisions to mitigate the causes of environmental pollution to the barest minimum are crucial. In this regard, the suggested framework of actions provides three objectives to improve issues of management. These are the promotion of constant co-operation and quality communication with stakeholders; sustainable planning; building the capacity of decision-makers and site managers and fundraising through investments.

Community Development

Based on stakeholders' interviews, Onitsha needs to construct a more realistic level of development in its community as a primary step toward sustainability. More enhancement in the economic opportunities of the Onitsha community (while improving social conditions) is believed to be a pivotal step to manipulate the community-related challenges, create better community life and underpin sustainable tourism efforts in heritage sites. There is also a need to provide the indigenes and inhabitants with training programs to raise their awareness of the value of heritages and build up the work experience of workers in Ime Obi's Palace. Such programs should enhance the Onitsha people's knowledge and skills, to enable them to participate more effectively in the development process and value heritage-preserving practices and income-generating activities from tourism.

Heritage Site Conservation

The discussions with the stakeholders have revealed a great worry and a substantial risk to the future of heritage sites in Onitsha, especially the Ime Obi's Palace and Zik's heritage center, given the existing complex of challenges and threats. The results asserted the need to set an integrated management plan with a long-term vision for developing heritage tourism in Onitsha, based on stakeholders' involvement. Such a plan should balance between heritage management, Onitsha community and inhabitant's interests and the general guidelines of sustainable tourism approach. The suggested framework presents actions to prevent destruction, looting/poaching of heritage resources and protect Onitsha's heritage assets for future generations.

Table 1: Framework of actions for the Management of Heritage sites for tourism development

<p>Management-related issues Promote co-operation and excellent communication with all the stakeholders</p>	<p>○ Make available strategies to coordinate between the Ministry of Tourism Culture and National Orientation and other governmental authorities in the area of cultural heritage management as well as the host community.</p>	<p>○ Stakeholders in the Ministry, related ministries and governmental authorities.</p>
	<p>○ Instigate and maintain a regular dialogue with stakeholders, including the tourism industry and the local community, in the initial planning process and during the</p>	<p>○ Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation in cooperation with the</p>

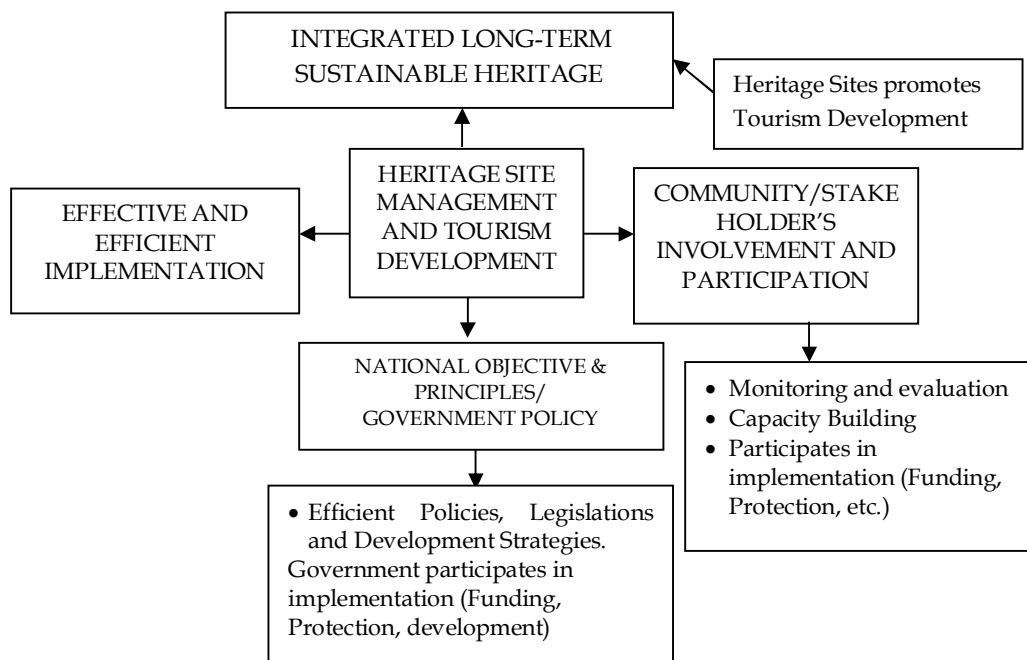
	implementation phase. This would guarantee effective communications among stakeholders and help in determining how the industry can contribute to community development and heritage management	domestic indigenes and the diaspora, private firms and NGOs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthen the enabling environment by integrating principles of Sustainable tourism into heritage site planning and management and equally offer supporting policies, strategies, legal and administrative frameworks. 	➤ Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation National Commission for Museum and Monuments.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quality infrastructure projects with well urban planning structures. Such projects should be operated in an eco-friendly manner 	➤ Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation National Commission for Museum and Monuments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conduct adequate reporting, measuring and reactive monitoring mechanisms of the sustainable heritage site management plan in order to control the impacts of tourism on the heritage destinations, increase the ease of use for good practices and encourage all stakeholders and tourists to act responsibly in terms of heritage management and economic benefits to the host communities. 	➤ Federal and State Ministry of Environment, Housing and Urban Development
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organise awareness campaigns programmes and training courses for managers in government-related authorities to improve techniques of heritage sites planning, increase managers' commitment and collaborations to sustainability, and train managers on practical ways to involve the community and other stakeholders in the decision-making process 	➤ NTDC, NCMM, Community Association's Participation and Involvement,
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support funding and ensure its proper use; securing adequate funding for different aspects of sustainable development such as heritage management, suitable infrastructure, training programs and proficient employment which is essential in heritage management for tourism development. 	➤ Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, National Tourism Development Corporation, NCMM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent Capacity building programmes for decision-makers, site managers and key stakeholders. 	Provide applicable strategies to avoid financial mismanagement, for example, specifying aspects of expenditure and continuous evaluating of managers' performance	➤ Federal, State, and Local government, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, NCMM, NTDC, Community associations and stakeholders, Tourism enterprises and associated NGOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising 		➤ Federal, State, and Local government,

		Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, NCMM, NTDC, Community associations and stakeholders, Tourism enterprises and associated NGOs
Heritage Site Management Protect heritage site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Build a more sustainable living community for Onitsha's indigenous heritage sites, especially the Ime Obi's Palace people far enough from the major road with a transport network connecting them with the sight with the Inland town. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Federal, State and Local Governments establishments, NCMM, Tourism enterprises, NGOs and stakeholders.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage tourism organisations to donate for the preservation of Ime Obi's Palace and other heritage sites. This is to be achieved by the adoption of such strategies as reducing their destruction and giving them priority in the promotion and marketing of tourism destinations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, NTDC, other government agencies in cooperation with associated NGOs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Determine the carrying-capacity of Ime Obi's Palace heritage site and the types of human activity therein accepted to avoid deterioration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, NTDC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The study, evaluate and archive heritage sites in Onitsha by specialists in Archaeology and Tourism and Art History. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, NCMM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enhance the security system of heritage sites and work with relevant international agencies and organization in order to prevent looting and destruction of antiquities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ NCMM, Police, Community Participation and Involvement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent antiquities poaching/looting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide moral and financial incentives to those among the stakeholders and youths who help protect Onitsha's antiquities from theft. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ NCMM, key stakeholders, private enterprises and associated NGOs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use Geographic Information System in detecting places where antiquities may be buried in Onitsha 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ NCMM, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation
Community Development Economic and social life enhancement through the development of sustainable tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support small and medium tourist enterprises (SMTE) by a workable funding mechanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Federal, State and Local government agencies, NTDC, NCMM, Community Development Associations, Private enterprises
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guide tourists to the methods of supporting the local community. For example, tourists can increase local purchases, use local guides and donate for community development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ NTDC, NIHOTOURL, Tourism enterprises and Community

		associations, local NGOs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase the financial resources Onitsha Improvement Union and government support for infrastructure projects by seeking donations from the international community and allocating a portion of the profit of Onitsha's heritage sites and tourism activities to the city's development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Federal establishments, NTDC, Domestic and Diaspora indigenes.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diversify Onitsha's tourism product (e.g. business tourism, nature-based tourism, cultural heritage tourism and film tourism). Promoting Onitsha as a resourceful destination is likely to increase visitor demand as well as an increase in revenue generation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, NTDC, Community Development Associations and Community Improvement Union.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Help marketing local products through a promotion at local, regional and international levels. Local products can be promoted in brochures, websites, television, billboards and in-flight magazines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ministry of Tourism Culture and National Orientation, NTDC, Tourism related enterprises and associations within the tourism industry (e.g. airline companies, hotels and tourism companies), Community full participation and involvement.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Help indigenous people understand the value and legal obligation, rights and procedures in protection of heritage sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ministry of Culture Tourism and National Orientation, NTDC in cooperation with associated NGOs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Train local people in tourism-related activities (e.g. interpretation and marketing skills for local products) so that they can contribute to tourism development and receive benefits of tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, NTDC, NIHOTOUR and associated NGOs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guide SMTEs to benefit from technical and financial services provided by national and international organisations in. This is in addition to encouraging major tourism companies to support SMTEs with business expertise in Onitsha. This would qualify managers to plan for and organise enterprises, produce and develop high-quality tourism products and services and create a competitive advantage in the tourism market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ministry of Tourism Culture and National Orientation, NTDC, NCMM, Community associations other NGOs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Raise public awareness and building pride through acquaint indigenous people with the history of their culture and civilization, a necessary measure to get them to care for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ministry of Tourism Culture and National Orientation, NCMM,

	their heritage and convey such an attitude to the future Onitsha generations to come.	NTDC, Community stakeholders and related NGOs
	o Organize awareness campaigns about environment. Such campaigns should focus on the environmental conditions in Onitsha and how to decrease the range of pollutants and manage waste in environmentally and economically beneficial ways.	➤ Ministry of Environment and associated NGOs, Community Development Associations and Improvement Unions.
	o Encourage the indigenous people of Onitsha to continue to be fully involved in the development process. Such a procedure would decrease the possible conflict between the interests of the governmental authorities and those of the community.	➤ Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation, NTDC and local NGOs.

FRAMEWORK FOR HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN ONITSHA



Conclusion

This study attempts to achieve a better understanding of the sustainable management of heritage sites for tourism development in developing countries. More particularly, it identifies heritage sites and investigates Ime Obi’s sustainable management and its impact; it further explores stakeholders involvement and the challenges of sustainable management in Ime Obi’s Palace, a heritage site in

Onitsha, Anambra State Nigeria and suggests a framework of action for development that can help in realising the opportunities of sustainably managing heritage sites for tourism development.

This study confirmed that stakeholder's families and Obi in Council Chiefs (traditional rulers), youths, governments and private organisations are the most participating stakeholders in the preservation and maintenance of heritage sites in Onitsha. Tourism at Ime Obi Palace Onitsha and some other heritage and world heritage sites cannot be managed in isolation of all stakeholders. Heritage sites management for tourism development is now tilting to the sustainable use of heritage resources for the maximum benefit of all. Site management needs to consider and respond to issues and opportunities outside the boundaries of the site, to cooperate with local and regional agencies in the development of policies and programmes that are integrated with a broader context. Proper destination planning and management are critical to ensure that the unique features of the Ime Obi's Palace as a heritage site do not stand in direct contrast with the degradation of urban, natural and scenic qualities in the surrounding cultural landscape in Onitsha, Igboland, Nigeria and the world at large. The study further confirmed that the level of stakeholder's commitment, involvement, participation and education has contributed in the positive management of heritage sites in Onitsha but then the level of education has also contributed in hoodlums destruction of heritage site like the Zik's Estate in Inosi Onira.

The challenges of applying a sustainable development approach in Onitsha heritage sites have been classified into two main types: community-related and management-related. When these challenges are properly handled, using the proposed framework, sustainable development will be achieved.

However, we believe that the findings of this paper can inform other case studies, especially in the context of developing countries improper management of the heritage sites. Further research is suggested to investigate more successfully managed site and failed experiences of some heritage sites and compare the results to the findings of this research. Also, although this study sheds light on some of them, causes of and relations among the challenges and ways to tackle them still need further exploration. Also, the allocation of more specific responsibilities for each stakeholders group as suggested by this study and finding ways for the monitoring and evaluation of their accomplishment is another suggested area for

future research. Such a flow of research would enhance our understanding of the practice of Sustainable Heritage management and Tourism Development and help its implementation in developing countries.

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