

## **IMPERATIVE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS PEOPLE (SNP) PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM ACTIVITIES IN OSOGBO METROPOLIS OSUN STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Participation in tourism activities by Special Needs People (SNP) has both economic and social benefits. Tourism activities are pleasurable activities which can improve physical and mental health of the participants. This study attempts to investigate the imperative for special needs people (SNP) participation in tourism activities in Osogbo metropolis, Osun State, Nigeria. Sixty (60) respondents were purposively selected out of which fifty-seven (57) questionnaires were returned which represents 95%. Data were collected using structured interview schedule from schools for the handicapped in Osogbo metropolis. Statistical tools such as frequency counts, percentages and Chi-square were used for analysing the data. Hypotheses were tested and the calculated  $X^2$  (11.68) is greater than tabulated  $X^2$  (5.99). Chi square indicates that there is a significant relationship between benefits to be derived from participating in tourism activities by special needs people (SNP) in Osogbo metropolis. A major conclusion of this study is that tourism activities are imperative for special needs people in Osogbo metropolis provided adequate and related tourism activities information is made available. The study concluded there is a need to include special needs people (SNP) in tourism activities especially in the study area. The study recommended that government should establish holiday centres in the study area to encourage special needs people participation in tourism activities.*

**KEYWORDS:** Imperative, Special Needs People (SNP), Participation, Tourism Activities, Osogbo Metropolis

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is one of the leading sectors of the world economy and has been identified as a means of generating national income in less industrialized economies. It ranks high in the economic development efforts of many nations and it is becoming a dominant sector of economic activities worldwide. Today, no country in the world, whether industrialized or developing, can afford to ignore the importance of tourism activities to its economic, social and cultural development. In recent times, nations of the world have become increasingly more aware of the immense benefits derivable from tourism activities, and are assiduously developing their tourism sector (WTO, 2009).

Tourism is invaluable in heritage managing and conservation and it enhances the social standards of any given society. It can change both the environment and the lives of the members of that community including the lives of people with disabilities. Communities can attain harmony and progress through the procedures they adopt in order to attract tourists (Adzer, 2007).

Onu (2007) argued that participation in tourism activities by special needs people have both economic and social benefits. The economic benefits include job creation and income generation while the social benefit is being present at destinations at the same time as others

and participate as others welcome their presence. Social benefit is also in the area of international relations. Therefore, tourism activities are very imperative for both able individuals and people with disabilities.

Dakwo (2007) maintained that tourism activities are a vehicle for individual and collective fulfilment and that in Nigeria, tourism policies should respect the quality of men and women, children, elderly, the handicapped (Special Needs People) and minority groups. Tourism activities are very beneficial to people with special needs because it aids their mental and physical exertions, promote friendship and companionship or association with other persons. Educationally, it can sharpen their appreciation of nature manifold beauties and broaden the understanding of the laws of nature among others.

Many tourism experts have argued that special needs people (SNP) should be involved in tourism activities. For example, persons with disabilities (Special Needs People) range from amputation of limb, paraplegics resulting from accidents and congenital deficiencies need tourism activities for compensating their handicapping conditions. Participation in tourism activities provides relief from tension, boredom and anxiety. It also assists its capacity to promote, foster and develop human interaction and provides opportunities for participation in group situation. Tourism activity for special needs people (SNP) is viewed positively because it is seen as a phenomenon which improves people with disabilities happiness (Swarbrook et al 2007; Adekitan. 2007).

Based on the enormous benefits of tourism activities to the nations, communities and physically challenged people, observations have shown that people with special needs have been neglected in the planning of tourism activities (Obong, 2007). Demand for tourism and involvement in tourism activities by special needs individuals is not only very low but their non-inclusion in tourism policy and planning in the country is also evident (Okunola, 2007). It is against this backdrop that this study attempts to extensively investigate the imperative for special needs people (SNP) participation in tourism activities in Osogbo metropolis with a view to finding ways of involving people with disabilities in tourism activities in the study area.

One of the most controversial areas within tourism is the issue of people with disabilities involvement in tourism activities and their opportunities to take tourist trip. In many cases, tourists with disabilities are denied equal access to tourism products (Swarbrook et al, 2007).

In Nigeria, every human being has a right to tourism activities. No obstacle should be placed in the way of participation in tourism activities and enjoyment of the natural world and that government should develop tourism and encourage families, youths, students, the elderly and special needs people (SNP) to participate in tourism activities (Article 7, Global Code of Ethics for Tourism 1999 cited in Dakwo, 2007).

However, as a result of the immeasurable benefits of participation in tourism activities, it is expected that the involvement of special needs people (SNP) in tourism activities should be on the increase in all the states of the federation, most especially Osun state which accords great importance to tourism activities. Observations have shown that tourism destinations abound in Osun state and the state gives right of precedence to tourism activities to the able and healthy people but depriving people with disabilities (SNP). Their non-inclusion is also evident as they are systematically marginalised in Osun state tourism destinations planning and development as special needs people infrastructure, facilities and amenities that can motivate them to participate in tourism activities are not yet developed. This negates Articles 2 and 7 of the

global code of ethics for tourism in the framework of the right of all persons to use their free time for leisure pursuits or travel with respect to the choice of society of people without any form of discrimination.

The need for the involvement of special needs people (SNP) in tourism activities and benefits that Osun state will derive by including people with disabilities in the state tourism policy and planning necessitates this present study. This study, therefore, investigates the imperative for special needs people (SNP) participation in tourism activities in Osogbo metropolis with a view to finding ways of involving people with disabilities in tourism activities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Special need is an umbrella underneath which a staggering array of diagnoses can be wedged (Mauro, 2010). In the United States of America, a special need is a term used in chemical diagnostic and functional development to describe individuals who require assistance for disabilities that may be medical, or psychological. In the United Kingdom, special need often refers to special people within an educational context. This is also referred to as Special Educational Needs (SEN) ([www.answers.com/topic/special-needs-1](http://www.answers.com/topic/special-needs-1)). In Germany, a similar term exists. Special needs children are called *bensondere kinder* ("special children").

Special needs people (SNP) referred to those individuals with functional limitations relating to physical ability. The category includes the crippled, the deaf, the dumb, the blind, the mentally retarded, the learning disabled, the behavioural disorder or emotional disabilities and the exceptional individuals in our contemporary societies (Okunola, 2007). Orthopaedic impairment refers to set of individuals with various degrees of difficulties in physical mobility with or without aid. They also refer to as those who use crutches, braces, clamps, artificial legs or hands and wheel chairs (Adekitan, 2007)

Abosi, Obani and Ogue (2000) cited in Okunola (2007) defined special needs people (SNP) as those people with malformation or abnormality of body parts and or ill-health conditions that resulted in restrictions of normal movement and or limitation of energy in an individual.

Handicapped or people with disabilities are those individuals having some impairment affecting any one of these area: physical, mental, social, emotional and occupational. Okolie (2001) cited in Adekitan, (2007) defined disability as "any relatively severe chronic impairment of function resulting from disease, accident or congenital defect".

A direct concern for people with disabilities dated back to the renaissance period. Holy Bible revealed that quest for the care of the child with disabilities dated back to the time of the Hebrew law which represented prophetic thoughts and teachings (Leviticus 19: 14). Moreover, in most countries of the Islamic faithful, people are very concerned about the welfare of persons with disabilities (Okunola, 2007). In our society today, tourists with disabilities are denied equal access to tourist products. However, we need to recognise that there are many kinds of disabilities and degrees of disability. The conspicuous ones include;

- Mobility problems, ranging from elderly people who may find it difficult to climb stairs to people who are confined to a wheelchair.
- Sight difficulties ranging from minor impairment to a complex lack of vision.
- Hearing difficulties ranging from minor impairment to complete hearing loss.

These are the most widely recognized disabilities which affect tourism activities, but there are many others. Clearly, the need of such tourists may dictate every aspect of their holiday choice and may even determine whether they are able to take a holiday at all. The situation is further complicated if their conditions are such that they need someone to accompany them, for this person may not be easy to find, and will normally have to pay as well as the traveler with disabilities.

It has to be recognized that the situation for travelers with disabilities varies from country to country, being more sympathetic in the USA and Scandinavia than in most other countries. An American person with disabilities wishing to travel to Scandinavia, for instance, should be able to do so with the minimum of inconvenience. However, a Greek or Turkish traveler with disabilities wishing to visit South America may find it an impossible dream.

Social tourism is a largely European phenomenon that is based on the idea that tourism is a social right of the citizen and or tourism bring social benefits to the individuals both healthy and special needs people (SNP), so that some form of subsidy or state support is justified. Social tourism is significant in country such as Germany, France, and Spain. It takes a number of forms, including;

- Subsidized visits to health spas for people with particular disabilities, in France.
- Helps workers on lower incomes to be able to afford to take a holiday.
- Non-profit making holiday centres owned and operated by trade unions or voluntary sector organization in a wide range of European countries, notably in Germany, France or Spain.

Social tourism reached its peak, perhaps, in the former Soviet Union where it encompassed every worker and people with disabilities. It was the core of the Soviet domestic tourism industry. It also had an international dimension with the old Eastern bloc nations, where tourists with disabilities used subsidized resort facilities and accommodation.

Many factors are responsible for non-participation of persons with disabilities in tourism activities. John and Whewey (2004) pointed out some of the factors which influence participation of special needs people in tourism activities. They include:

- Individual factor:- The stage of an individual's life, his or her interests, attitudes, abilities, upbringing and personality.
- The circumstances and situation in which individuals find themselves:- the social setting of which they are a part, the time at their disposal, their job and their income
- Opportunities and support services available to the individual:- resources, facilities, programmes and activities; their quality and attractiveness, and their management.
- Self-confidence and family up-bringing.

A study on conference tourism by Ladkin (2006) revealed a recent consumer trend that will have an impact on the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences (or Confessions) and Exhibitions (MICE) sector relates to the Disabilities Discrimination Act (DDA), which took effect from October 2004 in the United Kingdom. This act gives special needs people (SNP) a full range of access rights including to buildings, tourism and travels, transport and commercial, and cultural and social activities. The impact of this on venues is that both new and existing facilities will have to be designed to allow for people with disabilities access. This includes access for those with visual and hearing disabilities, for wheelchair users and for people with

learning disabilities. Venues will have to adopt physical space, catering facilities and means of communication so that they are accessible to less able delegates.

## METHODOLOGY

### Procedures

This study adopted survey research design and the population of the study comprises all schools for the handicapped (both private and public) in Osogbo metropolis, Osun State. Structured questionnaires were administered to a total of sixty (60) respondents from the selected schools for the handicapped in the study area. The information was gathered using close ended questionnaire which was divided into two sections. 'Section A' contained the demographic information about the respondents while 'Section B' consisted of questions on the research questions based on the variables using five points Likert scale. Fifty-seven questionnaires were returned which represent 95% response and were analysed. The data collected were subjected to frequency counts and percentages. Chi-square statistical method was used to test hypotheses.

## RESULTS

The focus of this study was to investigate the imperative for special needs people (SNP) participation in tourism activities in Osogbo metropolis. The results from the findings were based on the variables identified which were considered to make participation in tourism activities imperative for special needs people. Having analysed and interpreted the data collected, the findings are discussed as follows: Data collected were used to test assumptions and hypotheses of the study. These are found to be adequate in producing the kind of information required to achieve the objectives of the study. Hypothesis which suggested that there is no significant relationship between benefits derivable from tourism activities and special needs people participation was tested and the calculated  $X^2$  (11.68) is greater than tabulated  $X^2$  (5.99). Chi square result indicates that there is a significant relationship between benefits to be derived from participating in tourism activities by special needs people (SNP) in Osogbo metropolis.

## HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between benefits to be derived from tourism activities and special needs people (SNP) participation.

**Table 1: Chi-square analysis of the hypothesis**

Level of Responses	Observe	Expected	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
Strongly Agree	18	19.0	-1	1	0.05263
Agree	30	19.0	11	121	6.3684
Undecided	9	19.0	-10	100	5.2632
Disagree	-	-	-	-	-
Strongly Disagree	-	-	-	-	-
Calculated Chi square					11.6842
Degree of freedom (df) is 3-1= 2					



The critical value of Chi-square at 0,05 level of significance is 5.99

From the above table the calculated  $X^2$  value of 11.68 is greater than the tabulated  $X^2$  value which is 5.99 at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between benefits to be derived from participating in tourism activities by special needs people is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there are benefits derivable from participating in tourism activities by special needs people (SNP) in Osogbo metropolis. It therefore means that participation in tourism activities have positive effect on special needs people.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This study established that tourism activities are beneficial to special needs people and this is in line with the assertions of Dakwo (2007); Adekitan (2007) which confirmed that special needs people should be more involved in tourism activities. It also agreed with Sfakianakis (2000) which argued that participation in tourism activities provides relief from tension, boredom and anxiety.

The study also confirmed that not all the activities such as song performance, walking and participation in cultural dance etc. are available for the disabled persons in the study area. A number of factors were identified to affecting the involvement of special needs people participation in tourism in the study area. Special needs people are not allowed by custom to participate in some festivals in Osogbo metropolis. More importantly, cost, terrorism, poor transportation and transportation delay, health and personal safety are also hindrances to participation.

Moreover, problems of accommodation to provide quality services needed, custom and food, interaction with fellow tourists and language barriers affect participation of special needs people. This finding agreed with Ladkin (2006) in relation to Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) which give special needs people a full range of access right to tourism and travel, accommodation and provision of services needed.

Study find out that special needs people lack awareness on tourism activities information. This is in line with Swarbrook et al (2007) assertion that tourism activities for special needs people should be seen as a phenomenon which improves people with disabilities happiness. Provisions of related tourism activities information were means to make special needs people aware of tourism activities in the study area. Factors which can enhance participation of special needs are extensively investigated. However, subsidizing cost of participation in tourism activities to special needs people who visit tourism destinations can encourage participation in the study area.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that it is imperative for the special needs people to participate in tourism activities in the study area. The state government and other tourism stakeholders need to establish non-profit holiday centres in the study area to encourage special needs people participation. This will go a long way to provide facilities which will cater for every participant

at destinations. Tourism policy and planning should also accommodate special needs people (SNP) facilities.

This study consequently recommends that holiday centres (recreational destinations) should be established by government of the state of Osun and also by all other stakeholders. This will encourage special needs people (SNP) participation in tourism activities in the study area. Participation will create an avenue for special needs people (SNP) to mingle and interact with fellow tourists without any form of discrimination.

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