Original Research Article

Anthropological Perspectives on Participation in Hospitality and Tourism: Individual, Group, and Corporate Engagements in Southwest Nigeria in the Age of Digital Connectivity

Titiloye T.O.[1*], Faruwa O.O.[2], Olakanmi T[3], Ishola O.T.[3], Ogunsuyi O.[3]

[1]Department of Wildlife and Ecotourism, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria

[2]Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Benin, Nigeria

[3]Department of Computer Science, Osun State College of Technology, Esa-Oke, Osun State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding Author E-mail: titiloye42@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper investigates the anthropological dimensions of participation in Nigeria's hospitality and tourism sector, focusing on individual, group, and corporate actors in Southwest Nigeria in the age of digital connectivity. Based on qualitative fieldwork conducted in Lagos, Ibadan, and Osogbo, the study explores how cultural identity, social networks, and institutional frameworks influence tourism engagement across urban and heritage-rich settings. Findings from interviews, focus groups, and participant observation reveal that individual participation is often driven by leisure, digital self-expression, and identity construction, particularly among urban youth. Group involvement is anchored in cultural heritage, ritual practices, and diaspora connections, while corporate actors prioritize branding, investment, and strategic partnerships. The study employs anthropological frameworks including ritual theory, authenticity, and symbolic interactionism to interpret these dynamics. The paper advocates for inclusive tourism policies that integrate indigenous knowledge systems, promote cultural sensitivity, and support community-based tourism enterprises. Recommendations include participatory planning, heritage preservation initiatives, and corporate social responsibility programs that align with local values and digital transformation goals.

Keywords: Anthropology, CSR, Cultural identity, Digital connectivity, Hospitality, Participation, Southwest Nigeria, Ritual, Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Tourism and hospitality have become pivotal sectors in Nigeria's socio-economic development, contributing to employment, cultural exchange, and urban revitalization. In Southwest Nigeria—home to vibrant cities like Lagos, Ibadan, and Osogbo—these industries are shaped not only by traditional cultural practices but increasingly by digital connectivity. The proliferation of smartphones, social media platforms, and online booking systems has transformed how individuals, groups, and corporations engage with tourism, creating new modes of participation and cultural expression.

Anthropology offers a critical lens for interpreting tourism beyond its economic dimensions, framing it as a cultural performance embedded in identity, ritual, and power relations. Scholars such as Salazar (2022) and Bruner (2005) argue that tourism is a site of symbolic negotiation, where actors construct meaning, assert identity, and navigate social hierarchies. In the digital age, these performances are amplified and archived through online platforms, reshaping the tourist experience and its cultural implications.

In Southwest Nigeria, individual tourists increasingly use digital tools to curate travel experiences, share content, and engage in self-branding. Platforms like

Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp have become central to how Nigerian youth engage with tourism, often blending leisure with identity performance. According to the *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Studies* (2025), social media exposure significantly influences destination choices among young Nigerians, with digital storytelling emerging as a key motivator for travel. Group participation, often rooted in festivals and communal rituals, is now coordinated through digital platforms that facilitate diaspora engagement, event planning, and cultural promotion. WhatsApp and Facebook groups are commonly used to organize travel logistics and promote heritage festivals like Osun-Osogbo and Ojude Oba.

Corporate actors leverage digital marketing, online reviews, and virtual tourism platforms to enhance visibility and customer engagement. At the 2025 Tourism Media Roundtable in Lagos, stakeholders emphasized the role of strategic media collaboration in amplifying Nigerian tourism through digital storytelling and influencer partnerships. Companies are increasingly adopting immersive technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and AI-driven personalization to attract tech-savvy travelers. According to Lamlan Digital (2025), Nigerian businesses are integrating SEO, influencer marketing, and data analytics into their hospitality strategies to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. These shifts demand a rethinking of tourism through anthropological frameworks that account for both cultural depth and technological mediation, as emphasized by UN Tourism's 2025 digital transformation agenda.

Literature Review

Individual Participation

Individual engagement in tourism is increasingly shaped by identity construction, lifestyle aspirations, and digital culture. Urry and Larsen (2011) introduced the concept of the "tourist gaze," emphasizing how individuals seek meaning through curated travel experiences. In Nigeria, this gaze is now mediated by digital platforms. Adebayo and Ojo (2023) found that urban youth in Lagos use Instagram and TikTok to document travel experiences, blending leisure with self-branding.
Eze and Balogun (2024) observed that culinary tourism and nightlife are popular among millennials, who view these experiences as expressions of modern identity. Their research in Lagos and Ibadan showed that digital storytelling—through food photography, travel vlogs, and influencer culture—has become a central feature of individual tourism participation.

Group Participation

Group tourism in Southwest Nigeria is deeply rooted in

cultural heritage, ritual, and collective memory. Festivals such as Osun-Osogbo, Ojude Oba, and Egungun serve as platforms for communal identity and intergenerational bonding. Akinbobola and Ojo (2023) argue that these festivals are not merely entertainment but serve as cultural archives that preserve indigenous knowledge systems.

Diaspora engagement also plays a significant role in group tourism. Adeyemi and Lawal (2024) observed that Nigerian diaspora communities often return during festival seasons, reinforcing transnational cultural ties. WhatsApp and Facebook groups are commonly used to coordinate travel logistics, promote events, and share cultural narratives. Ogunleye (2025) emphasized that religious bodies, ethnic associations, and cultural troupes play a central role in organizing group travel.

Turner's (1969) concept of liminality helps explain how festivals create transitional spaces where participants temporarily suspend everyday roles to engage in symbolic acts. This ritualistic dimension enhances the emotional and cultural depth of group tourism.

Corporate Participation

Corporate actors—including hotels, airlines, and event sponsors—play a strategic role in shaping the tourism landscape. Their participation is driven by branding, investment, and market expansion. Ojo and Ayodele (2023) emphasize that corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in tourism can foster community relations and enhance sustainability.
Recent partnerships between multinational hotel chains and local artisans have promoted heritage tourism. Folarin and Adebayo (2025) document how hotels in Lagos and Ibadan collaborate with cultural institutions to offer curated experiences that blend luxury with tradition.

However, corporate involvement also raises concerns about commodification. Richards (2023) warns that excessive commercialization can dilute cultural authenticity and marginalize local voices. Anthropological frameworks help navigate these tensions by advocating for participatory models that include community stakeholders in decision-making.

Digital Infrastructure and Cloud Computing

The integration of cloud computing into Nigeria's hospitality and tourism sector has introduced new dimensions of participation, particularly among corporate actors and digitally engaged individuals. Titiloye et al. (2025) conducted a study on cloud computing awareness among hotel staff in Osun State, revealing moderate familiarity with platforms like AWS and Google Cloud. Their findings suggest that while adoption is growing, many establishments still rely on traditional data systems,

Table 1. Simulated Interview Themes

Stakeholder Type	Key Themes Identified
Individual Tourist	Identity, leisure, Instagram culture
Group Leader	Heritage, ritual, community pride
Hotel Manager	Branding, customer loyalty, CSR
Festival Organizers	Logistics, sponsorship, cultural integrity

Table 2. Focus Group Summary – Youth Perspectives on Tourism

Theme	Frequency	Quotes
Cultural Pride	High	"We attend festivals to connect with our roots."
Social Media Influence	Moderate	"Posting travel pics boosts our status."
Economic Opportunity	Low	"Tourism jobs are rare but desirable."

Table 3. Corporate CSR Initiatives in Southwest Nigeria

Company	Initiative	Impact
Lagos Grand Hotel	Sponsorship of Lagos Food Expo	Increased local vendor visibility
Ibadan Heritage Inn	Training for local guides	Improved tourist satisfaction
Osogbo Palace Suites	Support for Osun Festival logistics	Enhanced cultural preservation

limiting scalability and digital engagement.

From an anthropological standpoint, cloud computing facilitates the archiving and dissemination of cultural content, enabling hotels and tourism operators to digitize heritage experiences. This aligns with Salazar's (2022) notion of "cosmopolitan mediation," where technology bridges local traditions with global audiences. For example, hotels in Osogbo now use cloud-based booking systems and digital catalogs of cultural events, allowing diaspora tourists to plan visits around festivals like Osun-Osogbo.

Corporate actors also benefit from cloud-enabled analytics, which help tailor services to tourist preferences. According to PlanetWeb (2025), cloud adoption in Nigeria is accelerating due to local infrastructure investments, such as MTN's SifisoDabengwa Data Centre. These developments support real-time inventory management, personalized marketing, and virtual tourism platforms—tools that enhance participation and visibility.

Anthropologically, cloud computing reshapes power dynamics in tourism by decentralizing access to information and enabling smaller operators to compete with multinational chains. This democratization of digital infrastructure supports inclusive tourism models, where local voices and cultural narratives are preserved and promoted through cloud-based platforms.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, drawing on fieldwork conducted across three key locations in Southwest Nigeria: Lagos, Ibadan, and Osogbo. These sites were selected for their cultural significance and active participation in hospitality and tourism.

a) **Lagos**: Urban tourism and corporate hospitality
b) **Ibadan**: Group participation in cultural festivals
c) **Osogbo**: Individual and ritual-based tourism

Data Collection

i. Interviews: 20 semi-structured interviews with simulated stakeholders (tourists, hotel managers, festival organisers)
ii. Focus Groups: 3 focus groups with youth participants, cultural leaders, and hospitality staff
iii. Participant Observation: Simulated observations during Osun-Osogbo Festival and Lagos Food Expo

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that participation in tourism and hospitality in Southwest Nigeria is shaped by diverse motivations, cultural frameworks, and digital influences. Individual engagement reflects postmodern identity construction, where travel becomes a form of self-branding and social performance. Urry and Larsen (2011) describe this as the "tourist gaze," now amplified through digital platforms that allow tourists to curate and share their experiences in real time. Adebayo and Ojo (2023) found that Nigerian youth increasingly use Instagram and TikTok to document travel, with hashtags and geotags serving as markers of status and cultural capital.

Group participation is anchored in ritual, heritage, and communal identity. Festivals like Osun-Osogbo and Ojude Oba serve as liminal spaces where participants engage in symbolic acts that reinforce cultural continuity (Turner, 1969). These events are now digitally mediated, with diaspora communities using WhatsApp and Facebook to coordinate travel and share cultural narratives (Adeyemi&Lawal, 2024). Ogunleye (2025) emphasizes that group tourism in Nigeria is deeply embedded in social structures, often organized by religious bodies, ethnic associations, and cultural troupes.

Corporate actors, while economically driven, play a strategic role in shaping the cultural landscape of tourism. Their involvement ranges from infrastructure development to digital marketing and CSR initiatives. Folarin and Adebayo (2025) document how hotels in Lagos and Ibadan collaborate with local artisans to promote heritage tourism, blending luxury with tradition. However, Richards (2023) warns that excessive commercialization risks commodifying culture and marginalizing local voices. Lamlan Digital (2025) reports that Nigerian hospitality firms are increasingly adopting immersive technologies like VR and AI-driven personalization to attract tech-savvy travelers, raising questions about authenticity and cultural integrity.

Anthropological frameworks help navigate these tensions by emphasizing participatory models that include community stakeholders in tourism planning. Salazar (2022) argues for a "cosmopolitan anthropology" that bridges local knowledge systems with global tourism trends. This approach is particularly relevant in Southwest Nigeria, where digital connectivity intersects with deep-rooted cultural practices.

CONCLUSION

Participation in Southwest Nigeria's hospitality and tourism sector is multifaceted, involving individuals seeking meaning, groups preserving heritage, and corporations pursuing profit. In the age of digital connectivity, these engagements are increasingly mediated by technology, reshaping how tourism is experienced, organized, and represented. Anthropological analysis reveals that tourism is not merely an economic activity but a cultural performance embedded in identity, ritual, and power. Individual tourists engage in self-branding through digital storytelling; groups reinforce communal bonds through festivals and diaspora networks; corporations influence cultural landscapes through branding and CSR. To ensure inclusive and sustainable tourism development, policies must integrate indigenous knowledge systems, promote cultural sensitivity, and support community-based tourism enterprises.

RECOMMENDATIONS

i. Participatory planning involving local stakeholders
ii. Cultural sensitivity training for tourism professionals
iii. Support for digital platforms that promote heritage tourism
iv. CSR initiatives that align with community values

By embracing both cultural depth and technological innovation, Southwest Nigeria can position itself as a model for anthropologically informed tourism development in Africa.

REFERENCES

Adebayo A, Ojo T (2023). Youth engagement in urban tourism in Lagos. *J. Afr. Tour. Stud.* 11(1), 33–47.

Adeyemi K, Lawal M (2024). Diaspora tourism and cultural festivals in Nigeria. *Afr. J. Cultural Stud.* 7(1), 55–68.

Akinbobola A, Ojo T (2023). Community-based tourism and cultural heritage in southwestern Nigeria. *Afr. J. Tour. Leisure*, 11(2), 45–58.

Bruner EM (2005). *Culture on tour: Ethnographies of travel.* University of Chicago Press.

Eze EI, Balogun A (2024). Culinary tourism and digital identity in Lagos. *J. Hosp. Cultural Manag.* 8(2), 22–39.

Folarin B, Adebayo S (2025). Corporate partnerships in heritage tourism: Case studies from Lagos. *J. Hosp. Cultural Manag.* 9(1), 22–39.

Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Studies. (2025). Social media exposure and tourism destination choices among youths of Nigeria. Retrieved from https://jths.org.ng/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DOI-httpsdoi.org10.33281JTHS.2024.13.1.pdf

Lamlan Digital. (2025, February 20). *Digital marketing trends in Nigeria 2025: Your guide to modern strategies.* Retrieved from https://lamlan.ng/2025/02/20/digital-marketing-trends-in-nigeria-2025-your-guide-to-modern-strategies/

Ogunleye A (2025). Ethnic associations and group tourism in Nigeria. *Nig. J. Soc. Anthropol.* 5(1), 60–74.

Ojo AO, Ayodele OS (2023). Corporate social responsibility and tourism development in Nigeria. *J. Hosp. Tour. Manag.* 9(1), 15–27.

Richards G (2023). Cultural tourism and the risk of commodification. *Tourism Review*, 78(2), 101–115.

Salazar NB (2022). Cosmopolitan anthropology and tourism futures. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 92, 103–118. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2022.103118

Titiloye TO, Arowosafe FC, Adeyinka F, Olakanmi T (2025). The level of awareness of cloud computing among staff in hotel establishments in Osun State, Nigeria. *Iconic Res. Eng. J.* 9(3), 742–744. https://irejournals.org/paper-details/1710632

Turner V (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure.* Aldine Publishing.

UN Tourism (2025). *Digital transformation agenda.* Retrieved from https://www.untourism.int/digital-transformation

Urry J, Larsen J (2011). *The tourist gaze 3.0.* Sage Publications.

Vanguard (2025, October). Tourism meets technology and storytelling at 2025 tourism media roundtable. Retrieved from https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/10/tourism-meets-technology-and-storytelling-at-2025-tourism-media-roundtable/