

**Ogbunike cave in Nigeria: a tourism potential asset in  
Anambra State**

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**Abstract**

Cave is one of the natural resources found in different communities in Nigeria. Mere people see it as nothing but the archaeologists and tourism experts see it as an asset to tourism development and environmental conservation. Visitors as well as tourists travel to have an outlook of a cave. Unfortunately, caves in Nigeria are abandoned in the forest without conservation. One of the ways to conserve cave is tourism. The paper examined the potentials of Ogbunike Cave as a tourism asset in Anambra State, Nigeria. Ogbunike Cave is associated with the living traditions of Ogbunike people and has over the years provided an avenue for sacred observances. The implication is that developing Ogbunike cave as a tourist asset help in the sustainability of the cave and its history for posterity. The result shows also that it creates job opportunity for the local population, thereby raising their standard of living. This study used in-depth interviews and direct observation to elicit information from respondents which will be analyzed qualitatively. Related literatures on the topics were used as secondary data. The work helps to create awareness on the values of the cave, while providing the needed inputs for harnessing its potentials.

**Key Words:** Potential, Ogbunike Cave, Tourism, Anambra State, Nigeria

## **Introduction**

Cave is a natural opening on the earth, large enough for human exploration (White, 2021). Such a cavity is formed in many types of rock and by various geological processes. The largest and most common caves are those formed by chemical reaction between circulating groundwater and bedrock composed of limestone or dolomite (White, 2021). The formation and development of caves is known as Speleogenesis, it can occur over the course of millions of years (Laureano, et. al., 2016). Some caves are formed in limestone by dissolution. According to Rindam (2014), caves are part of nature or ecotourism that is capable of attracting tourists from different part of the world. Caves are of a great value to an archaeologist and tourism operators. They help an archaeologist to know the dietary pattern of the past inhabitant. For a tourist, it helps him to have the experience of nature or cave tourism. Cave is a powerful tool for environmental conservation, which in turn enhances the touristic appeal

Nigeria is endowed with many caves of touristic and archaeological value within Igbo culture areas. These includes Ogbunike cave, Ajali cave, Owere-Ezukana, Agbogugu and Eha-Alumona etc. Ogbunike cave is one of the largest among the caves in South east Nigeria. These caves have tourism potentials that are yet to be untapped for tourism. Cave is seen as an independent “Cave Tourism” product to the market. Cave is rich natural attractions which when developed will be a source of revenue to the state and at the same time upgrade the standard of living of the host community where the cave is located. Infrastructural development and community development are assured in such area.

Ogbunike cave is one of the major tourist attractions in Anambra state. The cave was developed on a sandstone formation contrary to widely held view that caves normally develop on the limestone regions. In Igbo culture area, caves that have sandstone formation were also discovered by Umeji (1995) in her study on “Aspects of Speleology of the Scarplands of Eastern Nigeria”. This includes Uhu Chukwu and Okpu Chukwu caves in Isikwuato, Abia State, Nigeria. She also studied Isi-Ugwu Obukpa and Ogba Agu caves in Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria. Ogbunike cave has varied nature and potentials that have not been exploited or fully developed. The potentials range from mineral composition of the area to good water aquiver and as a tourist centre. Some traditions follow the discovery of Ogbunike cave. That means that the cave still retains its historical and spiritual significance. There is an annual festival called “*Emem Ogba*” celebrated in commemoration of the discovery of the cave. The researcher observed that Nkissa River flows by the side of the cave to a space which the water that drains from the cave empties itself. At the meeting point of the river and the stream, one can feel the warm water from the cave and the cold river water (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2007). At that point, difference in temperatures between the water and the river is made uniform or equilibrated. The integrity of the site can be attested to by the presence of the primary forests around the caves. The site has a sufficient boundary that protects its values from direct effect of human encroachment (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2007). It has a large land mass which is one of the criteria for sound tourism development. Within the vicinity of Ogbunike cave is also Mbida Ogba stream. Visitors to Ogbunike cave will have the advantage of enjoying the serenity of the stream.

Ogbunike cave was regarded as a symbol of justice by the indigenous people. Ogbunike cave has an attractive water fall. More often people inscribe their name on the wall showing the day and date they visited. Ogbunike cave with its landscape, wildlife, flora, and cultural elements constitutes major tourist attraction for the people of Ogbunike and environs. Visitors to the cave are advised to go with touch light and wear trouser as they prepare to crawl.

The fact is that not much has been written about the tourism aspect of this site. Okpoko (2006:8) noted that such aspect of cultural tourism has been least explored and exploited even when Nigeria is very rich in cultural heritage. The study is useful for cave study and to geographers, archaeologists and tourists who are always on the look to see something out from their own locality. The study serves as a reference material to further research on caves. The resources are to be exploited for economic and commercial benefits in a manner that ensures sustainability, while preserving its ecological health and natural beauty. The paper examines the potentials of Ogbunike cave for tourism development.

### **Method**

The study used an in-depth interview and direct observation to elicit information from respondents which was analyzed descriptively. Interview guide was used to extract information from the key informants. Six elders and four youths were interviewed. The youths serve as tourist's guides to the cave. The elders were the community heads. They help people to understand the history, management practices and value of the cave. Journal articles and books are used as secondary sources.

### **The study area**

The study is on Ogbunike cave in Oyi Local Government Area, Anambra State, Nigeria. Oyi Local Government Area is 10km from Onitsha, Nigeria. Ogbunike is located on longitude 6.40°E and the latitude 6.20°N (Isizoh, 2020). Ogbunike occupies an area of 5km square and it is bordered on its western and north western point by Oze and Nkwelle Ezunaka and on the east by Umudioka, and on the south by Ogidi town. The access route to the town is the Enugu- Onitsha road. Ogbunike villages are Osine, Ifite, Ukalo, Amawa, Azu, and Umore, 2021a). Ogbunike Cave is situated in a valley with tropical rain forest behind the "Ogba" hills in which lies St. Monica College, Ogbunike (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2007). The Ogbunike people are subsistence farmers. The number of yams in a man's barn, cocoyam and cassava farm shows how industrious a man is.



Fig1: Map of Ogbunike, Source: Isizoh, 2020

## **Literature review**

### **Cave tourism**

The tourism industry is a service industry which helps to enrich and uplift the revenue/economy of the destination and the local community (Vaidya, Singh and Gautam, 2018:33). Cigna and Forti (2013:10) notes that our ancestors visits cave since prehistory, they searched for a shelter or a burial place or also looking for minerals impossible to be found outside. They revealed that “touristic” interest toward caves is new. For Cigna and Forti (2013:10), caves are extremely fragile environment, of which transforming them into a tourism product strongly affects their pristine state. They suggested that strict rules should be followed before, during and after the tourism development. The first documented tourist visits of a cave took place in Mesopotamia. King of Assyria had his portrait carved at the entrance of the cave together with an inscription in 3100 BP (Optiz D., 1929 in Cigna and Forti, 2013:10).

A Cave is a “hollow in the earth, especially one opening more or less horizontally into a hill mountain” (Universalium, 2018). In United State and Canada, Caving or Cave Tourism is well known as “Spelunking” and in United Kingdom people used to say the word “Potholing” (Rathnayake, 2016).Cave provides stable atmosphere and humidity for a longer period of time, therefore travelling traders, monks, merchants are used to stay in rock-shelter caves as a temporary accommodation (Devrath, -); (Bapat, 2003). Rock Shelter caves are mostly observed in India, and these caves are well known because of their statuette, painting and epigraphy et which edify on the history and trade relations with the west area of the World (Chandra, M. 1977 in Vaidya, Singh and Gautam, 2018:33). Cave Tourism is a part of physical tourism product as caves are located in natural settings and their structures are tangible in nature (Rathnayake, 2016). Cave has a great potential for tourism development along with economic upliftment of the local community (Rindam, 2014).The marketing of Cave Tourism will ultimately help to conserve the environment through the protection of the cave site (Vaidya, Singh and Gautam, 2018:34). Show caves are caves that are managed by a government or commercial organization and made accessible to the general public, usually for an entrance fee. Unlike wild caves, they typically possess such features as constructed trails, guided tours, lighting, and regular opening hours (Shavanddasht, Karubi and Nekouie Sadry, 2017:166).

Caves are natural phenomena that serve as an abode for man and animal. It is a habitat enriched with a lot of data about prehistoric man; information relating to environmental changes that occur in the environment especially during paleoecological and paleoclimatic times (Onwudufor and Odum, 2015). Cave has drawn the attention of archaeologists, geologists, historians, anthropologists, tourism professionals among others (Odum, 2019:129). For Ibeanu (2006) caves are avenue researchers inspect most artifacts and ecofacts in-situ. This was because most caves have not been altered by human activities. Ibeanu and Umeji (2001) notes that caves also provide information on the environmental conditions of the area.

Bočić, Lukić and Opačić (2006:13) notes that people visit caves out of aesthetic, emotional, recreational, educative and sometimes medical reasons. This is in line with Tongkul (2005) who asserts that cave tourism resources are based also on the intrinsic values of scientific, aesthetic, recreational and cultural values. The scientific value indicates important geological records, history of the cave formation or earth, and mineralogy,

i.e. an interest in fossils, rocks and minerals. Aesthetic values are related to the mystery and formidable wonder of geological landforms or unusual geomorphologic features in a cave, and surrounding landscapes. Recreational value is related to those who enjoy exploring inner caves, boating in caves, hiking and camping around caves that are generally located in valleys, mountain terrain, waterfalls, beaches, or limestone areas. Cultural value is linked to superstitious rituals, residents' beliefs and wishes, traditional meaning, and historical and archeological records (Kim, Kim, Park and Guo, 2008).

Ogbunike cave has integrity that made it to be well represented on the World Heritage List. The level of integrity is also an important consideration, because World Heritage is concerned with best that planet Earth has to offer. Thus, inscribed properties are expected to meet the highest international standards (IUCN, 2008:20). This is the reason why tourism is an option for the development of Ogbunike cave.

Oguamanam and Okonkwo (2018:21) in their study of Mmaku and Achi caves for geotourism, note that the geology and landscape constitute a form of natural area tourism known as geotourism. For them, geotourism attractions are visited and developed due to their valued contributions to community development, income generation and employment opportunities. For Newsome and Dowling (2010) geotourism is a form of nature-based tourism that focuses on landscape and geology, promoting tourism to geosites and conservation of geodiversity. It promotes tourism to geosites and the conservation of geodiversity and understanding of earth sciences through appreciation and learning" (Rachmawati and Sunkar, 2013). Ibeanu (2000), writing on Okigwe caves and the need to develop the caves into tourist resort suggested that through sustainable documentation, interpretation and education of the people the cave could be conserved properly.

## **Findings**

### **Description of Ogbunike cave**

Ogbunike cave is an identity and a thing of pride to the people of Ogbunike. To the natives the cave is known as "*Ogba*". In the tradition of Ogbunike people, *Ogba* was believed to be a spirit god that is resident in caves in the middle of a large rock. He was an all – seeing spirit who could detect crimes especially robbery. When someone is accused of a crime, he could prove his innocence by entering the cave. The guilty ones never return alive. People use the name of the town where the cave was located to describe the site, which is Ogbunike cave.

There are myths associated with the cave's existence. The people of Ogbunike worshipped the cave before the arrival of the Europeans to the town in 1894, when they built St Monica's College (Ayaduno, 1996). Ogbunike cave was believed by the communities that it has been in existence since creation. It was not made by man rather it was discovered by man. The tourists guide said that Ogbunike cave was discovered by a man called "Ukwa" from Umucheke kindred in Ifite. Ukwa was a great hunter, during one of his hunting expeditions; he encountered a gigantic phantom who sat majestically on his throne in the thick forest. A phantom is assumed to be a ghost or an apparition of a dead person. Ukwa called his friend Eburu to accompany him to meet the phantom. Eburu is a co-hunter and a native of Adegbe kindred of Ifite Ogbunike. The phantom who was the god of the cave spelled out the taboos as was listed at the signboard.

Descending into the valley where the cave is located is a lengthy walkway made up of about 317 steps. The steps were constructed by the Anambra State Government in the mid-90s. At the end of the walkway is an open space used as a reception point where visitors by tradition remove their shoes. The reception point is a table land of about 5 x 5 square meters used also as a relaxation spot by visitors to the cave. The cave contains a large bat colony which produced a large deposit of guano. The immediate environment of the cave up to about 200 meters radius is a thick tropical type of vegetation. Among the fauna of the site are deers, antelopes, grass cutters, porcupines, rabbit alligators, snakes and frogs. Others are fishes, crabs and birds (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2007).

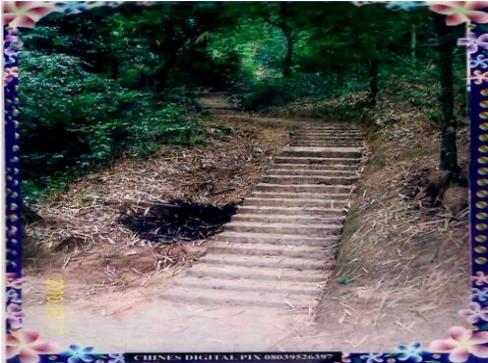
Because of peoples' belief, visit to the cave is made bare footed. Painting graffiti on the walls is not forbidden, so many walls have them. According to Mutoe-Okafor *et. al.*, (1996), this is where Africans hid from slave raiding parties during the African holocaust period. This shows that the cave has been in use over centuries by the local people. The spiritual significance is still apparent, as the "*EmemOgba*" celebration takes place every year to commemorate the cave. This site was added to the UNESCO World heritage tentative list on 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2007 in the mixed (cultural + natural) category.

The main cave consists of a massive structure with a big open chamber of about 5m high, 10m wide and 3m long at the entrance, which consist five networks of tunnels leading to different directions. The dimension is 350m length (Ayadiuno, 1996). The cave could be described as a wonder of nature by people. The indigenous people do not know the age of the cave.

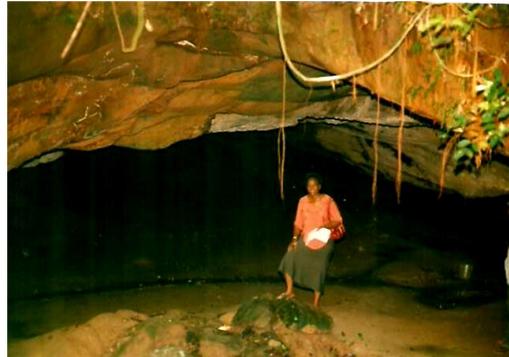
The cave has six tunnels which branched off from the dome shaped entrance, four on the right handside and two on the left. The entrance to the tunnels is a wide and tapering mysterious hemispherical vault of solid rock with all season cool spring water dripping from top and all corners. The cave's horst is about 70m high. Steep on the east side with a forest of huge species of trees, lianes and grasses. The roots of the plants do not penetrate the interior part of the cave (Ayaduno, 1996). The entrance is about 5m high and 8m wide. The cave walls have joints and fractures, ledges and indurate lateritic covering. The cave greets one with water, dropping from the rock.

Some of the tunnels are inter-connected and widen to roomy spaces while narrowing almost too impassable fissures in others. Some of these tunnels turn out to be blind valleys. There are accumulation of calcium carbonate on the ceilings, walls and boulders of rock on the floor (Ayadiuno, 1996). Other features found are the columns and pillars. The community in ancient times named the features to reflect the characteristics of each apartment. These are called "*Obi Ogba*" (the waiting room inside), "*Obi Okpala Ogbu*" (son's waiting room), "*Mwo Ede Nwunye Ogba*" (store room for the son's wife), "*Mbida Ogba*" (waterfall), "*Anwu Dike Ogba* (the corridor in the main entrance)" Nkissa River, and the vegetation.

There are parts of the cave the people gave name due to its formation. One of them is called the "Roundabout" because of its semi-circular form. Another is called "the slide" because you ascend the tunnel gradually reaching the peak. There is another called "corner kick" as a result of its "L" shape. For touring inside the cave, one need torch light, tough and rough jeans to protect the elbows and a pocket compass in case one misses his bearing and no shoes as they retard movement.



**Plate 1:** The Staircase Leading to the Cave



**Plate 2:** The Cave Corridor



**Plate3:** The Nkissa River



**Plate 4:** The Tunnel where the cave water flows out

### **Festival in honour of the cave**

The festival is celebrated annually on December and it is called “*Imem Ogba*”. It lasts for three days. This goes with a lot of entertainment, feasting, dancing, and masquerading within that period. The festival creates avenue for the visitors and tourists to visit the town. The in-laws, friends and relatives visit each other to exchange greetings and pleasantries. A special diet is prepared at that period called “*Mbidi Ogba*”.

At the commencement of the festival, the elders in the village come together with the chief priest to have a meeting on how to celebrate the festival. Some religious sacrifices and rituals are done to appease the god of the cave. One month before the festival a mid-night masquerade comes out and hangs his bag on a tree at the “*Eke Ogba*” market square. This is a sign for the people to know that the festival is fast approaching. “*Eke Ogba*” is fondly called “*Eke Ogbunike*”. It was built in Ukwu’s village since he was the one who discovered the

cave and the first Chief priest. On the festival day, the men will be dressed in lions skin clothes carrying their dane guns, the women wear “*jigidas*” on their waist and beautify their bodies with calm wood lotion (*Uhie*) and black indigo (*Uli*).

## **Discussion**

Tourism is defined as all travel that result in one or more nights being spent away from home. The purpose of travel follows the United Nations Statistical commission’s definition, which encompasses leisure, business and other reasons (Dieke, 2006). Caves are natural tourist attraction that boosts local economy through job creation, and provision of infrastructures to the host communities. They need to be maintained and developed as a cultural heritage for enjoyment, education, relaxation and for posterity.

Ogbunike cave is one of the most interesting tourist centres in the country. More work is needed to develop its potentials. Presently, it is still in its original state except the stair case and scanty recreational building constructed by the Federal government through Anambra state government. There is no record of register of tourist visit at the cave rather tourists print their names on the hard rock housing the caves as a sign of them being there. The guides also take N1, 500.00 as an entrance fee. It is not a stable price, it is negotiable. The researcher noticed that anybody could answer tourist guide because the government or the community do not employ any guide. Any male person from the community could act as a tourists guide. Thus, no accountability of the money collected and no tourist’s record. The major tourist attractions in Ogbunike cave includes “*Obi Ogba*”, this is the waiting room or cave corridor, which is the main entrance with waters dripping from the ceiling (see plate 2). This chamber accommodates more than 2,000 people during the Nigerian Biafra war (1967-1970) according to the respondents. “*Obi Okpala Ogbu*” was seen as the son’s own reception or waiting room. “*Mwo Ede Nwanye Ogba*”, which was assumed as the wife’s store house, where she packs cocoyam (*xythozoma esculenta*) after harvesting. A visit to the room revealed elements of packing lots inform of grooves on the hard rock. “*Mbida Ogba*” is the waterfall in Ogba forest. An interview with the tour guides and elders shows that the waterfall and the river have a healing effect. People collect water with water bottles which they used for healing. Then “*Anwu Dike Ogba*” – the corridor in the main entrance which housed people during the Nigerian Civil war.

Nkissa River and entire cave environment are tourist’s attractions. They all provide a good scenic attraction to the tourists. Other tourist attractions within the cave is one place called the “corner Kick” because of its “L” shape. There is also the “Roundabout” named because of its semi- circular form, as mentioned before. The festival in honour of the cave and its spirit calls for tourism promotion and development. Ogbunike cave is a tourist’s site that also attracts adventurers from difference parts of the world. People come from far and near to see this great wonders of nature. In order to have a good assessment of the cave, swot analysis was used. The vegetation is cool, the old and huge trees that are really eye-catching provides a soothing effect to tourists.

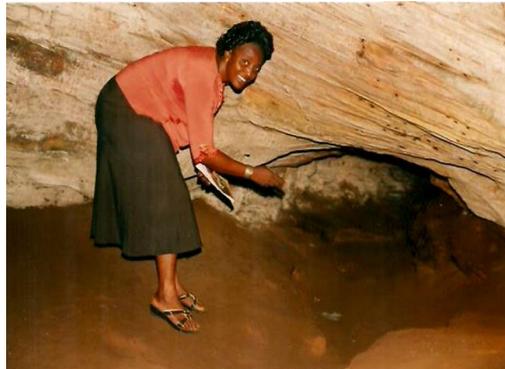
Traditional method has been used in the management of the Ogbunike cave, which helps to maintain its integrity. Odum (2009:129) asserts that traditional regulations and festivals associated with caves reinforce conservation around caves. He maintained that traditional conservation mechanisms should align with the

principles of ecotourism making ecotourism ideal for cave conservation. This has aided the conservation of patches of biodiversity around caves and boosts caves ecotourism appeal. This might be the reason why the tourism sector showed interest in the development of the cave. This was evident on the stair case, two tourist guest houses, and the sign board that were built by the Federal Government and the Anambra State Government of Nigeria at the cave site. Ogbunike cave accounts high tourists visit during festive period like Christmas Easter and New yam festival. Long vacation is another time that tourists visit the site. At times three (3) to five (5) people visit the site on a day except group visit.

Nature protection in Croatia depends largely on laws and regulations, which are passed not only to preserve natural resources from exploitation, but also to protect the endangered species (Opačić, 2001). The basic legal document for nature protection nowadays is Nature Protection Act from 2003 (Bočić, Lukić and Opačić, :2006). According to one of the respondents, he said that the animals like bat, python that are in the cave are harmless except if one goes inside the cave with a harmful object or without the indigene as a tourist guide.



**Plate 5:** The waterfall in the cave forest ( *Mbida Ogba*)



**Plate 6:** The entrance leading to one of the tunnel.

**Table 1: Swot Analysis of Ogbunike Cave**

<i>Strengths or Internal Factors</i>	<i>Opportunities or External Factors</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>The people want the cave to be developed</i></li> <li>➤ <i>It was proposed as a world heritage site in 2005</i></li> <li>➤ <i>It has good features for tourism and environmental study.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Cultural festival is performed in honour of the cave.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The people have pleasant welcoming disposition</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The site is known beyond the vicinity</i></li> <li>➤ <i>It is accessible</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Ogbunike is a mini town close to urban centre.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The Ogbunike town has power supply that keeps tourists as they visit.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>It has nearby hotels that could take care of the tourists.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>They have large population that can benefit from the cave if properly developed.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>There plenty of shops along the way to the cave.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Traditional management practices sustain the cave till now.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Inspite that the government does not pay much attention to the development of the site, the community assign individuals to guard and look after the cave. This creates an opportunity for tourism development</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The cave is still intact.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Helped to boost the cultural and social life of the entire community</i></li> <li>➤ <i>It is one of the best caves found in, southeastern Nigeria and good area for</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>If the cave is harnessed for tourism, it will help to conserve the area for posterity.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Developing the area for tourism add to economic base of the state and raise the standard of the local people.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The cave represents the identity and pride of Ogbunike people.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>It will create job opportunity to the communities and the people of Anambra state.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The unique nature of Ogbunike cave will attract both international and local tourists from far and near.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The development of the caves brings to limelight the rich cultural heritage of Anambra State.</i></li> </ul>

*cultural and heritage tourism development.*

**Threats**

- *There are no clear policies, procedures and guidelines for the promotion of the potential tourism products.*
- *People do not enter the cave because of the animals that inhabit the cave area.*
- *People have started encroaching the cave area due to neglect by the government to help to conserve the area through tourism development.*
- *Some of the cave area has started falling off due to lack of scientific conservation.*

**Weakness**

- Security of the area is not assured because at times people visit there without seeing any guide.
- The origin of the cave depends on myth which is not certain.
- Unregulated visitors activities causes defacement of the cave.
- The road leading to the cave is a pathway and is rough.
- The government of Nigeria and that of Anambra state do not have strict policy guiding the cave area. This shows that they pay lip attention on the development of the cave.
- The two reception houses built at the entrance do not have tourism facilities that can keep tourists for a moment.

The Swot analysis assessed the tourism potentials of the Ogbunike cave. It revealed that Ogbunike cave has unique features that could be harnessed for tourism development. However, tourism helps to upgrade the standard of living of the local people. It is important to note that the amount realized to the purse of Ifite Progressive Movement through the tourist's guide is nothing compared to what the state and the community would benefit if the site is harnessed. On tourists visit to the cave, they buy goods from the local shops/restaurants and also use the available local transport services and some use nearby hotels and guest houses for their comfort. The money paid for these services goes to the purse of the local people, thus, increasing the local income. For tourist transportation, accommodation and sustenance are the major products that form the criteria for the choice of a destination. They also sell their traditional craft as souvenir to the tourists, which they take home as a reminder. The purchase of locally made crafts by the tourists encouraged them to produce more. These help to sustain the local handwork. This is because the host communities found a ready market for their products.

The components of cultural tourism like festivals and craft centres attracts foreign exchange, increases local income and provides job for the local population (Okpoko and Okpoko 2002). Developing the site involves local people from the initial planning to the end. At the same time local people were employed to take care of

the tourism destination because the potential tourism resource is situated in their area. The faith or the sustainability of the tourism resource depends in their hands. With the community participation, tourism development will achieve its sustainability. With the development of Ogbunike cave attracts infrastructural development to the host community. The rough road leading to Ogbunike cave will be tarred and the power supply will be extended to the cave environment and beyond. Pipe borne water will be circulated in the communities and cave areas in order to keep the tourists. Caves have educational value. Students of cultural studies study caves as a cultural identity of a given people. Students from primary, secondary and tertiary institution go for field work or excursion in caves. There is lots of such visit to Ogbunike cave. If proper records are kept, one will have realized that school from far places like Lagos, Abuja visits Ogbunike cave. Unfortunately there is no statistics of tourists or schools that visit the cave.

### **The management practices of the cave**

Presently, Ogbunike cave is under the management of Ifite Ogbunike progressive Union. They appoint people as tourists' guides, who assist tourists to walk safely inside the cave without missing his/her way. In 2016, a new sign board was erected that has all the rules and regulations clearly written. The rules and regulations are as follows:

- Only the cave manager and assistant are authorised to operate at the cave.
- You are duty bound to pay for the upkeep of the cave.
- Official hours are 8am-5pm. Visitors outside official hours are at their own risk.
- Women in their menstrual period are prohibited.
- Do not steal within or around the cave.
- Deforestation of the cave environment attracts a fine of N5, 000.00 only.
- Water in containers at the main entrance is for drinking. Please do not abuse.
- All items of sacrifice must be dropped in the Ogba river
- Fighting attracts a fine of N5, 000.00.



**Plate 7:** Sign Board at the Entrance of Ogbunike Cave

**Plate 8:** The Tourist Mini Guest House.

### **Socio cultural and religious importance**

Ogbunike cave is regarded as one of the greatest gifts to Ogbunike people. It has soci-cultural and religious value. Religiously, the cave has a deity called “*Ogba Kisa Ogwugwu*”. Most of its adherents were pegand. The deity is in the front of the cave corridor. The tree that is the physical symbol of deity was clothed with white cloth; one could see food debris and sprinkled blood of animal around it. The Chief Priest is Ogbuefi Nwankwo Ezekwesili Nwosu. The duty of the priest is to consult the oracle for the host community and the neighbouring towns. The chief priest has rules that guide his conduct. One of the taboos was that the Chief Priest must not eat any carnivorous animals in the cave. One of the respondents said that in the olden days that the cave helps the local people to curb crimes like stealing and killing human beings. Anybody that is involved in such act does not visit the cave, if not the person will face its consequences. Anybody that commits an offence and enters the cave will have problem. Thus, the host communities regard the place as a mini court.

The spiritualist and religious people go to the cave for prayers and at times for a retreat. The native doctors go there to perform some rituals. It serves as a praying ground for some celestial and sabaterian churches. This is because of the spiritual atmosphere of the area. The evidence is seen as a lot of melted candle waxes of different colours were found on a big stone at the bank of the river in front of “*Obi Okpala Ogba*”. There was a plate that contains N5.00 and stone was used to hold the money. Cloths of different colours (white, black and red cloths) were tied on the area where the River Nkissa and cave water meet. Calabashes were found containing different items like drinks (fanta and coke), handkerchiefs, copper coins etc. Religiously people collect water from the cave which they use for healing. For the indigenous people water from the cave cures some illness like tuberculosis. It can help to make barren women to conceive said one of the respondents. A pregnant woman who use to drinking water from the cave experiences safe delivery. As a result, many tourists who visit the cave always come along with jerry cans for them to collect water for drinking. “Pastors and native doctors always come to the cave area to collect water for miracles and healing. Many people have given testimonies that they received healing after drinking the water. The native doctors go there on Eke market days to collect water with containers. They use the water on their patients.

The researcher on her way out from the cave with the research guide met a great native doctor of Ogbunike town going down to the cave with some group of people for prayers (incantations) and sacrifices. The cave has sign board that shows the direction and regulations guiding the cave and its environs. In 2000, an indigene, Dr. Chuba Okadigbo knew the economic and spiritual values of the cave and went and hid the mace, the symbol of authority of the legislature inside Ogbunike cave (Ubabukoh, 2017). Socially people go to Ogbunike cave for picnic and rafting.



**Plate 9:** The Shrine in front of the Cave



**Plate 10:** The Graffiti in the Cave Walls

### **Harnessing the Tourism Potentials of Ogbunike Cave**

The potentials of Ogbunike cave are the cultural festival celebrated in honour of Ogbunike cave, the cave structure, the scenic cave environment, the waterfall and the Nkissi River. These potentials attract tourists far and near to the cave. The history of the cave should be documented for touristic purposes.

Every development project must be preceded with an impact assessment of the proposed project on the environment. It is an attempt to anticipate the likely effects of the project activities on the environment. The effects could be positive or negative. The aim is to make developmental project more environmental friendly. In the development of the attractions into tourist resort there should be identification and inventory of the existing situation. The feasibility study helps to x-ray the costs and benefits of developing the cave by the developers. Tourism adds to the economy of the state and Nigeria at large. The benefits outweigh the costs as discussed above.

For the sustainability of Ogbunike cave, the area should be fenced in order to avoid encroachment. This can only be done when all the necessary agreements have been reached and signed by all the stakeholders (the villagers or host community, government and the project proprietors). There should be clearing of some grasses and shrubs on the attractions. Low walled thatched huts should be built at different points where tourist can relax for a while.

For tourism to thrive in Ogbunike cave basic infrastructural facilities like good roads, building good hotels, clean water supply, accommodation and food centers, electricity etc. Traditional architectural designs, thatched houses with design and entertainment in the most traditional way should also be incorporated. Generally developing and packaging the attractions into tourist resort or tourism product is concerned with the provision

of tourism infrastructures and superstructures. Suitable access roads leading to the cave should be tarred from the main road through St Monicas's college down to the cave and also through Onitsha –Enugu expressway at the tempo mill Umunya to the cave. Standard accommodation should be provided which will also have other components or services that could help the tourist to stay longer. The accommodation should be able to meet the demand of different classes of visitors. Restuarants and guest houses should be built along the road leading to the cave area. As one move through the untarred road to the site, there is not even small shop for one to buy even pure water. Developing the cave will attract shops along the area, thereby increasing the local economy. GSM network and internet services should be made available at Ogbunike cave site. Awareness needs to be created, by printing a handbook by Anambra State Tourism Board to show the picture of the cave and the location. On this the general public and most importantly the contagious community needs to be aware of the importance of the resources. Emphasis should be placed on reaching an agreement with the stakeholder community by educating them and gaining their support and interest in protecting the resource as well as generating greater benefits to these communities from the cave's operations. The site could be televised on the screen often for people to know and see such a wonderful work of nature. The development of the cave involves the effort of the entire tourism sector, non-governmental organization (NGO) and the community. There are government organizations in charge of tourism development. These include, National Commission for Museum and Monuments, Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation, and State Tourism Board, Local Government Tourism Committee, and Ministry of Information, Culture & Tourism. Both the government and non-governmental organizations should team together in the development of Ogbunike cave. Community participation should be adopted in the development of the cave.

The waterfall needs to be developed and a swimming pool attached to it, where the water from the waterfall plunges into. A good drainage system should be provided where the excess water flows out of the pool. The roads leading to the waterfall should be made accessible and asphalted. The cave having a good sparse of land creates an avenue for tourism development. Public gardens, parks, children's playground, sports facilities could be constructed which will be useful for both local tourists and foreign tourists while exploring the beauty of the cave. Car parks should be constructed where visitors start to experience some of the natural vegetation and the features of a typical sandstone cave. A reception foyer with ticket sales booths should be provided. This will generate considerable profits for the state or the promoter of such facilities. There should be a kind of zoological garden to accommodate both the cave fauna and those imported from outside. Comparison could be made by the tourist on these faunas from different geographical location.

Since there is power supply from St Monica's college to the town, the government should help to extend it to the Ogbunike cave environment. They should provide new transformer to serve the structures that will be constructed on the cave's site. Electric tram should be provided inside the cave to highlight the beauty of the cave formations and a tour guide points placed to show directions into the core attractions inside the cave. Lecture garden should be built where students that visit the cave can stay and receive lectures from the cave guides. All these facilities will help to attract international and local tourists. This will help to boost the economy of Ogbunike people and the nation at large. If all these facilities especially hotels are built a lot of people would have been preffered to stay close to their destination area instead of going to the Awka to logde in a hotel when

they have business in Anambra State. Mr Chux Brain, a mathematician says that having visited the cave in 2016, the cave can automatically become Anambra's major revenue earner if well harnessed for tourism ( Ubabukoh, 2017). Just as we have many caves which have been explored and developed for tourism purposes. For instance, Harrison's cave in the central upland area of Barbados has been developed as a tourist attraction.

### **Archaeological importance of cave**

Caves are archaeological treasure houses for learning about the people since items placed in caves are protected from climatic condition and scavenging animals. Cave paintings are of particular interest to archaeologists. They use it to understand the people that lived in the area in the past. One example is the Great Cave of Niah, in Malaysia, which contains evidence of human habitation dating back 40,000 years (Shreeve, 2006). Another is the Diepkloof Rock Shelter in South Africa which contains evidence of human habitation and use of symbols dating back 60,000 years. Caves are also used for preservation or aging of wine and cheese. The constant, slightly chilly temperature and high humidity that most caves possess makes them ideal for such uses (Texier *et al*, 2010).

Caves are of particular interest to archaeology as well as the archaeologist. Ogbunike cave has served as transient and /or long term habitation sites for man at various times in the past. Ogbunike cave has been believed to have preserved the cultural sequence of human occupations that made use of the cave. Ibeanu and Umeji (2001) noted that caves and rock shelters can provide useful information on paleoecology as well as paleoclimatic changes. The analyses of cave deposits brought by natural agencies (wind, denudation), human coprolite and animals' droppings such as bats guano are veritable sources of information on early human subsistence patterns and changes in vegetation in a given area. The traditional importance or relevance of caves to archaeology is that it has been a major source of information on the environment and adaptive mechanisms of Paleolithic hunter-gatherers in Nigeria, Africa and parts of the world (Murty, 1985). Ogbunike cave can also be useful for test excavation.

For us not to neglect such a great heritage, Anambra State tourism board with the ministry of culture and tourism should be the supervisory and co-ordinating body empowered to give derivation and policy guidance on development of Ogbunike cave. There should be an official register kept by the tourism board on the site that takes care of tourist's data. The government should have alliance with the host community on the planning and implementation of developmental programmes. Okpoko (2006:1) asserted that planning is crucial if we are to harness the huge heritage resources of Africa for tourism. Planning is future oriented and provides a frame work by which policy is made into a structure that enables implementation (Eagles, McCool and Haynes, 2002).

The tourist or cave guides in Ogbunike cave are not trained. Cave guides should be trained to correctly inform the visitors about the cave and its environment. Unfortunately, the guides have not been trained properly and, notwithstanding that they are doing their best, the overall result will not be very good. It is very important that the guides receive proper instructions about the environmental aspects of the cave as well as dealing with the public. It is important that guides are skilled in tactfully avoiding entering into discussions, which can have a detrimental effect on the overall tour. The guides are the guardians of the cave and they must be ready to stop any misbehaviour by the visitors, which could endanger the cave environment.

## Conclusion

Ogbunike cave has potentials that could boost the economy of the nation if properly conserved, developed and managed through tourism. The influx of tourists as well as visitors in Ogbunike cave with its landmass is the assurance of its contributions to the local people, tourism sectors and Anambra state in general. The cave serves as a holiday resort and excursion ground to students and researchers in vacation. Therefore, it provides an educational experience and is a popular site for ecological and other field visits. Ogbunike cave with its high quality tourism potentials brings Ogbunike and its environment to the global recognition. The greatest challenge of Ogbunike cave is to find the balance between the use of the cave for tourism purposes and meeting the need of its customers, while ensuring that some of the natural vegetation that are unique are not disturbed. This balance requires planning and sensitive management by the stakeholders.

Ogbunike cave has very challenging and exciting landscapes, which form part of tourism development. The tourism potentials form the most essential element in tourism product. The cave also provides a valuable resort for educationists. Tourism education will engender a sense of cultural pride on students studying Archaeology and Tourism. Thus our present educational system and the universities should anchor our educational system on Africa's cultural heritage and values. It is only through this way that our (Africa) past can become economically sustainable, and contribute to global education, research, tourism while promoting the past accomplishments of humanities.

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