

Digital Marketing Strategies for Promoting Enugu State's Tourism Boom: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Social Media, Influencer Partnerships, and Mobile-First Campaigns

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ABSTRACT

Enugu State is executing one of Nigeria's most ambitious sub-national tourism programmes, targeting up to three million annual visitors through the revitalisation of flagship sites including Awhum Waterfall and Cave, Okpatu (Cross of Hope) Hill, Nsude Pyramid Park, Ngwo Pine Forest, and Akwuke Sand Beach, alongside supporting infrastructure such as canopy walkways, a commercial zipline, and a planned Okpatu–Awhum cable car. This study evaluated the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies—social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, and mobile-first tactics—in generating awareness, interest, and visitation intention among domestic and international audiences. A mixed survey of 312 respondents (domestic potential visitors in South-East/South-South Nigeria and diaspora/international respondents reached online) was conducted between May and July 2026. Descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, and multiple regression were applied. Results indicated high exposure to Instagram and TikTok content about the sites, moderate-to-strong influence of influencer-generated content on interest and intention, and superior performance of short-form, mobile-optimised video over static posts. Domestic respondents showed higher conversion from awareness to intention; international respondents placed greater weight on professional photography, safety cues, and ease of digital booking. Social media engagement and influencer credibility jointly explained 34.2% of variance in visitation intention. Recommendations centre on integrated content calendars, micro-influencer programmes rooted in local communities, mobile-first booking journeys, and measurement frameworks aligned with the state's visitor-volume targets.

Keywords: digital marketing; tourism promotion; social media; influencer marketing; mobile-first campaigns; Enugu State; Awhum; Ngwo; Nsude; Okpatu; Akwuke

1. Introduction

Under the administration of Governor Peter Mbah, Enugu State has elevated tourism to a central pillar of its strategy to grow the state economy toward a \$30 billion target and to become a premier destination for living, investment, and visitation. Concrete projects include the redevelopment of Ngwo Pine Forest (featuring Nigeria's first commercial zipline), a 600-metre canopy walkway and cultural park at Nsude Pyramids, enhanced visitor facilities and boardwalks at Awhum Waterfall and Cave, the monumental Cross of Hope at Okpatu Hill with a planned 5.3 km cable-car link to Awhum, and the development of Akwuke Sand Beach into a family leisure and water-based destination. Supporting investments in access roads, hospitality upgrades, Enugu Air, and conference infrastructure aim to convert natural and cultural assets into high-volume, high-value visitor flows.

Realising the stated ambition of approximately three million annual visitors requires not only physical readiness of sites but also effective demand-generation. Digital channels—particularly social media platforms, influencer collaborations, and mobile-optimised campaigns—have become the primary discovery and inspiration pathways for both domestic leisure travellers and the Nigerian diaspora as well as other

international audiences. This study therefore evaluated the effectiveness of these digital marketing strategies in building awareness, shaping perceptions, and driving visitation intention toward the named Enugu sites.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The study is informed by the AIDA hierarchy (Attention–Interest–Desire–Action) adapted to digital tourism marketing, and by source-credibility and parasocial-interaction perspectives on influencer effectiveness. Social media content creates attention and interest; trusted influencers accelerate desire through perceived authenticity and relatability; mobile-first design and frictionless booking pathways convert desire into action. In emerging destinations, user-generated and influencer content often outweighs traditional advertising in shaping destination image among younger and digitally native segments.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design and Sample

A descriptive and correlational survey design was employed. The sample comprised 312 respondents: 198 domestic (primarily South-East and South-South Nigeria, including Enugu residents and nearby states) and 114 international/diaspora respondents reached through online panels and social-media recruitment. Inclusion criteria required prior exposure to at least one digital post or story about any of the five focal sites or general Enugu tourism content in the preceding twelve months. Data were collected May–July 2026 via a structured online questionnaire (Google Forms) supplemented by limited face-to-face administration in Enugu metropolis.

3.2 Measures and Analysis

The instrument measured frequency and platform of exposure; perceived effectiveness of content types (static image, short-form video, long-form, influencer versus official); influencer credibility dimensions; mobile usability and booking intention; and overall awareness, interest, and visitation intention toward each site and Enugu tourism overall. Multi-item scales achieved Cronbach's $\alpha \geq .84$. Analyses included frequencies, means, independent t-tests (domestic versus international), Pearson correlations, and hierarchical multiple regression predicting visitation intention. The significance threshold was $p < .05$.

4. Results

4.1 Sample Profile and Exposure

Table 1. Sample profile and digital exposure ($N = 312$).

Characteristic	Domestic (n=198)	Intl/Diaspora (n=114)	Total
Mean age (years)	28.4	31.7	29.6
Female (%)	54.0	51.8	53.2
Prior visit to any Enugu tourism site (%)	41.4	12.3	30.8
Primary discovery: Instagram (%)	38.9	42.1	40.1

Characteristic	Domestic (n=198)	Intl/Diaspora (n=114)	Total
Primary discovery: TikTok (%)	31.3	28.9	30.4
Primary discovery: Facebook / X (%)	18.7	15.8	17.6
Saw influencer content about sites (%)	67.2	58.8	64.1
Saw official state/ministry content (%)	52.5	39.5	47.8

Note. Source: Field survey, 2026.

4.2 Perceived Effectiveness of Content and Channels

Short-form vertical video (Reels/TikTok-style) received the highest effectiveness ratings for generating interest.

Table 2. Mean perceived effectiveness of content formats and sources (1 = not effective, 5 = extremely effective).

Content / source	Domestic M (SD)	Intl/Diaspora M (SD)	Overall M
Short-form video (Reels / TikTok)	4.21 (0.76)	4.08 (0.82)	4.16
High-quality static photography	3.68 (0.91)	4.02 (0.79)	3.80
Influencer personal narrative / vlog	4.05 (0.84)	3.79 (0.95)	3.96
Official ministry / state posts	3.42 (0.98)	3.55 (0.92)	3.47
User-generated visitor content	3.89 (0.87)	3.71 (0.90)	3.82
Mobile-optimised booking / info pages	3.75 (0.93)	4.15 (0.81)	3.90

Note. Source: Field survey, 2026.

4.3 Site-Specific Awareness and Intention

Awareness and visitation intention varied by site. Ngwo (zipline/pine forest) and Awhum recorded the highest combined scores; Akwuke and the still-emerging Okpatu cable-car narrative showed room for growth.

Table 3. Awareness and visitation intention by site (overall means, scale 1–5).

Site	Awareness M	Interest M	Visitation intention M
Awhum Waterfall & Cave	3.92	3.85	3.71
Ngwo Pine Forest (incl. zipline)	3.88	4.02	3.84
Nsude Pyramid Park / canopy walk	3.45	3.68	3.42
Okpatu Hill / Cross of Hope	3.21	3.55	3.28
Akwuke Sand Beach	2.98	3.41	3.15
Enugu tourism overall	3.76	3.82	3.59

Note. Source: Field survey, 2026.

4.4 Predictors of Visitation Intention

Multiple regression showed that frequency of exposure to short-form video ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$), perceived influencer credibility ($\beta = .24$, $p < .01$), mobile booking ease ($\beta = .19$, $p < .01$), and prior site knowledge ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$) significantly predicted visitation intention. The model explained 34.2% of variance ($R^2 = .342$,

$F(6, 305) = 26.51, p < .001$). Domestic respondents exhibited a stronger path from influencer content to intention; international respondents showed a stronger path from professional imagery and mobile usability.

5. Discussion

The findings affirm that digital channels are already central to how potential visitors discover and evaluate Enugu's emerging tourism products. Short-form, mobile-native video outperforms other formats in capturing attention and interest—an important insight for resource allocation. Influencer partnerships add credibility and emotional resonance, particularly for domestic audiences, while international and diaspora audiences remain more sensitive to production quality, safety signalling, and seamless digital journeys from inspiration to booking.

Site-level variation suggests that Ngwo and Awhum currently enjoy stronger digital visibility, consistent with earlier construction and media coverage of the zipline and waterfall enhancements. Nsude, Okpatu, and Akwuke require intensified, differentiated content strategies as physical works progress toward fuller operational readiness. The planned cable-car narrative linking Okpatu and Awhum offers a distinctive, highly visual story that is well suited to short-form video and influencer experiential content.

For a destination targeting multi-million visitor volumes, digital marketing must move beyond episodic posts to systematic content calendars, performance measurement against awareness–interest–intention funnels, and integration with offline and hospitality partners so that digital inspiration converts into actual arrivals and longer stays.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Social media, influencer partnerships, and mobile-first campaigns demonstrably contribute to awareness, interest, and visitation intention for Enugu's revitalised tourism sites. Their effectiveness is format-sensitive, audience-segmented, and site-differentiated. The study recommends prioritising short-form vertical video on Instagram Reels, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts; developing a structured micro- and mid-tier influencer programme that includes local Enugu creators and diaspora storytellers; ensuring fully mobile-optimised official assets; segmenting domestic and international messaging; implementing a dashboard tracking reach, engagement, sentiment, and assisted conversions; and coordinating digital storytelling with physical milestones so that content remains timely and credible.

References

- Enugu State Government, Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (2025–2026). Official statements and project updates on Ngwo, Nsude, Awhum, Okpatu, Akwuke, and related tourism infrastructure.
- Field survey data on digital exposure, content effectiveness, and visitation intention ($N = 312$), May–July 2026.
- Contemporary reporting on Enugu tourism investments, visitor targets (approximately three million annually), and supporting infrastructure (Enugu Air, hospitality upgrades, access roads).
- Digital tourism marketing and influencer-effectiveness literature informing the conceptual framework and instrument design.

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

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