



Exploring the Potential of AbokoEbije Regatta Cultural Festival for Event Tourism and Rural Development in Igala Land, Nigeria

Abraham Templeman¹, AdamuNefisatAdejoh², AdamuLukman Musa^{4*},
Ademu Samuel⁴

¹Department of History and International Studie, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria

²Department of Leisure and Tourism Management, Federal Polytechnic Idah, Kogi State, Nigeria

³Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria

⁴Department of Earth Sciences, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author*: AdamuLukman Musa

Date of Submission: 04-12-2024

Date of Acceptance: 15-12-2024

ABSTRACT: Despite having a rich cultural legacy, Kogi State, Nigeria, has not fully explored its potential for event tourism. This study analyzed the challenges and prospects associated with the AbokoEbije Regatta Cultural Festival for rural community development in the Igala area, Kogi State. We collected data from 132 participants, comprising 101 prospective members of the AbokoEbije Regatta Association committees and 42 citizens of the Aboko community, using a descriptive survey research approach. Slovin's formula facilitated the proportional selection of 146 participants from a target pool of 180 members of a cultural association and government officials. The data collection included an 11-item questionnaire and focus group discussions (FGDs). We analyzed the quantitative data through descriptive statistics, t-tests, and multiple regression analysis while thematically evaluating the qualitative data from the focus group talks. The findings indicated a variety of events inside the festival; nonetheless, they underscored its limited impact on the advancement of event tourism, attributed to poorly designed festival offerings and insufficient promotional techniques. Projections indicate an increase in attendance to 9,184 by 2033 and 10,861 by 2037, reflecting significant growth from 692 attendees in 2006 to 3,937 in 2017. The research indicates that effective utilization and marketing of the Aboko Regatta Festival, via tourism communication strategies, could enhance its impact on rural community development and event tourism in Idah.

KEYWORDS: AbokoEbije, Event Tourism, Rural Community Development, Cultural Heritage, Tourism Communication Strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism, a significant global endeavor, acknowledges its cultural, social, and economic advantages for host communities. The socioeconomic benefits encompass the generation of income, the creation of employment opportunities, the advancement of infrastructure, and the cultivation of increased entrepreneurial prospects. It is widely acknowledged as one of the sectors experiencing the most rapid expansion. By encouraging cross-cultural communication and understanding, tourism enhances social cohesiveness [1]. Many places across the world have successfully developed tourist economies by utilizing their natural and cultural resources, showcasing the industry's potential as a vehicle for sustainable development. Rural tourism, which first emerged in Europe in the middle of the 19th century, demonstrates this potential. It makes use of traditional customs, cultural assets, and rural landscapes as leisure and experiential tourism attractions. This type of tourism has significantly expanded in places like China, where its introduction in the 1950s led to a spectacular surge by the 1990s. Likewise, the natural tourism assets of the Caribbean, wildlife safaris in East Africa, and historical sites in Egypt and Mediterranean nations highlight the international significance of tourism in promoting regional economies and cultural conservation [2]. Nigeria, a nation rich in cultural and natural attractions, has not yet fully realized its tourism potential. The nation possesses extensive untapped tourist potential, exemplified by national parks like as Kainji and GashakaGumti, as well as cultural events like the Argungu Fishing Festival and the Osun-Osogbo Festival. Historical towns like Idah, Benin, and Calabar exemplify the nation's abundant cultural heritage [3]. Idah functions as a



historical nucleus of Igala culture and traditions, presenting substantial prospects for tourism development if adequately supported.

The AbokoEbije Regatta Festival, conducted in Idah, is a notable cultural event that could establish the region as a tourism attraction. Notwithstanding its inherent significance, this festival is inadequately developed and insufficiently documented [3]. The local population's insufficient understanding of the economic and cultural advantages of these festivals intensifies this issue. Furthermore, the colonial-era marginalisation of Kogi State's ethnic identities has contributed to the neglect of its cultural heritage, necessitating urgent intervention through documentation and development initiatives [3].

This study investigates the threats and opportunities associated with the AbokoEbije Regatta Festival, advocating its role in fostering rural development and cultural preservation. By exploring strategies for awareness creation and examining the festival's socio-economic potential, this research contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism development in Nigeria.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism is characterized as a complex and varied activity that impacts numerous individuals and diverse economic sectors. Tourism is a complex phenomenon, making it challenging to establish a coherent definition. Tourism has recently emerged as a robust industry, comprising a complex network of businesses that create employment, generate foreign currency earnings, facilitate income redistribution, and enhance tax revenue generation. The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) (1999) identifies travel and tourism as the largest global industry and a significant source of employment in national and regional economies. The New England Foundation for Arts (NEFA), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and Internetworking Technology Tracking (INTT) conducted research indicating that in 2000, the travel and tourism sector contributed 11.7% to global GDP and supported nearly 200 million jobs worldwide. The projections indicate totals of 11.7% and 225 million for the year 2010. Additionally, travel and tourism generates employment across the economy.

This section examined the academic literature pertinent to this study. We conducted a

review of the existing literature under the headings of tourism, types of festivals and their contributions to tourism development, community involvement levels, and awareness creation. We organized the literature review into subheadings that addressed the impacts of cultural festival events on tourism development, the theoretical framework, identified gaps, and provided a summary of the findings.

Conceptual Framework of Tourism

Tourism is understood variably among individuals. [4] propose that to adequately conceptualize tourism, academics must extend their focus beyond economic factors and consider the interrelationships between tourism, leisure, recreation, and other social practices.[5] and [6] characterized tourism as generating an ordering effect that encompasses the organization of humans, non-humans, documents, texts, physical devices, architectures, and various other elements. We cannot solely regard tourism as a business activity; it interconnects with objects, systems, machines, bureaucratic processes, sites, photographs, and the desires of both visitors and locals. People regard tourism as a business or industry. [7], in their historiography of tourism research, assert that the field remains predominantly positivist, which constrains research methodologies and the nature of knowledge generated. Scholars have extensively examined and characterized tourism through hierarchical oppositions such as self/other, tourist/host, same/different, work/play, ordinary/extraordinary, origin/destination, and work/leisure [8] and [9].

[10]stated that tourism involves interactions with ordinary individuals. Entering a country with an open heart and mind fosters appreciation for both commonalities and differences, leading to the perception of tourism as an agent of peace. Researchers' contributions to the process of knowledge creation form the foundation of tourism. Exploring the essence of tourism can enhance tourism theory, supporting [11] assertion that we are tourists most of the time, regardless of our preferences (such as in our efforts to promote peace). This may uncover a more profound relationship between peace and tourism than previously thought.[12] argues that tourism has the potential to provide insights into our existence in the world, our processes of understanding, our conceptual frameworks, our behaviors, our motivations, and the factors that influence our choices. We understand tourism as a form of commercialized hospitality.



The emphasis is on the visitor component, specifically the role of the tourist [13]. Proponents conceptualized the touristic process as a commercialization of the traditional guest-host relationship, assigning strangers a temporary role and status within the society they visit. People regard tourism as a manifestation of fundamental cultural themes. This analysis focuses on the profound cultural significance of tourism. The proponents of this perspective reject the overarching "ethic" approach to tourism [14], opting instead for a "emic" understanding of its culture, which emphasizes the specific, symbolic meanings derived from the perspectives of the vacationers themselves. The proposed approach would ultimately eliminate tourism as an analytical concept, leading to a comparative study of various culture-specific forms of travel. Tourism represents a contemporary form of traditional pilgrimage. This perspective examines the deeper structural significance of modern tourism, equating it with pilgrimages in traditional societies. This concept characterizes tourism as a type of "sacred journey," thereby aligning the study of it more closely with that of pilgrimage [13].

Types of Cultural Festivals and its importance to Event Tourism

Cultural festivals, as a category of organized events, have attracted considerable interest in tourism studies for their capacity to cultivate distinctive, site-specific experiences. [15] categorizes festivals according to their program objectives, including artistic and entertainment pursuits, cultural celebrations, and leisure activities, each fulfilling a distinct role in event tourism. Cultural festivals are essential since they represent traditions, heritage, and identity; therefore, they greatly enhance tourism [16]. The grouping of events into categories such as mega-events, milestone events, major events, and community events clarifies their impact. Mega-events, such as the Olympics, draw international audiences and stimulate economic activity and global recognition for the host location [17]. Hallmark events, intimately associated with local identity, such as the Edinburgh Festival, illustrate the cultural importance of their locales, fostering lasting ties between the event and its environment. Community festivals promote local engagement and celebrate regional customs, thereby enhancing the cultural fabric and sense of belonging within communities [16]. Diverse cultural festivals in Nigeria, including the Argungu Fishing Festival and Durbar Festival, exemplify traditional practices and function as significant tourist attractions [18]. Festivals

stimulate economic activities by drawing both domestic and foreign tourists, thereby fostering investment and generating employment possibilities [19]. They aid in the preservation of cultural history, provide avenues for creative expression, and bolster communal pride and cohesiveness [20]. Insufficient infrastructure, suboptimal marketing strategies, and a lack of awareness within local communities impede the complete actualization of the tourism potential associated with these festivals [21]. Strategic planning and community engagement enhance the socio-economic advantages of cultural festivals by addressing existing barriers. [22] assert that festivals ought to optimize cultural and economic benefits while reducing adverse effects on host communities. Cultural festivals embody a convergence of heritage, identity, and tourism, serving a crucial function in promoting sustainable event tourism and establishing destinations as cultural centers within the global tourism framework.

Strategies of Creating an Awareness of Cultural Festival

Promoting awareness of cultural events is crucial for their success and their contribution to the development of event tourism. Local communities frequently assume a vital role in orchestrating these festivals, governed by governmental bodies, non-profit groups, or commercial entrepreneurs, contingent upon their aims and target demographics [17]. Stakeholders aim to improve cultural identity, economic benefits, and community development, with a focus on inclusivity and wide accessibility. Public awareness strategies often rely on the effectiveness of branding and communication. Communities or organizers may strategically organize cultural festivals as distinct, temporary events that highlight specific cultural aspects. This branding attracts tourists and promotes local pride and community involvement [23]. Furthermore, utilizing business sponsorships and collaborations with media organizations guarantees broader exposure and backing for the activities [24]. This strategy corresponds with the necessity to engage varied audiences while preserving the festivals' cultural authenticity. Efficient data gathering and analysis are crucial for comprehending trends and enhancing festival administration. In Nigeria and Kogi State, inadequate mapping and documentation of cultural festivals pose considerable obstacles [25]. Enhancing statistical analysis and incorporating best practices from regions with developed festival ecosystems, such as Australia, can improve strategic planning and marketing



initiatives. Australia's strong institutional frameworks and ongoing evaluations of festivals illustrate effective strategies for developing enduring awareness campaigns [26]. Involving local communities in the planning process is essential for establishing trust and ensuring that events align with their expectations. Residents' perspectives are essential for comprehending and improving the effectiveness of festivals in event tourism [27]. Collaborative comprehension between organizers and inhabitants guarantees a balanced strategy that fulfills economic and social goals [28]. Integrating cultural and historical elements can enhance a festival's allure, rendering it more attractive to attendees. Festivals function as venues for cultural exchange and identity formation, bolstering community togetherness and regional tourism potential [29]. Strategic marketing and thorough preparation can effectively enhance festival visibility and demand, thereby improving recognition and impact [30].

Strategists on Determining the Benefits of Cultural Festivals Event on Tourism Development

Certain local or regional ethnic celebrations or showcases are an essential part of event-related tourism, as they help achieve economic benefits beyond local economies. This is quite evident, especially when festivals attract tourists who patronize local businesses and economically boost the region [31]. These events enhance tourism by increasing visitor expenditure, thereby impacting both on-site and off-site economies, including sectors such as accommodation, food, and retail. Economic gains result in higher tax revenues, which support infrastructure improvements, thereby strengthening community resilience and enhancing tourism potential [32]. The socio-cultural dimensions of festivals are significant, despite being less tangible. Cultural festivals enhance communal pride, cohesion, and identity by emphasizing traditions and encouraging inclusivity in their planning and execution [33]. The interaction between local populations and tourists promotes cross-cultural understanding, thereby enriching community social capital and fostering a sense of belonging [27]. Festivals offer immersive learning experiences that promote cultural exchange between visitors and locals, thereby increasing awareness and appreciation of the host community's heritage [22]. Cultural festivals offer advantages; however, they also pose socio-economic and environmental challenges. Increased traffic, noise pollution, and waste generation place strain on local infrastructure,

potentially disrupting daily life in host communities [34]. There are concerns regarding the commercialization of cultural practices, as well as ethical problems resulting from the misuse of public resources in the organization of such events, which may cloud the envisioned development aspect associated with the events or festivals [35]. According to [36], festivals draw a large number of people due to their increased services, which could potentially lead to higher prices and an improvement in people's living standards. Effective strategists emphasize the optimization of positive outcomes and the minimization of adverse effects. By integrating social, economic, and environmental sustainability, planners can enhance the impact of festivals [23]. Cultural festivals can have a leverage role in developing sustainable tourism, which requires the stakeholders to engage in strategic budgeting and capacity-building initiatives [37]. Cultural festivals play a crucial role in tourism development; however, their execution must reconcile economic goals with socio-cultural and environmental considerations to ensure sustainable benefits. Festivals offer immersive learning experiences that promote cultural exchange between visitors and locals, thereby increasing awareness and appreciation of the host community's heritage [22].

Theoretical Framework and Motivational Theories

Destination management, similar to sustainability, has the potential to significantly transform individuals and societies in a positive manner [38] and [39]. Research theories hold significance as they provide frameworks for conducting studies [40]. Tourism uses the theories not only to clarify empirical questions, but also in planning and development processes to avoid over-analyzing objects and make reasonable decisions [41]. Thesis in tourism explains how to bring in concepts such as social, environmental, economic, and cultural paradigms [42]. Sustainability theory is concerned primarily with how tourism development may balance environmental, social, and economic needs, which is part of the integrative approach required for increasing benefits to the community without undermining natural and cultural assets [42]. Equally, motivational theories are important in explaining tourists' attraction and search for market gaps or inductors. Individual travelers made complex choices due to biological and cultural factors, motivation, and others [43]. The core motivational trends, including the desire for a unique cultural experience, relaxation, learning new skills, and maintaining excellent health, are also relevant.



Gray's travel motivation theory categorizes motivation into needs for novelty, either in experiences or in a warm climate; both highlight the need to escape monotonous city activities. These aspects underscore the reasons for tourists to travel to culturally and historically rich places. These models are also important in understanding and responding to issues of cultural tourism in Idah, Kogi State. By applying these theories, we can strategize on the core needs of tourists, thereby promoting the development of appropriate tourism practices that are non-destructive and culturally relevant. This is the type of approach that goes beyond simply explaining tourist behavior but also provides a good foundation for tourism development and planning.

Brief Geographical and Historical Background of the Study Area

According to a survey map of Nigeria [44], Idah is located between longitude 7.0 49" N and latitude 6.0 44" N, southeast of Kogi State, and on the right bank of the River Niger, which flows through to form a confluence with the River Benue at Lokoja. Idah, one of Kogi State's Local Government Areas, was and continues to be the traditional home of the Igala people, as well as the seat of the Igala people's supreme monarch, AttahIgala. The country has a population of approximately 1,000,000 people and a land area of 3329 km². Idah borders the Igalamela/Odolu Local Government Area to the northeast, the Ibaji Local Government Area to the south, and Edo State to the west. We cannot examine Idah's history without also discussing the Igala land. It is also difficult to write Igala's history without mentioning Idah, the seat of the country. Several authors, primarily historians, have attempted to compile a complete history of the Igala people's origins. The Igala form a kingdom, with the Atta as its ruler and his capital at Idah on the banks of the Niger. The Atta is the guardian of Igala culture, whereas Idah is the ancient historical town's seat. The kingdom's overall population was 460,000 in 1962, but it has progressively grown to be almost 1 million now. According to [45], a breakaway Jukun group migrated eastward from Wukari, staying just south of Benue, settling at Amagedde northeast of Igala, and eventually moving across the nation to Idah. Clifford also said that Ayegba was the first monarch (Atta) to reign in Idah. This implies that the Jukuns established the institution of kingship in Idah before its existence. He also cited the narrative of the French adventurer BURDO, who connects Igala to Yoruba. AdolphiBurdo, when traveling along the River

Niger in 1878, presented the original narrative of the Igala monarch to Bishop Crowder. According to Burdo, after the monarch annexed the Yoruba to the Fulani, the Sultan of Rabba requested that another state compensate for the loss of territory. Rather than becoming enraged, the Sultan descended the Niger and arrived in Idah, then inhabited by the AKPOTOS. He purchased the country and established the defeated ruler, who took the title Atta, which means "father of the patriarch." A 1960 collection of tales claims a historical connection between the Igala and Benin royal dynasties, relating the transfer of the Oba of Benin's brother from Benin to Idah. In his examination of the Royal Mask (EjubejuAilo) in Idah, he hailed it as a remarkable example of Benin artistry from a relatively early period, when the IFE wielded considerable power. The Royal Mask (EjubejuAilo) connects the Igala kingship to that of Benin. A group of kingmakers (the Igalamela) chooses the Atta Igala from one of the four royal lineages in the Igala country. [46]believed that the Igala kingdom originated in Igala. According to him, Idah, the traditional capital of Igala, had the economic, social, and geographical elements that allowed the first residents to establish their own kingship. He claims that the first Atta-Igala lived in OPATA, Igalamela, and that political raids from Benin and Jukun shaped the kingship of Idah at various times. Finally, he recognized three dynasties that shaped Igala kingship: the Igala, Benin, and Jukun dynasties. There are numerous theories on how Igala and its king came to be. These are significant aspects of the Igala oral tradition. This study encourages and considers different points of view, as focusing on just one would misrepresent the historical corpus. However, the Igala traditions are partially mythological in nature, and the early period did not have the same temporal value as the later section of the dynastic records. Instead, it takes a synoptic view of history, condensing events and advancements that must have spanned centuries into a single reign. For example, the Leopard Myth mostly refers to AbutuEje. His name, EJE (Leopard), represents his ancestry with the royal clan's fabled progenitor. Clifford portrays EBULEJONU as a historical figure, although the tale of her rule incorporates mythological references to the marriage of the ACHADU and EBULEJONU, the female Atta.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to collect data from three communities in the Idah Local Government Area of



Kogi State. This method was selected for its ability to collect data that reflects the present condition of tourism phenomena, as well as to evaluate hypotheses and generate insights for future studies [47]. The design enabled the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, thereby ensuring a thorough analysis of behaviors and attitudes [48] and [49].

A reconnaissance survey was performed to identify and analyze tourism sites within the Aboko clan. Primary data were obtained via structured and semi-structured questionnaires distributed to 142 respondents, of which 132 were successfully returned. Secondary data sources, such as books, journals, and government publications, offered contextual background and enhanced the literature review.

The study population consisted of individuals aged 18 to 60 from the Aboko communities. A two-stage sampling method was utilized, comprising purposive sampling to identify relevant populations and simple random sampling to guarantee unbiased representation of gender and age demographics. Slovin's formula calculated a sample size of 146, which ensures statistical validity and resource optimization [50].

Data collection instruments included structured questionnaires for quantitative analysis and interview schedules for qualitative insights. The questionnaires comprised closed-ended and Likert scale items to facilitate standardized data collection, whereas interviews provided in-depth insights from tourism board officials and community leaders.

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS (version 20) to generate descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and regression models for predicting future trends. Thematic analysis was conducted on qualitative data, utilizing data reduction, discussion, and interpretation to get essential insights. Results were conveyed through tables, charts, and direct quotations, guaranteeing clarity and contextual depth.

This study presents a comprehensive framework for assessing the AbokoEbije Regatta festival, yielding practical insights for its sustainable development through the integration of different methodologies.

IV. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Results are presented in Figures and Tables (Fig. 1-5 and Table 1-9). The research uncovered

substantial insights into the socio-cultural and tourist development effects of the AbokoEbije Regatta Cultural Festival in the Idah Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. The response rate of 92.95% signifies substantial community involvement and efficient assistance from festival organizers, enabling a thorough understanding of the research objectives through data analysis. Demographic study revealed that a substantial percentage of respondents (75%) over the age of 31 corresponded with the traditional age parameters for participation in cultural associations. Male participants comprised 70.45% of the poll, indicating the influence of patriarchal traditions on cultural festivals in African societies [51]. More than 82% of respondents achieved secondary education or above, indicating a knowledgeable populace capable of substantive engagement and decision-making [52]. The findings about the festival's event types underscored its broad offerings, which include musical performances, water sports, cultural dances, and fishing activities. Attendance analysis indicated a localized audience, with 77% consisting of community members and invited guests and a negligible presence of international tourists. This is consistent with previous research indicating insufficient marketing and governmental support for cultural tourism in Nigeria [53]. Regression analysis forecasts exponential growth in festival attendance, estimating around 9,184 visitors by 2033 and 10,861 by 2037, contingent upon the implementation of effective tourism strategies. The festival's development status as a tourism product received a low rating ($M=2.3$, $SD=1.2$), indicating insufficient infrastructure and commercialization. This discovery supports the observations of [54], who noted comparable underdevelopment in other Nigerian cultural events. The event exhibited moderate socio-economic advantages, encompassing small business expansion ($M=89.06$, $SD=37.29$) and skill development ($M=77.95$, $SD=37.67$). Nonetheless, its impact on tourism-related benefits, such as prolonged tourist visits, was minimal ($M=101.74$, $SD=34.65$). Challenges encompassed security threats, environmental deterioration ($M=96.38$, $SD=33.78$), and antisocial behaviors, indicative of inadequate regulatory frameworks [55].

V. DISCUSSION

This study elucidates the socio-economic and tourism-related effects of the AbokoEbije Regatta Cultural Festival in the Idah Local Government Area, Kogi State. This part examines



the implications of the data analysis, linking the findings with existing literature to assess the festival's developmental state, contributions to rural community advancement, and its viability as a tourism product.

Response Rate and Its Implications

The response rate of 92.95%, surpassing the criteria established by [56], highlights the efficacy of the data collection process. The active engagement of local officials and leaders of cultural associations greatly enhanced this remarkable participation. The response rate indicates the local community's strong identification with the festival and their willingness to engage in discussions regarding its cultural and economic significance. This discovery facilitates deeper understanding of community-driven tourism initiatives in the region.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The demographic attributes of respondents provide substantial insights. The majority of adults aged 31 and older (75%) conforms to the conventional Igala cultural prerequisites for involvement in cultural associations. This indicates a maturity-based inclusion criterion that, although honoring tradition, unintentionally restricts youth participation. Encouraging the involvement of younger demographics in cultural festivals can enhance intergenerational knowledge transfer and foster creativity. The gender distribution, biased towards male responders (70.45%), underscores the patriarchal systems ingrained in African cultural practices. This reflects Idang's (2015) claim concerning male supremacy in conventional African festivities. To improve inclusivity, specific measures can focus on empowering women to engage more actively, so enhancing the cultural narrative and varying perspectives in festival management and promotion. The educational background of respondents indicates a notable degree of literacy, with 82.2% having completed at least secondary education. This knowledgeable population is well positioned to facilitate informed decision-making over the festival's evolution as a tourism offering. According to [52], elevated levels of education are associated with enhanced rational decision-making abilities, which may be crucial for strategizing festival expansion.

Cultural Artifacts and Community Advancement

The AbokoEbije Regatta Cultural Festival features a variety of activities, such as musical performances, aquatic sports, traditional dances, fishing, boating, and swimming. These acts illustrate

the profound cultural legacy of the Idah community. Nevertheless, the data indicate that these cultural components are predominantly underutilized as tourism commodities. [53] similarly noted that Nigerian cultural events experience insufficient promotion and underutilization as tourist attractions. To realize the festival's potential, stakeholders must emphasize the commercialization and professional presentation of these events. The negligible participation of overseas tourists (0%) sharply contrasts with global trends that utilize cultural festivals to draw varied audiences. Brazil's Carnival and Kenya's Maasai Mara cultural events have attained global prominence through strategic branding and international marketing. To address this disparity, intentional initiatives are necessary to promote the AbokoEbije Regatta Festival on both local and worldwide scales, utilizing contemporary communication channels and smart partnerships.

Festival Advancement and Tourism Opportunities

The findings reveal that the festival is underdeveloped as a tourism product, with respondents citing insufficient infrastructure, lack of governmental support, and limited marketing initiatives. [57] noted the insufficient focus on cultural tourism in Nigeria, which restricts its economic potential. Regression analysis indicates a substantial rise in festival attendance by 2037, contingent upon the implementation of proposed interventions. Addressing infrastructural deficiencies, including roadways, water supply, and accommodation facilities, is essential for establishing Idah as a competitive tourism destination. Additionally, product diversification, including the introduction of guided tours, courses on Igala culture, and exhibitions of cultural artifacts, can enhance the festival's appeal.

The Impact of Awareness Strategies on Tourism Development

Local marketing campaigns have served as the primary method for generating awareness; however, their limited impact (mean = 61.59) suggests a lack of effectiveness. [58] underscore the significance of assessing the efficacy of promotional techniques, accentuating the necessity for more rigorous methodologies. Integrating digital marketing, social media initiatives, and collaborations with travel influencers might substantially enhance the festival's awareness. Additionally, marketing the festival as a distinctive cultural experience might establish it as a leading event in Nigeria's cultural tourism agenda.



Socio-Economic Advantages and Obstacles

The event has exhibited concrete socio-economic advantages, such as job creation, skills enhancement, and the advancement of small enterprises. These correspond with the findings of [59] regarding the beneficial socio-economic effects of cultural festivals in Nigeria. Nonetheless, the report also recognizes considerable problems, including environmental deterioration, security threats, and social issues such as price inflation and exploitation. Achieving equilibrium between these advantages and obstacles necessitates a multi-

stakeholder strategy. Policymakers, local leaders, and community people must cooperate to formulate explicit rules and regulations that alleviate adverse effects while optimizing socio-economic benefits. Implementing eco-friendly techniques and stringent security measures at festival events could improve the overall experience for attendees while safeguarding the environment.

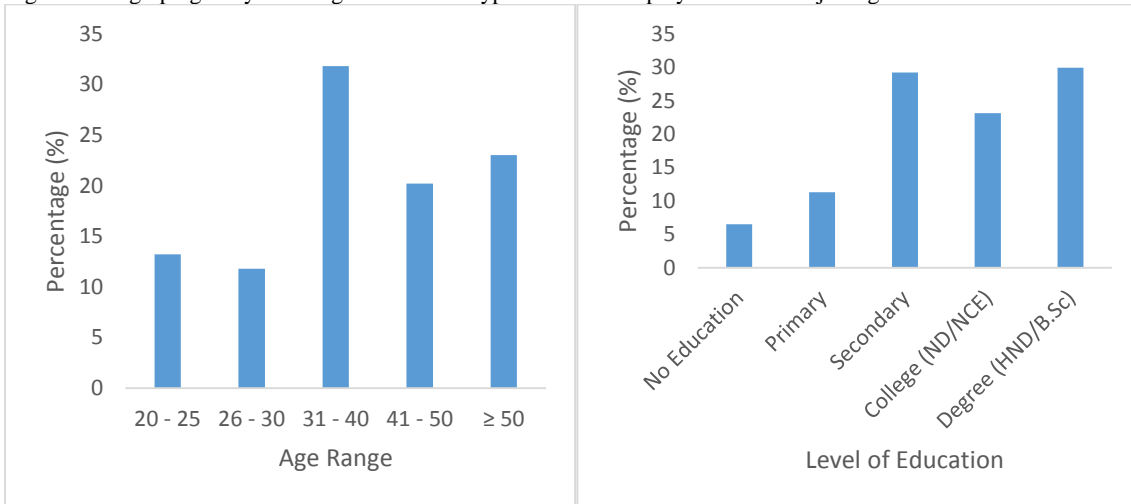


Fig. 1. a) Photograph showing one of the researchers (left) in an interview section with the OnuAboko, b) researcher in an interview section with the secretary of Aboko clan during her visit to the community to gather information

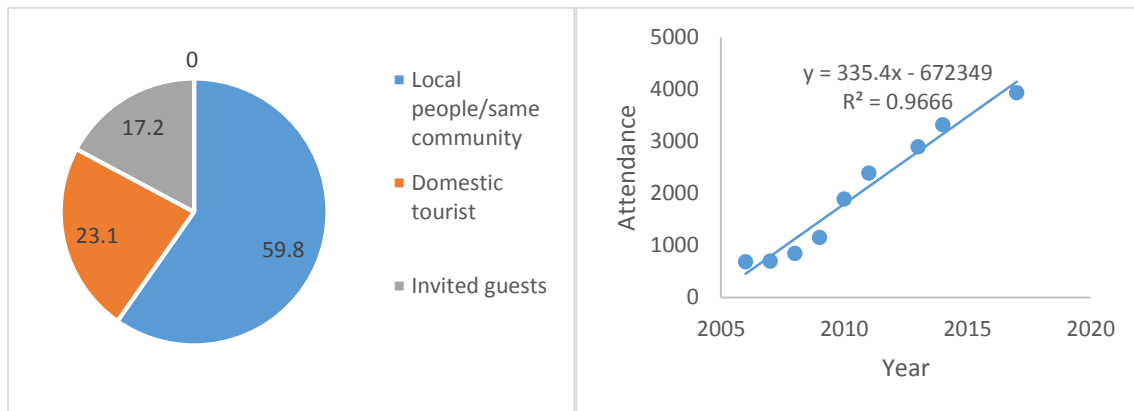




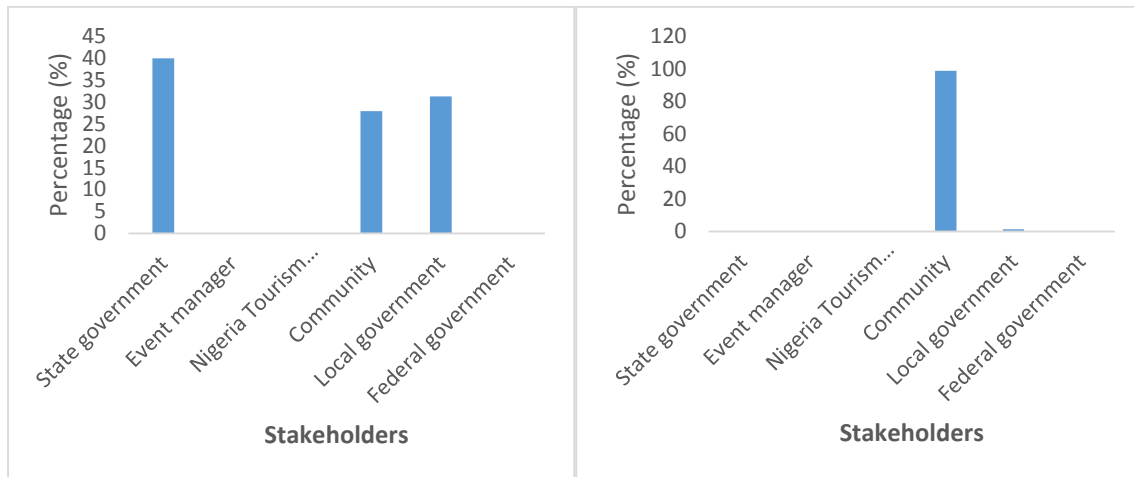
Fig. 2. Photograph gallery showing the different type of Events display in AbokoEbije Regatta Cultural Festivals



Source: Author's fieldwork and analysis, 2021
 Fig.3: Respondents' (a) Level of Education, and (b) Age Profile



Source: Author’s fieldwork and analysis, 2021
 Fig.4: (a) Attendees of cultural festivals, and (b) Attendees of AbokoEbije Regatta Cultural Festival from 2006 to 2017



Source: Author’s fieldwork and analysis, 2021
 Fig.5: (a) Stakeholders involvement in AbokoEbije Regatta cultural festivals from 2006 to 2013, and (b) Stakeholders involvement in AbokoEbije Regatta cultural festivals from 2014 to 2017

Table 1: Response Rate

Respondents	Issued questionnaires	Returned questionnaires	Percent response (%)
Regatta festival associations and committees	100	93	93.00
Residents of Aboko community	42	39	92.86
Total	142	132	92.95

Source: Author’s fieldwork and analysis, 2021

Table 2: Gender and Education Status

Statements	Gender		Total
	Women	Men	
Regatta festival associations and committees	21 (15.91%)	72 (54.55%)	93 (70.45%)
Residents of Aboko community	18 (13.64%)	21 (15.90%)	39 (29.55%)
Total	39 (29.55%)	93 (70.45%)	132 (100%)

Source: Author’s fieldwork and analysis, 2021

Table 3: Type of events

S/N	Events
1	Musical display across the community
2	Water sport events



3	Cultural dance
4	Fishing
5	Boating
6	Swimming

Source: Author's fieldwork and analysis, 2021

Table 4: Attendees of AbokoEbije Regatta Cultural Festival from 2006 to 2017

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2013	2014	2017
No.	692	701	848	1,156	1,897	2,393	2,897	3,319	3,937

Source: Author's fieldwork and analysis, 2021

Table 5: Development status of cultural festival as a tourism product

Question	Likert Scale			Mean	Standard deviation	Chi-square	P - value
	Very poorly developed	poorly developed	Don't know				
Aboko Regatta Festival (water sport events, cultural dance, fishing, boating, swimming)	20	98	14	77.27	35.36	131.00	≤ 0.05

Source: Author's fieldwork and analysis, 2021

Table 6: Development status of AbokoEbije Regatta cultural festival as a tourism product

Question	Likert Scale				Mean	Standard deviation	Chi-square	P - value
	Very low extent	low extent	Don't know	High extent				
Aboko Regatta Festival (water sport events, cultural dance, fishing, boating, swimming)	18	103	9	2	83.47	37.03	131.00	≤ 0.05

Source: Author's fieldwork and analysis, 2021

Table 7: Strategies adopted to create awareness of cultural festivals

S/N	Strategies	Percentages (%)
1	marketing/advertisements	59.9%
2	local marketing	21.3%
3	provision of incentives on tourism development	18.8%

Source: Author's fieldwork and analysis, 2021

Table 8: Influence of strategies

Question	Likert Scale				Mean	Standard deviation	Chi-square	P - value
	Very low extent	low extent	Don't know	High extent				
Products development	15	100	11	6	78.65	37.92	131.00	≤ 0.05
Advertisement locally and abroad	20	110	1	1	94.71	34.39	131.00	≤ 0.05
Product diversification	20	110	1	1	94.71	34.39	131.00	≤ 0.05
Promotion of conference, meeting and exhibition tourism	32	80	20	-	59.27	26.07	131.00	≤ 0.05
Provision of incentives on tourism development	28	100	4	-	81.82	32.50	131.00	≤ 0.05
Branding of cultural	30	101	1	-	84.12	30.71	131.00	≤ 0.05



festival destinations								
Marketing	68	59	5	-	61.59	12.11	131.00	≤ 0.05
Development of facilities like arenas, hotels, canoes, costumes	15	113	4	-	98.56	35.39	131.00	≤ 0.05

Source: Author's fieldwork and analysis, 2021

Table 9: Extent of benefit of cultural festival on event tourism

S / N	Question	Likert Scale					Mean	Standard deviation	Chi-square	P-value
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Don't know	High extent	Strongly disagree				
a.	Cultural festival have led to the development of infrastructure in the destination	28	97	7	-	-	77.59	32.72	131.00	≤ 0.05
b.	Cultural festival have led to the development small scale business	-	1	9	107	15	89.06	37.29	131.00	≤ 0.05
c.	Cultural festival have led to the development Community integration, foster community pride; teach new things; strengthen relationship; value training.	-	5	2	113	12	94.71	34.39	131.00	≤ 0.05
d.	Cultural festivals have led to employment generation.	-	4	10	98	20	76.67	36.49	131.00	≤ 0.05
e.	Cultural festivals have led to the development of new skills learnt through the hosting of the festival.	-	-	15	100	17	77.95	37.67	131.00	≤ 0.05
f.	Cultural festivals have led to security and environmental risks	-	-	1	111	20	96.38	33.78	131.00	≤ 0.05
g.	Cultural festivals have led to such negative impact include: vehicular noise; unreasonable litter; stretching of infrastructure; pollution; prostitution and antisocial activities that lead to unwanted pregnancies	-	-	21	103	8	84.20	35.68	131.00	≤ 0.05
h.	Cultural festivals have led to attraction of tourist to stay longer and spend more.	14	115	-	3	-	101.74	34.65	131.00	≤ 0.05

Likert scale key: 1-Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3-Don't know, 4-Agree and 5-Strongly agree.

VI. CONCLUSION

The AbokoEbije Regatta cultural festival in Idah Local Government Area, Kogi State, exemplifies a rich cultural legacy, as demonstrated by the varied cultural presentations during the event. The lack of strategic alignment between cultural festivals and event tourism has restricted its attractiveness to local participants and a limited demographic of domestic tourists and dignitaries, failing to capitalize on its potential for extensive tourism expansion. Although stakeholders, especially state and local governments, were initially instrumental in its development, their reduced participation after 2013 resulted in the host community bearing the duties independently,

adversely affecting the festival's sustainability and expansion. Projection assessments suggest a slight rise in participants by 2033 and 2037; still, the festival remains predominantly localized, missing the global visibility necessary for the expansion of event tourism. Similarly, localized marketing initiatives have largely hindered the growth of event tourism. Although the event has created some employment opportunities and promoted inter-tribal cohesion, its influence on infrastructural development has been minimal, and certain antisocial behaviors have negatively impacted its reputation. In summary, the AbokoEbije Regatta cultural festival has had a negligible impact on event tourism but has marginally affected rural



community development in Idah. Strategic improvements are essential to enhance its function in promoting sustainable event tourism.

REFERENCES

- [1] Nath P.S. (2008): Successful Tourism Management: Fundamentals of Tourism. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Ltd.
- [2] Saxena G. and Ilbery B. (2008): Intergrated Rural Tourism, a Border Case Study, Annals of Tourism Research, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp. 233-254. Retrieved from www.elsevier.com/locate/atoures, on March 15, 2015.
- [3] Abutu, G. N. (2011): The Role of Festivals in Tourism Development in Igala Land: A Case Study of Aboko-Ebije Boat Regatta and OganAngwa Festival in Idah Local Government Area of Kogi State. Unpublished Thesis in UNN Nsuka, pp. 103.
- [4] Hall, C. M., Williams, A. M., & Lew, A. A. (2004). Tourism: Conceptualizations, institutions, and issues. A companion to tourism, 3-21.
- [5] Franklin, A. (2004). Tourism as an ordering: Towards a new ontology of tourism. Tourist studies, 4(3), 277-301.
- [6] Franklin, A. (2007). The problem with tourism theory. In The critical turn in tourism studies (pp. 131-148). Routledge.
- [7] Xiao, H., & Smith, S. L. (2006). The making of tourism research: Insights from a social sciences journal. Annals of Tourism Research, 33(2), 490-507.
- [8] Johnston, L. (2001). (Other) bodies and tourism studies. Annals of Tourism Research, 28(1), 180-201.
- [9] Picken, F. (2006). From tourist looking-glass to analytical carousels: Navigating tourism through relations and context. Current Issues in Tourism, 9(2), 158-170.
- [10] Moufakkir, O. (2010). Re-evaluating political tourism in the Holy Land: towards a conceptualization of peace. In Tourism, progress and peace (pp. 162-178). Wallingford UK: CABI.
- [11] Urry, J. (1990). The consumption of tourism. Sociology, 24(1), 23-35.
- [12] Espasandín Bustelo, F., Díaz Fernandez, C., & Quirós Tomás, F. J. (2010). Higher education of tourism in Spain and its adaptation to the European higher education area. Revista de Administración Pública, 44, 1191-1223.
- [13] Cohen, E. (2010). Tourism, leisure and authenticity. Tourism recreation research, 35(1), 67-73.
- [14] Nash, D., & Smith, V. L. (1991). Anthropology and tourism. Annals of Tourism research, 18(1), 12-25.
- [15] Getz, D. (2012). The nature and scope of festival studies. International Journal of Event Management Research, 5(1), 1-16
- [16] Šušić, V. & Dordević, D. (2013). The Place and Role of Events in the Tourist Development of the Southwest Serbia Cluster. Economic and Organization, 8(1), pp. 69-81.
- [17] Allen, J., O'Toole, W., Harris, R. & McDonnell, I. (2013). Festival & Special Event Management. Australia: John Wiley & Sons.
- [18] Kogi State Tourism Board Bulletin, (2014)
- [19] Okpoko, P. U., Emeka, E. E. & Diminyi, C. A. (2013). Understanding Tourism. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press.
- [20] Delamere, T. A. (2001). Development of a scale to measure resident attitudes toward the social impacts of community festivals, Part II. Verification of the scale. Event management, 7(1), 25-38.
- [21] Obioma, B. K. (2013) Tourism potential and socioeconomic development of Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. Reiko international journal of social and economic research 7(2)
- [22] Andersson, T. D. & Lundberg, E. (2013). Commensurability and sustainability: Triple Impact Assessments of a Tourism Event. Tourism Management, 37, pp.99-109.
- [23] Allen, J., O'Toole, W., Harris, R. & McDonnell, I. 2014. Festival & Special Event Management. Australia: John Wiley & Sons.
- [24] Getz, D. (2013). Event Studies, Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events. Routledge.
- [25] UNESO (2012) world conference on tourism development access and equality. Salamanca, Spain, June 7-10 Paris: author
- [26] Holloway, I. (2012). Design and analysis of quality of life studies in clinical trials.
- [27] Weaver, D. B. & Lawton, L. J. (2013). Resident Perceptions of a Contentious Tourism Event. Tourism Management, 37, pp.165-175.
- [28] Zhou, Y. J. (2007). Government and residents' perceptions towards the



- impacts of a mega event: The Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.
- [29] Liangi, G., Adaka, I. M, and Adinya, P. A. (2013). On the goals of development, cross current, 18, 387-405.
- [30] Adora C. U, 2013. Managing Tourism in Nigeria. Available: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/mse/article/viewFile/1226/1300>. Accessed on the 28th of March, 2016.
- [31] Grames, E., & Vitcenda, M. (2012). Community festivals—Big benefits, but risks, too. Retrieved May 12, 2017, from www.extension.umn.edu/communities/community-news/community-festivals/.
- [32] Ayeni D, Ebohoh O (2012). Exploring Sustainable Tourism in Nigeria for Developmental Growth; Eur. Sci. J. 8(20).
- [33] Fredline, L., Jago, L., and Deery, M. (2015). The development of a generic scale to measure the social impacts of events, in *Event Management*, 8(1), 23-37.
- [34] Sherwood, J. (2013). Haiku as Queer Tourism: From Bashō to David Trinidad. *New Criticals*.
- [35] Nunkoo, R., Ramkissoon, H., & Gursoy, D. (2013). Use of structural equation modeling in tourism research: Past, present, and future. *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(6), 759-771.
- [36] Andereck, K. L., Valentine, K. M., Knopf, R. C. & Vogt, C.A. (2015). Residents' Perceptions of Community Tourism Impacts. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32(4), pp.1056-1076.
- [37] Abdulkadir, J. (2018). Contribution of Cultural Festivals to Event Tourism Development in Kwara State, Nigeria (Doctoral dissertation, Kenyatta University).
- [38] Franklin, A., & Crang, M. (2001). The trouble with tourism and travel theory?. *Tourist studies*, 1(1), 5-22.
- [39] Hollinshead, K. (2004). *Tourism and new sense. Tourism and postcolonialism*. London: Routledge, 25-42.
- [40] Haralambos, M. (1980). *Themes and perspectives in sociology*: University Tutorial Press.
- [41] Igbo, E. U. M., & Okpoko, P. U. (2006). Theoretical considerations in tourism planning and development. *Issues in tourism planning and development*, 11-33.
- [42] Okpoko, A. I. (2006). *Fundamental of museum practice*, Nsukka: Afro Orbis Publishing Co. Ltd.
- [43] Peace, W., Marrison, I. and Routledge. S. (1998) in Awolalu, D. P. and Dopmu, B. (1979) .Festivals in the service of the Community: Studies in Social Studies. Vol. 11, pp. 19-21
- [44] Okpoko, A. I. (1993). *Institute of African studies University of Nigeria Nsukka*. West African Journal of Archaeology, 23, 104.
- [45] Clifford, C. M. (1969). A Viet Nam Reappraisal: The Personal History of One Man's View and How It Evolved. *Foreign Affairs*, 47(4), 601-622.
- [46] Okwoli, P. E. (1973). *A short History of Igala*. Ilorin: Matanmi.
- [47] Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*. New Age International.
- [48] Bartleth, S. & Burton, D. (2005). *Practitioner. Research for teachers*. London: Paul Chapman.
- [49] Kombo, D. K and Tromp, L.E. (2006). *Proposal and Thesis writing: An introduction*. Nairobi: Pauline's Publication Africa.
- [50] Israel, J. (2013). *Democratic enlightenment: philosophy, revolution, and human rights 1750-1790*. Oxford University Press.
- [51] Idang, G. E. (2015). African culture and values. *Phronimon*, 16(2), 97-111.
- [52] Mohanan, S. (2006). Mutual fund industry in India: development and growth. *Global Business and Economics Review*, 8(3-4), 280-289.
- [53] Esu, B. B., & Arrey, V. M. E. (2009). Tourists' satisfaction with cultural tourism festival: A case study of Calabar Carnival Festival, Nigeria. *International journal of business and management*, 4(3), 116-125.
- [54] Esu, B. B., Arrey, V. M. E., Basil, G., & Eyo, E. E. (2011). Analysis of the economic impacts of cultural festivals: The case of Calabar Carnival in Nigeria. *tourismos*, 6(2), 333-352.
- [55] Ukwanyi, J. K., Ojong, F. E., Austin, E. B., & Emeka, J. O. (2012). Impact of crime on sustainable tourism in Cross River State, Nigeria.
- [56] Mugenda, O. M. & Mugenda, A. G (2008). *Research methods: Qualitative and qualitative approach*. Nairobi: ACTS Press.



- [57] Festus, A. A. (2014). An assessment of the impact of culture and tourism on international public relations practice: a study of Nigerian tourism development corporation (NTDC). *culture*, 4.
- [58] Boone Jr, H. N., & Boone, D. A. (2012). Analyzing likert data. *The Journal of extension*, 50(2), 48.
- [59] Mmom, P. C., & Ekpenyong, O. A. (2015). Potential impact of CANIRIV on socio-economic activities in Rivers State, Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development Studies*, 8(1).