



## Impact of Cultural Festivals on Event Tourism Development in Kwara State, Nigeria

Abdulkadir Jimada and Zakariya Mi

Department of Hospitality Management  
Kwara State Polytechnic Ilorin, Kwara State

Email Address: sidiq.abdulkadir@gmail.com  
Phone No: 08082959707

**Abstract - Kwara State in Nigeria is endowed with a rich culture, however its impacts` to event tourism is not known. The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of the cultural festival on event tourism development in Kwara state, Nigeria. The study found that there is a variety of cultural festivals held in Kwara State. However, the cultural festivals, awareness strategies and their impact to tourism contributed to 21.0% to the development of event tourism in Kwara State. Though the variables explored contributed little to event tourism development types of cultural festivals impacted the most (Beta=0.222) while awareness strategies of cultural festivals (Beta=0.033) contributed the least. It is recommended that the Nigeria Federal and State government together with stakeholder need to come up with policies and programmes to identify and promote cultural festivals as an event tourism product. The study also recommends for international marketing of the rich these cultural festivals reach the global customers. The findings will benefit the Nigeria Federal and State government together with stakeholders with vital information on the state of cultural festivals in Kwara state. This vital information will help Nigeria Federal and State government to develop policies and programmes for developing event tourism. The private sector, Non-Governmental Organisation and other stakeholders may use this document to identify opportunities for investment in cultural event tourism. Finally this will benefit the world of academia since it will add to the literature on culture and event tourism.**

**Keywords: Tourism, Event Tourism, Cultural Festivals, Tourism Development**

### 1.0 Introduction

Tourism is one of the major sources of income in the world, today, and an important export industry. International tourist arrivals reached a record of 982 million, an increase of 4.6% in 2010, while receipts grew by 3.8% to US\$1.030 billion (UNWTO, 2016). According to World Travel and Tourism Council Travel & Tourism Economy employment is estimated at 1,375,000 jobs in 2009, 6.4% of total employment, or 1 in every 15.6 jobs. By 2019, this should total 1,811,000 jobs, 7.3% of total employment or 1 in every 13.8 jobs. The 443,000 T & T direct industry jobs accounted for 2.1% of total employment in 2007 and are forecast to total 581,000 jobs or 2.3% of the total by 2019 (WTTC, 2016).

WTTC (2016) estimates revenue related tourism and travel in Nigeria will exceed \$10 billion 2015 and will account for approximately 6% of the GDP. In a related development, United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2012) observed that contribution of the Tourism sector to Nigeria government earning revenue from VAT levies recorded at N1149 billion in 2014 is considered to grossly understate the actual level of revenue received. One then wonders what is hampering the full event tourism development. Of the estimated 1.6 billion tourists arrivals projected for 2020 which will generate billions of foreign exchange, how many are Nigerians expecting?

Event tourism development is the systematic planning, marketing, and hosting of events elementarily as tourist attractions. Event tourism development research is up to date and inadequately developed in kwara State, Nigeria. The development is essentially driven by objectives related to economic benefits. Indeed, there has been significant research into events in general. The focus on impac of cultural festivals only has been so significant that the related personal, cultural, and social development have not gotten significant interest especially in kwara State Nigeria. Getz (2012) asserts that cultural festivals, event tourism and its development

should make out the requisite inputs in terms of event tourism development. The inputs include what goes into actualizing impact of cultural festivals on event tourism development, the related bidding costs, development of facilities, marketing, and cultural events transformation processes. As well, when considering impact of cultural festivals and event tourism development management, one should consider the outcomes of the cultural festival events whether they are the desired ones or otherwise.

Impact of cultural festivals have significant importance on the development of conferences, seminars, exhibition and workshop on cultural festivals as well as a weapon for attracting tourist thereby, building tourist image within the different communities (Quinn, 2013). They help in passing religious content across. They help teach people particular social values. Cultural festivals also bring important benefits for the local community because they help to create a sense of belonging and recognition of the environment (Susic & Dordevic, 2013). Furthermore, the festivals are image makers and the *raison d'être* of city festivals that attract visitors and serve to raise the profiles of cities or regions (Quinn, 2013). They help create lasting cultural images and awareness. . Cultural festivals tourism (or culture tourism) is the subset of tourism concerned with a country or region's culture, specifically the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas, the history of such people and their art; architecture; religion(s); and other elements that helped shape their way of life. It can also include tourism in rural areas showcasing the traditions of indigenous cultural communities (i.e. festivals, rituals) and their values and lifestyle, as well as niches like industrial tourism and creative tourism. It is generally agreed that cultural tourists spend substantially more than standard tourists do and these were found not impacting to the development of event tourism in Nigeria (Richards, 2016).

However, festivals are considered to impact significantly to the cultural and economic development wealth of a Nation. Festivals have a major impact on the development of cultural tourism to the host communities. The festival organizers are now using the historical and cultural themes to develop the annual events to attract visitors and creating a cultural image in the host cities by holding festivals in the community settings. Tourism gives economic benefits to a region (i.e.) small and medium-sized enterprises' development, the creation of new jobs, provision of infrastructures etc. and this will, therefore, contribute to cultural festivals and event tourism development.

Culturally, tourism can enhance the enrichment of the community; this is attributed to the meeting of different cultures (Adora, (2013) and Obafemi (2013). Also, tourism can positively contribute to the maintenance of natural environment by protecting, maintaining national parks and other protected areas (Okonkwo & Odum, 2014). Festivals are seen to impact importantly to the cultural and economic development, which can have a major influence on the development of event tourism, especially to the host communities. Festival organizers use the event tourism to express the relationship between identity and place and play an important role of civic consciousness. Festivals are an important expression of human activity and contribute to the social and cultural life of their host communities (Raj & Vignali, 2013).

Of particular note in Nigeria and Kwara State, the Regatta festival is deep in culture and rich in tradition. However, Chio and Sikara (2012) opined that in Nigeria if tourism event was inappropriately planned it could destroy the very resources that are the foundation to the event development of the given area. According to Ngoka (2014) in Nigeria, there are challenges of marketing the state as a leisure destination as well as event venues. Other challenges include lack of properly packaged and branded destination, and lack of coordinated and consistent approach to positioning and promotion of Nigeria as a destination. While Kwara state, being a miniature Nigeria all the above and applicable to it.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

On Determining the impact of Cultural Festivals Event on Tourism Development the economic benefits of festivals are easiest to see and most often cited—impact of cultural festivals on event tourism development attracts visitors, which stimulates the growth of tourism and other businesses in a town or region. The social benefits of the contribution of festivals on event tourism development are less visible, but they are just as important (Grames & Vitcenda, 2012). Building on Schneider's observation, it's fair to say that contribution of cultural festivals on event tourism development can foster community pride, teach people new things, and strengthen relationships.

## 2.1 Socio-Economic Benefits of Cultural Festivals Event on Tourism Development

The functions of hosting cultural festival events are numerous on the host community and these perform certain benefits which are usually positive or negative. However, it is the responsibility of those involved in the planning and management of cultural festival events to maintain the positive benefits higher than the negative benefits by forecasting those benefits beforehand, and then find a way to manage them in order to achieve the best results to the parties involved. A way to achieve this objective is to identify and maximize all the assumed possible positive effects, and overcome the potential negative effects.

An important benefit and contribution of cultural festivals on event tourism development is it that they create an appropriate atmosphere for people to come together and have fun, thus improving the quality of life of residents and also visitors who attend them. However, these contributions of cultural festivals on event tourism development must be promoted, organized, and managed to add value to patrons in the experience. When discussing the benefits of the contribution of cultural festivals on event tourism development, more emphasis should be placed on the financing aspects, probably this is as a result that it can justify the accounts for the budget goals and expenditure. The 'triple bottom line' of social, economic and environmental goals/ measures should, however, not be underestimated. The reason is government policies usually acknowledge them. For instance, social and cultural advantages can play a significant functions in the summation of the contribution of cultural festivals on event tourism development overall benefits. Underneath are some major benefits of cultural festival association members and the local communities and these benefits will be discussed from both the positive and negative aspects (Allen et. al., 2014).

For reason of the high level of income generated through festival and event tourism business; the economic benefits on contribution of cultural festivals on event tourism development has on host communities cannot be overemphasized (Ayeni & Ebohon, 2012). Bankole, (2013) stressed that the benefits of tourism are a matter of controversy, it cannot be underestimated that tourism provides higher returns on invested capitals; effects to increase agriculture production and employment; generates foreign exchange and revenue to government; finance for infrastructure development and generally increases citizens welfare, helps capitals flights especially when associated with overseas trips for holidays and proper overall economic growth.

The extent to which contribution of cultural festivals has on job creation and socio-economic development in economies like that of Nigeria, appears to be due to inconsistency in findings and reports of researchers which are rather limited, or myopic in their research findings. In essence, one thing that is clear is that the vast tourism potentials of developing countries like Nigeria are not maximally tapped (Ayeni & Ebohon, 2013 and Yasarata, 2010).

These societal practices include customary beliefs, social functions and physical objects that are given or extended down from generation to generation. In this context, therefore, the potential benefits of contribution of cultural festivals on events tourism development as a whole on the culture of a group of people are a major problem to the host community, event managers/ organizers and other people involved in the event/ tourism industry. This is because cultural festivals often encourage visitors or 'outsiders' into a host community or 'society' and then, there is a possibility that the host community or group in the society gaining negative benefits by changing its culture (Cook et. al., 2013; Viviers & Slabbert, 2012), describe socio-cultural benefits of contribution of cultural festivals on event tourism development to mean the changes experienced by host community and it include: changes in the value systems, belief, norms, morals, perceptions, and conduct of behaviour and those effects that may affect the quality of life of host residents which can be positive or negative benefits.

The International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA, 2014) brought out the positive benefits of social factors on the contribution of cultural festivals on event tourism development of the host community. However, the social benefits are changes that occur in one or more following: The way of life of the people – this is how they live, work and move with one another that is daily basis; their culture – their shared beliefs, customs, values and language; their community – its cohesion, stability, character, services and facilities; their political system – these are the length to which people are able to take part in decisions making that affect their lives, the level of democratization level that takes place, and the resources provided for this purpose; their environment – the quality of the air and water people use; the level of hazard or risk, dust and noise they are exposed to; their physical safety; heir health and well-being – health is a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity; their fears and aspirations – their perceptions about their safety, their fears about the future of their community, and their aspirations for their future and the future of Negative Impact of Cultural Festivals on Event Tourism Development It is expedient to mention that there are e also negative socio-cultural benefits that could affect the life of the local community. The tourists may experience disruption of the normal lives of host communities, and also, reduced privacy (Fredline & Deerey, 2015). Bigger cultural festivals are likely associated with vehicular noise, unreasonable litter and

overstretching of host community infrastructure (e.g. transport) (Gursoy et. al., 2014). Viviere and Slabbert (2013) also mentioned that negative impacts include the exploitation of culture and traditional ways of life, prostitution, crime, and drugs. Kreag (2013) states that there are illegal activities which tend to increase the relaxation atmosphere of tourist areas and under aged children taking to drinking habits which is a problem especially where there are beach communities and in festival areas where alcohol is sold.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This study adopted a cross-sectional research survey design to collect primary data from respondents distributed in three communities in the three Senatorial areas of Kwara State. This study covered all three (3) senatorial district of Kwara State. There are sixteen (16) local government areas that are constituted into three (3) senatorial districts these are Kwara North, Kwara Central, and Kwara South; Kwara North, comprises of Baruten, Edu, Moro, Kaiama, Patigi Local Government Areas, while Kwara Central include Asa, Ekiti, Ilorin East, Ilorin South, and Ilorin West Local Government Areas. Kwara South includes Ifelodun, Irepodun, Isin, OkeEro, Oyun, and Offa Local Government Areas. Kwara State was created on 27 May 1967. The state was initially named West Central State but was later renamed to “Kwara”, a local name for the River Niger. The state has an area of 36,825 sq. km. As at 2006, the population of Kwarans was 2.37 million based on Nigeria (Census 2006).

According to Orodho, (2005) Target population is a large population from which a sample population is selected. The study targeted community associations involved in cultural festivals, government officials of the state Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and Kwara state Tourism Board. These community associations were selected since they have organized and registered groupings and are highly involved in hosting cultural festivals. The study used questionnaires and interview schedule to collect primary data as discussed in the sections below. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006) and Kothari (2004) questionnaires, data collection method is preferred since it collects a lot of information within a short period of time and offers confidentiality. Structured and unstructured questionnaires were used to collect primary data from members of the community festival association.

### **4.0 Result of the Study**

#### **4.1 Extent of Impact of cultural festival on event tourism**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cultural festival have led to the development of infrastructure in the destination	314	2.77	1.141
Cultural festival have led to the development small business	314	4.04	1.110
Cultural festival have led to the development Community integration, foster community pride; teach new things; strengthen relationship; value training.	314	4.06	0.899
Cultural festivals have led to the development employment generation.	314	4.02	1.031
Cultural festivals have led to the development new skills are learnt through the hosting of the festival.	314	4.08	1.003
Cultural festivals have led to security risks	314	4.07	.975
Cultural festivals have led to such negative impact include: vehicular noise; unreasonable litter; stretching of infrastructure; pollution and others.	314	4.01	.947
Cultural festivals have led to antisocial activities lie prostitution and unwanted pregnancies	314	4.03	.879
Cultural festivals have led to attraction of tourist to stay longer and spend more.	314	2.99	1.316

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

The analysis of the table above indicated that on the respondents disagreed ( $M= 2.77$ ,  $SD=1.141$ ) that cultural festival has led to the development of infrastructure in the destination. On the Impact of cultural festivals on development small business and employment creation the respondents agreed ( $M= 4.04$ ,  $SD=1.110$ ) and ( $M= 4.06$ ,  $SD=0.899$ ) respectively. The study also revealed that the respondents agreed ( $M= 4.08$ ,  $SD=1.003$ ) that cultural festivals have impacted positively to development new skills are learnt through the hosting of the festival.

These findings of positive impacts of cultural festivals in Nigeria are in agreement with those of Mmom and Ekpenyon (2015) in their study in River State. They found that largely the cultural festivities have more socio-economic benefits as opposed to specifically tourism development payoffs. The same was noted by Ukwai, Ojong and Austine (2012) in their research on impact of cultural festivals in Cross River State found that communities get pride for hosting them socially and economically as opposed to tourism activities commercialisation. These observation implies that cultural festivals are not directly exploited to promote event tourism in Kwara State. This has denied the local community the opportunity of exploiting their rich culture to improve their livelihood as its done in other countries like Brasil and Kenya.

However, the study established that the respondents agreed that cultural festivals have negative benefits on security ( $M= 4.07$ ,  $SD=0.975$ ) environment ( $M= 4.01$ ,  $SD=0.947$ ) and social activities ( $M= 4.03$ ,  $SD=0.879$ ). The negative impacts of cultural festivals were underscored by one of the senior manager in the Kwara State Tourism Board who noted the following;

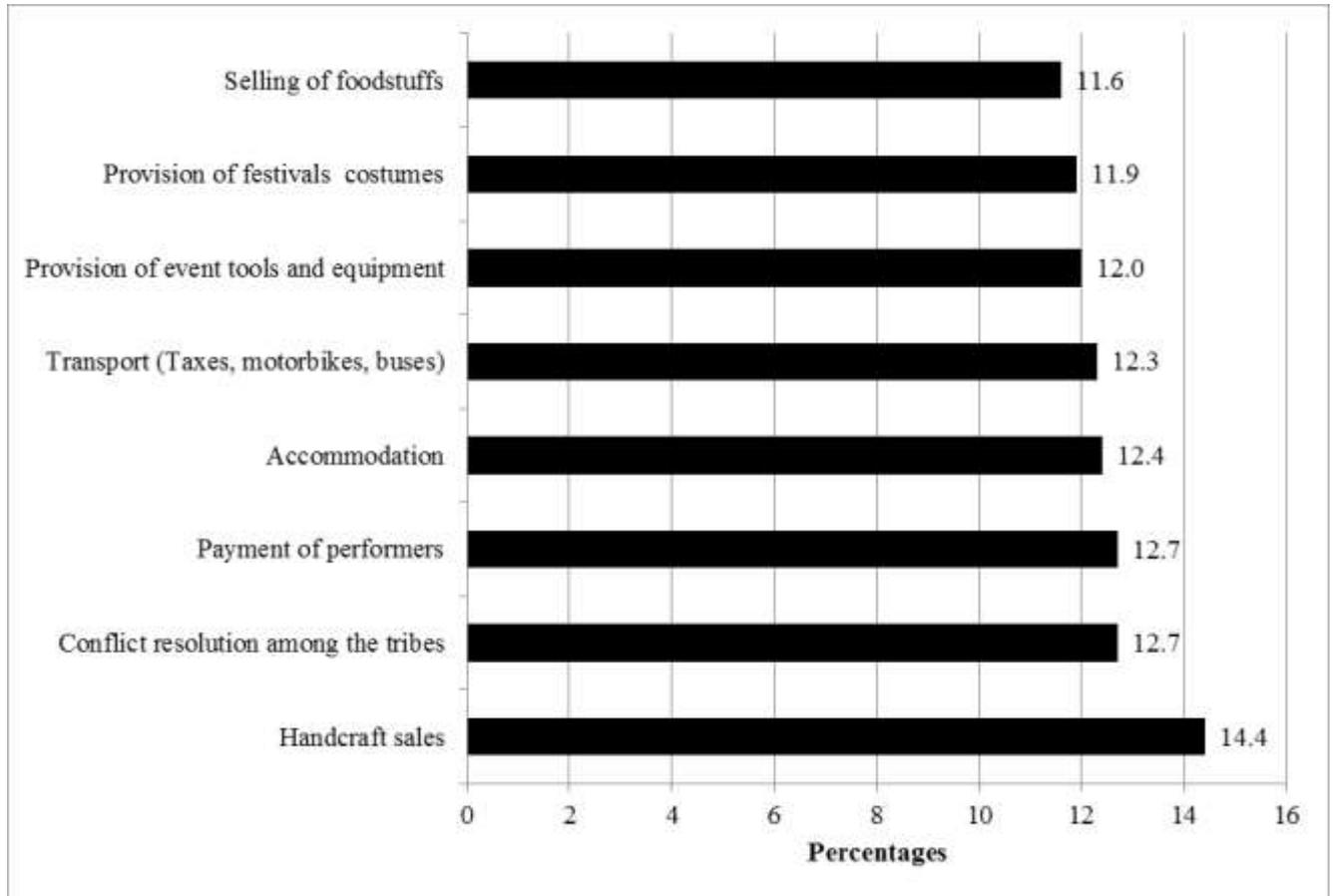
*“..... Cultural festivals are regarded with highly by the government and the locals in such that schools and colleges are closed to allow the students to attend. It's a period when social norms are broken which results in antisocial activities like uncontrolled alcohol drinking and illicit sex. The end result is unwanted pregnancies and spread of sexually transmitted diseases. In addition during the festivities period there is a lot of environmental pollution occasioned by littering, noise from cars, overcrowding among others. The concentration of large number of guests with no proper planning poses a security risk especially with the rise of terrorism activities. ....” (Oral Interview [OI], Mr. XX, December, 2016).*

The above sentiments are a confirmation unplanned cultural festivals can lead to negative impacts other than positive ones which could be attributed to lack of policies on event tourism development in the destinations. These observations are supported by Ukwai, et.al. (2012) in their findings of a study conducted in Cross River State in Nigeria on the impact of cultural festivals. The study established that largely the cultural festivals largely have positive socio-economic impacts. However, the cultural festivals are not devoid of anti-social activities like robbery, prostitution, price hiking among other social vices.

Finally, the study disagreed ( $M= 2.99$ ,  $SD=1.316$ ) that cultural festivals have led to tourist attraction who stays longer in the destination and spends more. This finding agrees with Perdue et. al. (2014) who argued that cultural festivals are used to enhance local pride and make provision for multiple recreational opportunities other than promoting tourism activities. The same was noted by Getz (2011) who argued that cultural festivals celebrations are viewed to be a unique tourist attractions and destination image makers but their positive impacts is not largely realised by the host communities. It can therefore argue that cultural festivals in Kwara state have not largely contributed to event tourism.

#### 4.2 Impact of Cultural festivals to community

The respondents were also asked to indicate the benefits communities have gotten from cultural festivals in Kwara State. Results are indicated below:



#### Impact of Cultural Festivals to Community

The analysis of the study results indicated that the contribution of other strategies adopted to create awareness on cultural festivals to develop event tourism in Kwara State. Handcraft sales lead at 14.4 %. Others were conflict resolution among tribes and payment of performers with 12.7% followed by accommodation at 12.4%, provision of transport (taxes, motor bikes and buses) at 12.3%, provision of equipment at 12%, provision of festival costumes at 11.9% and selling of food stuffs at 11.6%.

The findings above imply that cultural festivals are staged with tourism development in mind. This is so because the festivals are as result of promoting the posterity of community culture and beliefs. Most of the benefits accrued from these festivals are accidental as they were not envisaged in the planning of the ceremonies. During the festivities entrepreneurs identifies available opportunities which they exploit. Such opportunities are selling of food stuffs, transport and sales of handcrafts.

However, other benefits are not accidental as are direct given by the festival organisers. An oral interview with Kwara Federal State officials established the following on the direst benefits of hosting cultural festivals; “..... the hosting of the cultural festivals is the responsibility of the host community through their associations, the Federal and the local government. The participants are given performance costumes, tools and equipment as well monetary payments. These are the only direct benefit received to the performers. As a community there is no monetary benefit since there are no gate charges and therefore no revenue is collected. In conclusion there is not much direct benefit to the community at large. However, depending on the theme of the festival, the community collectively benefit. For instance cultural festivals are used as a platform of solving inter-tribal conflicts.....” (Oral Interview [OI], Mr. XX, December, 2016).

The above sentiments confirm that by and large the cultural festivals in Kwara State are not primarily hosted to directly monetarily benefit the community. This observation is supported by Ukwayi, et .al., (2012) who argued that cultural festivals have no collective monetary benefit to the community as the initial intention did not envisage that.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

- Cultural festivals indirectly created employment opportunities in the host communities
- Cultural festivals have created harmony among the communities since they are used to solve inter-tribal conflicts
- Cultural festivals, to a low extent, did not spur infrastructure development that could support event tourism in the destination.
- Cultural festivals had negative anti-social impacts which give the events a bad picture
- Overall, the study concluded that the contribution of cultural festivals have not helped to develop event tourism in Kwara State in Nigeria.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the study made the following recommendations:

- The study revealed that there was wide variety of cultural festivals but these are not contributing to event tourism. The study, therefore, recommends the formulation of policies by the Federal and State government for guiding, and identification of three major ones and develops them as the main tourism product instead of concentrating to them.
- The study found that marketing of cultural festivals were predominantly done locally as a strategy of creating awareness. The study, therefore, recommends that the Nigerian Tourism Corporation and Kwara State Tourism Board market these rich cultural festivals internationally to reach the global customers.
- It emerged from the study that promotion of emerging tourism like conferences, meetings and exhibition as a strategy of creating awareness of cultural festivals as a tourism product was not adequate. The study therefore recommends the Nigerian Tourism Corporation and Kwara State Tourism Board and stakeholders to partner with countries in Africa like Kenya and South Africa to learn and benchmark on the use of these strategies.
- It came out of the study that there is no great emphasis of linking cultural festivals with event tourism since the events are held to satisfy community beliefs. This study therefore recommends a policy to be formulated by Nigerian Tourism Corporation, Kwara State Tourism Board to guide on the strategies of linking cultural events with event tourism
- The study established that there were no major direct monetary benefits of cultural festivals to the community since there is no mechanism of collecting revenue. The study recommends construction of arenas and other facilities by the Kwara State Government, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders that will ensure gate collection from attendees and promoters.
- The study found out that the cultural festivals have low contribution to the development of event tourism. The study therefore recommends that the Kwara State Government and stakeholders should partner to promote cultural festivals in Kwara State as event tourism products by branding them to attract domestic and international tourists.

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