

Challenges for Developing Cultural Tourism through Local Festivals in Igala, Nigeria

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to assess the challenges facing the development of Igala festivals into cultural tourism products in Kogi state, Nigeria. The research adopted descriptive case study design using qualitative and quantitative approaches (mixed method). Snowball, judgemental and simple random sampling methods were adopted for this study. Snowball and judgemental sampling techniques were used to select the required number of interviewees across nine communities. Five key informants each from the nine communities were identified and selected to provide on the subject matter, while simple random sampling was used to select respondents that completed the close and open-ended questionnaires. Result shows that inadequate funding, government insensitivity, lack of government/private sector collaboration, insecurity, and the change factor brought by modernity and religious interference are the major challenges affecting the development of festivals into cultural tourism attractions in Igala. Although Igala festivals have high potential for cultural tourism development in Kogi state, government has not taken any responsibility in supporting the development of these festivals. Chi-square result also indicates that there is a strong relationship between Igala cultural festivals and tourism development in Kogi State. It was therefore recommended that the government of Kogi state should take responsibility by supporting policies that will favour tourism and provide enabling environment for private sector to thrive.

Keywords: Cultural tourism; development; festival, tourism; Igala kingdom

Introduction

Tourism is widely regarded as one of the businesses with the highest rate of growth across the globe, and it is a preeminent field of economic activity that spawns a plethora of advantages for a variety of locales (Ketema, 2015; Menbere & Menbere, 2017). The lucrative nature of

tourism has gained widespread recognition in many developing nations as a development agent. In Nigeria, tourism development is traced back to 1953, where the first attempt to develop the country's tourist resources was made by the British colonial administration (Diminyi & Okpoko, 2017). Since then, tourism is still not fairly developed when compared to other developing nations (Gaurvendra et al., 2022). According to World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC] (2019) tourism has emerged as a major export sector in the world. Its development is considered as a valuable means of achieving local economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Cultural tourism is receiving much attention and gaining importance in recent times for its economic advantage and sustainable approaches. It is increasingly being used as a tool (ICSSPE, 2010) to stimulate regional development in rural and urban areas. It has grown consistently in areas with unique cultures, as travellers have become more interested in opportunities to learn about places through their art and history (Martine, 2018). Festivals are strong components of cultural tourism products which often increase tourist flow in a destination. As a cultural tourism product, the activities of traditional festival enhance the chance of tourists to experience traditional lifestyle and connect themselves through direct contact with the local people and their cultural expressions, while experiencing the uniqueness of the cultural heritage and character of the place (Ekundayo, 2018).

Festivals enhance local pride and increase local economy. Well organized festivals can lengthen tourists' seasons, extend peak season or introduce a new season that can boost economic growth and usher in positive changes in the lives of community members. Garcia et al. (2015) festivals are the fastest growing form of cultural tourism in recent years due to its ability to revitalized local economy and cultures of many regions. During these periods, people from different parts of the world with divergent cultural background mingle together to learn new ways of life while appreciating each other's culture. Diminyi and Okpoko (2017) argue that cross-cultural communication between visitors and the visited encourage adaptive transformation of local cultures and promote the revitalization and preservation of ethnic identity. The promotion of cultural festivals in many cases could mean conflicting effects across the different regions. Festivals can be used as instrument to present local traditions and customs to visitors on one hand, and on the other hand, exposing local culture as tourism product to attract visitors could threaten continuity through commercialization (Bezirgan & Yetginer, 2020). Again, while festivals may grow local economy, enhance the quality of life and create social solidarity among communities, it may also encourage environmental damage and traffic congestion among other issues if not properly plan (Bezirgan & Yetginer, 2020; Yolal et al., 2016).

Igala is known for their history and cultural festivals, among the prominent ones are Egwu, Aboko, Egbe, Ogo, Ogani and Eka festival (Abutu, 2021). Egwu festival is celebrated all over the kingdom in memory of their departed brothers and sister, believing the dead is responsible for their existence. Egbe is celebrated in Egume community in commemoration of the kingship tussle between two heroes: *Akogwu Omaga* and *Akogwu Ohinekwa*; Aboko is a dramatization the warfare between the Igala and Beni people celebrated in Idah; Ogani is celebrated by all Angwa communities as a sign of their allegiance to *Ata* of Igala; Eka is celebrated by all Ibaji inhabitants in thanksgiving to God and their ancestors for bountiful harvest, while Ogo showcases the mysterious and deadly masquerade that was exchanged between the *Ata Igala* and *Onu Iyale* (Abutu, 2021; Miachi, 2012). Festivals offer tourists the opportunity to experience the lifestyle of the local residents along the River Niger which reflects on most aspects of their culture and tradition (Abutu, 2021). They are prominent cultural tourism attractions for inbound and outbound tourists. As noted by Onyeabor (2017) cultural tourism has become a major development strategy for most developing countries particularly for those with diversity of cultural resources.

Igala kingdom is found within the eastern part of the River Niger in Kogi state. It is the major ethnic group in the state with unique cultural heritage and ingenuity that is demonstrated in different festivals, which are organized and celebrated on a group communion to showcase their rich culture. Igala festivals are celebrated predominately in a natural rural environment and are primarily concerned with the preservation of culture, legacy, and customs. They offer a significant source of income for host communities by creating jobs (Onyeabor, 2017). The inherent potentials of Igala cultural festivals can be utilized for economic and social development of the region's local communities. According to Adebayo (2017) cultural festivals have a significant impact on the host community's economic, sociocultural life, and the surrounding environment. Bassey (2016) identified social benefits and cultural/educational advantages as strong predictors of inhabitants' subjective well-being in areas where festivals are celebrated. Festivals foster community identity and pride, stimulate economic activity, and support environmental and cultural preservation (Onyeabor & Nwahia, 2015; UNWTO, 2015). It has shown to be an inclusive cultural activity that enhances the participation and engagement of locals in the organization of festivals (Bezirgan & Yetginer, 2020). According to Abutu (2018) 97% of festival directors believed that the impact of their activities on the local community was of the utmost importance. 69% of the executives believed that the effects of festivals on the natural environment were negligible because it raises community members' awareness of environmental protection, whereas 91% of the organizers believe that festivals encourage the consumption of local goods, provide opportunities for local people to revive and develop cultural skills and talents, and reduce the crime rate through accompanying local sanctions. Onyeabor (2017) found that the inherent positive social implications of Onicha-Igboeze new yam festival have the ability to outweigh the activities' primary negative effects on the host communities.

Although Igala festivals have great promise for tourism, it is however, sad to note that efforts towards developing them into cultural tourism products has not yielded any positive result. This situation has brought mixed feelings among residents especially as it bordered on commodification of their culture. While some (Abutu, 2021; Ifegbo & Ibeanu, 2020; Adebayo, 2017) have identified the lackadaisical attitude of the state government towards tourism development as the major challenge, others (Eze-Uzomaka & Oloidi, 2017; Muobike, 2017; Ukabuilu & Okpoko, 2017) believe that uncoordinated behaviour of the local organizers and the insecurity that is ravaging the state are the main issues impacting negatively on the development of these festivals. Unlike the impact of festivals, not much research has been conducted on the challenges facing the development of cultural tourism resources such as traditional festivals in Nigeria. This study therefore, seeks to examine the factors militating against cultural tourism development in Kogi state using selected festivals in Igala Kingdom.

Objectives of the study

The primary objective of this study was to determine the challenges facing the development of Igala cultural festivals into tourist's attractions in Kogi State. To achieve this objective, the study is set to answer the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between Igala cultural festivals and tourism development in Kogi state?
2. What are the challenges facing the development of Igala cultural festivals to tourism products?

Literature review

Intangible cultural heritage has become very important sources of tourism product. Many countries of the world have realized the need for preserving their cultural festivals not only to

maintain their traditional values but as assets for economic and social empowerment. With the introduction of tourism within cultural heritage, the process of resource management and development has become more tasking and often associated with conflicting challenges especially when dealing with intangible cultural resources. It has been observed (Bezirkan & Yetginer, 2020; Rotich, 2012) that host communities face a number of drawbacks in trying to provide unique tourist products that will bring investment, create jobs and socioeconomic development to the area. The need to meet tourist' preference by modifying the product features (repositioning or even restructuring the surrounding environment) while trying to offer authentic experience and maintain social and cultural values of the community to ensure the sustainability and authenticity of the product further complicate the challenges for host communities (Ekechukwu et al., 2012).

Garcia et al. (2015) allude the dangers of stage-managing cultural tourism products to suit the preference of tourists to the detriment of community values. A situation, which many has accused tourism of manipulating peoples' customs and traditions to satisfy tourists. Rotich (2012) argues that it is difficult to integrate a particular culture into an entirely different worldview while trying to preserve it. According to Guarendra et al. (2022) the community suffers enormous consequences of not being the true representative of the product which is presented in different principles other than their true values, while tourists fail to get the authentic product. Ekechukwu et al. (2012) identified lack of market access and effective promotional strategies for cultural tourism products as a major challenge for cultural tourism development in Nigeria. Most third world countries lack market access of their own which has significantly hindered the realization of fair trade. This situation has reduced the participation in cultural tourism activities and trade, and unless poor countries have market access for their quality goods and services in rich countries and in other outlets locally, regionally and in the international marketplace (Rotich, 2012), their tourism market will remain underdeveloped and unprofitable (Marco et al., 2018). The promotion of cultural festivals and tourism are inextricably linked. Drawing from the inherent potential of tourism in Nigeria, it can be strategically perceived in such an integrated approach (Rotish, 2012). Diminyi et al. (2020) revealed lack of funding and illiteracy as the major factors hindering the development of tourism in Okwangwo Division of Cross River National Park.

Festivals are often promoted for its ability to maintain the past and also improve the quality of life of community members. It is a means through which local economy of the host can be developed. However, host communities have always faced the challenge of providing unique, special, and participatory tourist experience that will bring with it jobs and economic development in terms of investment in a range of initiatives (Diminyi et al., 2020; Rotish, 2012). Samardali-kakai (2013) maintain that inadequate infrastructure and poor accessibility of cultural sites have constantly posed a challenge to cultural tourism development in developing countries. Some cultural festivals are celebrated in remote communities where most of the infrastructure especially roads are in deplorable condition thus hindering the free flow of tourist. Although road transport account for over 85% of total freight and passenger traffic in Africa, the road network of most countries has greatly deteriorated as a result of poor maintenance. There are also rising cases of kidnapping, robbery, rape and insurgency, which have scared a number of intending tourists to most African countries and also hamper the development of tourist sites (Ekechukwu et al., 2012). According to Rotish (2012) insecurity is rampant in the cultural site destinations of Africa, thus posing a threat to tourism development. The policy trust of some Nigerian states is not supportive of tourism development. The tourism sector has often been left out of favourable development policies that would have encouraged government interference and participation in its development (Ekechukwu et al., 2012). The influence of the western religion (Christianity and Islam) has

also contributed to degradation of most aspect of cultures that would have been unique raw materials for cultural tourism in Nigeria. Diminyi and Okpoko (2017) examine the integration of traditional methods of conservation to modern management of ecotourism resources in Okwangwo Division of Cross River National Park. The results of the study show that Christianity and Islam are common place religions that have become major obstacle to cultural practices in Boki. The results further revealed that most people have decline from participating in cultural activities of their communities because of their new religion. This has affected the traditional conservation of heritage resources since local sanctions have become ineffective.

Methodology

Study area

The Igala people occupy the area of land to the south of the lower reaches of the Benue and east of the Niger rivers at about the confluence of these two rivers (Miachi, 2012). The area is approximately between latitude $6^{\circ}30'$ and $8^{\circ}40'$ north and longitude $6^{\circ}30'$ and $7^{\circ}40'$ east and covers an area of about 8,000 square kilometres (Miachi, 2012). The two natural rivers form natural boundaries to Igala land on the west and north respectively. To the east is Idoma land and south northern Igbo of Nsukka. The strategic location of Igala land makes it a gateway into and out of the interior of the country and made possible contact with many other Nigerian peoples and, later, from about the first half of the 19th century (Miachi, 2012), with European adventurers, missionaries, trading and government agents. The northern edge of Igala land is occupied by Bassa-Komo, Bassa-Nge and Ebira-Koto, who are Igala non-speaking groups (Miachi, 2012).

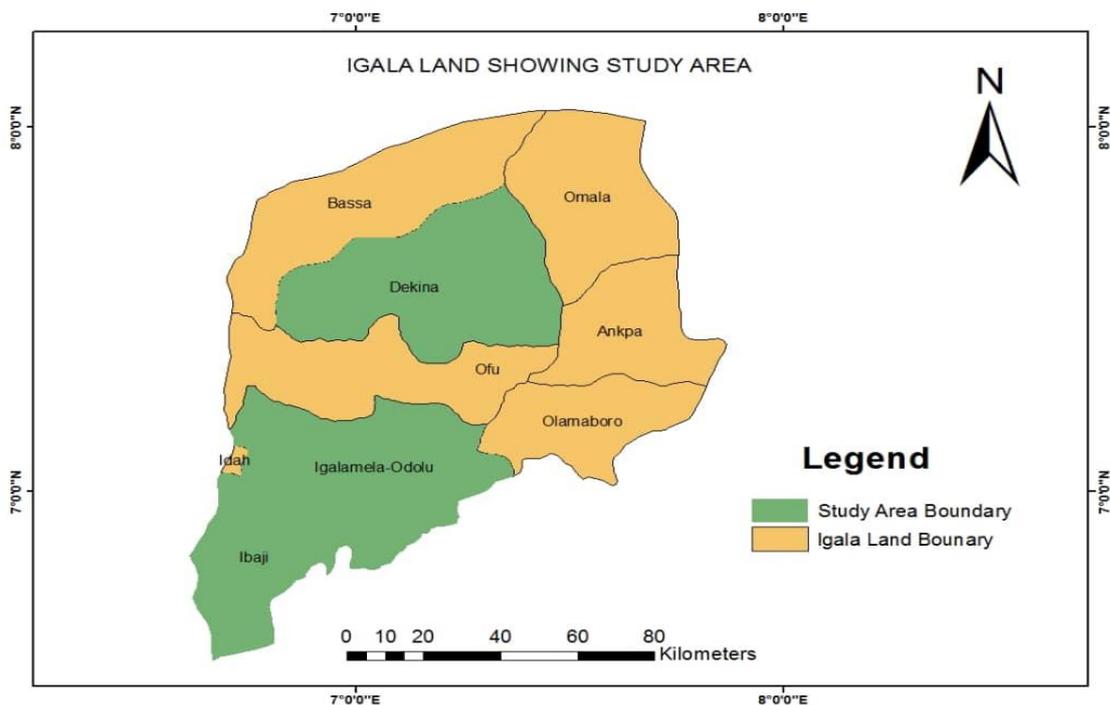


Figure. 1: Map of Igala showing the study area

The empirical data are drawn from a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to analyze the challenges confronting the development of Igala festivals into cultural tourism products. The researchers adopted mixed method approach for this study since a variation of data collection leads to greater validity of results and ensures there are no gaps in the information or data collected (Samardali-kakai, 2013). Judgmental sampling method was used

to select 3 local governments areas, 4 major festivals and 9 host communities with 3 from each local government area respectively. snowball sampling method enables us to select key informants across the sample communities, while simple random sampling was used to select 400 people that responded to the questionnaire survey.

The main instrument for data collection was semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), field observation and structured questionnaires. The study began with qualitative data and then moved to quantitative design and testing. Qualitative data draw mainly from extensive focus group discussions and in-depth semi-structured interviews with carefully selected key informants involved in the organization of festivals, while quantitative data was obtained from questionnaire surveys, containing open-ended questions that was administered to both residents and visitors during celebrations. Snowball sampling technique was used to identify key informants who are knowledgeable in their tradition and history of the festivals from nine (9) communities within the three local government areas based on the key role they play in these festivals. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique used by researchers to identify potential subjects in studies where subjects are hard to locate (Castillo, 2009). This method according to Okonkwo (2012) often leads the researcher to a realm he/she knows little about. In this study, the researchers identified one member of some population of interest to be interviewed and thereafter, asked the identified person to suggest other interviewee(s) that the researcher spoke with and so on. Thus, 48 key informants involving 3 staff from Kogi State Ministry of culture and tourism, 9 traditional rulers/community heads, 9 chairmen of festival organizing committee, 9 elders from each community comprising men and women, 9 youth leaders and nine 9 women leaders all performing active role in their respective festivals were carefully selected.

Taro Yamen’s formula was used to determine the sample size of 400 respondents that participated in the survey interviews as shown in Table 1.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population of the study area
- 1 = constant
- e = tolerable error

Table 1: Sample size for each Local Government Area

| LGAs | Total Population | Sample size | Percentage |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------|------------|
| Dekina | 352,300 | 195 | 48.75% |
| Igalamela/Odolu | 198,500 | 110 | 27.5% |
| Ibaji | 172,200 | 95 | 23.75% |
| Total | 723,000 | 400 | 100% |

During data collection which lasted for nine weeks (between February and April, 2022), 48 interviews were conducted with key informants across 9 communities and Kogi State ministry of culture and tourism. Each community had five (5) interviews with the community head, chairman of festival organizing committee, youth and women leaders and community elder. While the ministry of culture and tourism had three interviews with the commissioner for culture and tourism, director of information and head of logistics. Interview sessions lasted between one hour forty minutes (1h: 40mins) and one hour (1hr) respectively. The researchers carefully took down field notes, and in some cases, interviewees allowed the use of tape

recorder which facilitated the data collection process. Nine (9) FGD sessions involving 7 to 10 discussants were also conducted across the sample communities to supplement data from individual interviews by determining points of views, opinions and attitudes of local residents and government officials towards the development of festivals to unique cultural tourism attractions. A total of four hundred (400) structured questionnaires were randomly distributed across selected communities in the three local government areas in accordance with their respective population as shown in table 1, of which 370 were successfully completed and returned (see table 2). Forty-eight (48) items were designed based on a four-point rating-scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1.

Table 2: Summary of questionnaire distributed, returned and not returned rate in Dekina LGA

| LGA/Community | Sample population | No of copies distributed | No of copies returned | No of copies not returned |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| DEKINA LGA | | | | |
| Iyale | 65(33%) | 65(33%) | 63(30%) | 2(20%) |
| Egume | 60(31%) | 60(31%) | 58(31.4%) | 2(20%) |
| Dekina | 70(36%) | 70(36%) | 64(34.6%) | 6(60%) |
| Total | 195(100%) | 195(100%) | 185(100%) | 10(100%) |

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

Table 3: Summary of questionnaire distributed, returned and not returned rate in Igalamela LGA

| LGA/Community | Sample population | No of copies distributed | No of copies returned | No of copies not returned |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| IGALAMELA | | | | |
| Odolu | 35(32%) | 35(32%) | 30(30%) | 5(50%) |
| Akpaya | 35(32%) | 35(32%) | 32(32%) | 3(30%) |
| Ofurachi | 40(36%) | 40(36%) | 38(38%) | 2(20%) |
| Total | 110(100%) | 110(100%) | 100(100%) | 10(100%) |

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

Table 2: Summary of questionnaire distributed, returned and not returned rate in Ibaji LGA

| LGA/Community | Sample population | No of copies distributed | No of copies returned | No of copies not returned |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| IBAJI | | | | |
| Ejule | 30(31%) | 30(31%) | 28(33%) | 2(20%) |
| Ibaji | 30(31%) | 30(31%) | 27(31.7%) | 3(30%) |
| Onyedega | 35(37%) | 35(37%) | 30(35.3%) | 5(50%) |
| Total | 95(100%) | 95(100%) | 85(100%) | 10(100%) |

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

Data were analyzed to reflect the research objectives and questions. In doing this, Codes were generated to identify respondents, their place of interview and what they said. Thus, R1 – R5, R6 – R10 and R11 – R15 represent respondents from Iyale, Egume, and Dekina communities in Dekina LGA; R16 – R20, R21 – R25 and R26 – R30 were from Odolu, Akpaya and Ofurachi in Igalamela LGA; R31 – R35, R36 – R40 and R41 – R45 represent respondents from Oyedega, Ibaji and Ejule communities in Ibaji LGA, while R46 – R48 were staff of Kogi State Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Qualitative data were coded and transcribed into transcripts in their original form and analyzed consequentially in the form of narration, while descriptive statistics involving tables, percentages and simple mean were used to present and analyse data obtained from questionnaires. Chi-square (χ^2) was also used to test the hypothesis to show the degree of respondents for and against the researcher's assumption at a significant level of 0.05.

Results

Results show that challenges are inevitable when developing traditional festivals into cultural tourism attractions, especially when it concerns communal events. Findings revealed inadequate funding, insecurity and the change factor occasioned by modernity (western religion and technology) as the major challenges bedeviling the development of cultural tourism in Igala kingdom (R2, R7, R8, R11, R18, R24, R27, R40, R35 and R46, Dekina, Igalamela and Ibaji). Limited funding has affected planning of the festival in Igala as organizers lack funds to hire canopies, chairs and enough souvenirs for participants. Sometimes prices are not awarded as a result of inadequate funding (R31 - R34, FGD, Onyedega community). Another respondent from Ofurachi remarked as follows:

The problem of kidnapping and armed robbery in our area has really affected our festivals as most people from neighbouring communities no longer attend. Apart from visitors, our prominent sons and daughters find it scaring to travel down for the festival for fear of becoming kidnapped victims. Craft men and women and other business owners use to make huge profit from the sales of their locally made products, which supported greatly in enlightening the local people about the benefits of festivals as tourism attractions, but it is no longer the same now. The only security we depend on during festivals is the local vigilante who operates without any sophisticated weapon (R30, Ofurachi community).

Respondents from Ejule, Akpaya and Iyale lamented on the manner in which the culture is fast eroding as a result of religion and acculturation. According to them, certain rituals sacrifices are no longer made to certain deities associated with festivals in the land. They added that *Oja*, *Owojoku*, *Ekunke-oga* and *Akpayaka* deities in Ejule, Akpaya and Iyale have been abandoned as a result of the new religions in the land. The implication is that the younger generation does not acquire the ideal culture of Igala people, but that which has been greatly adulterated by modernity and even the neighbouring cultures of Tiv, Igbo and Nupe. The respondents further emphasized on the dying Igala culture, citing examples on the traditional attire, costumes and salutation, which constitute aspects of the Igala cultural pattern that are cherished by visitors during festivals (Respondent 9, 23, and 39, FGD, Iyale, Akpaya and Ejule communities).

The above views were supported by comments from respondents in Odolu, Ibaji and Onyedega communities. They explained that due to the emergent of Christianity and the introduction of western education, young men who were eager to active participants of *egwu-afia* festival have dropped their intentions, believing it to be against their present belief system (Christianity). According to them:

In the past, there used to be 21 different performing masquerades during the *egwu-afia* festival, but now we barely have up to 15 due to attitudinal changes among our youths. Majority of our young boys who would have been active members perceive it as fetish and not worthy of practice. Some youths who were members have suddenly declined from rehearsals and this has so much affected the number of masquerades that parades the community and display during the festival. (Respondents 41-45, ejule community).

It was also observed at *egbe* festival that the cultural attire which is generally known as the 'Igala' attire was not worn by majority of Egume youths during the festival. The significant of this attire according to one respondent is to showcase the ideal identity of the Igala people, yet this was not fully achieved in this years' *egbe* celebration (Respondent 10, Egume community). In corroboration of the above views, two respondents at Akpaya and Dekina

explained that the most glaring challenge that festivals face annually is lack of government support. They noted that government and other tourism promotion agencies like the ministry of culture and tourism and the state tourism board has not shown any commitment in the celebration of these mind-blowing events. They had this to say:

We only hear that the ministry of culture and tourism and the state tourism board exist, but we have over the years not felt their impact either by sponsoring or promoting these festivals in any form. But, we will appreciate so much if the government and any other tourism promotion agency get involve during these festivals to either sponsors the events or aid in their promotion so that people outside Igala land, Kogi state and Nigeria can appreciate our rich culture (R11- 15, FGD 1 and R21 – R25, FGD 2 & 3, Dekina and Akpaya communities).

This view supported comments from several respondents in Onyedega community who noted that they will appreciate the government through the ministry of tourism if it over-takes the planning and organization of Eka and other festivals in Igala. However, some respondents express mixed feelings about agitations of some community members to hand over the responsibility of celebrating their festival to government, noting that they are scared of government policies which might change the ideals of the sacred sacrifices carried out during festivals. They also believed that the community will have nothing to gain if the government assumes the sole responsibility of organizing festivals in Igala land. They however, suggest the support of the government by playing collaborative role with community members to effectively plan and organize successful festival celebration that will benefit both the government and host communities economically, while observing socio-cultural and environmental ethics (Respondent 31 – 35, FGD, Onyedega community). The general observation during festivals revealed the readiness and desperation of host communities to collaborate with government and non-governmental agencies to develop and promote their festivals beyond Kogi state and Nigeria at large.

Respondents also noted that security situation in Igala and Kogi state generally is terrifying. Accordingly, they suggested the establishment of more police post/stations, civil defence and military sub-stations in every community, and a collaboration between these security agencies and the local vigilante groups to curb these social monsters of kidnapping, cultism and robbery (R16 – 18 and R43- 45, FGD, Ibaji and Odolu communities). In another view, respondents at Oyedega argued that the celebration of Eka festival suffers from inappropriate planning which encourages outrageous spending and waste of resources that leave the community members in indebts. It was also noticed that host communities were not happy about the deplorable state of their roads and the lack of market access to promote their cultural products. Some respondents remarked as follows:

Our roads are very bad, which has discouraged visitors to participate in our unique festival. We also have very interesting cultural sites such as “Okpatu” sacred groove, Igba shrine, traditional Medicare center, costume making center among others, which are of interest to tourist. During rainy season we encounter difficulty going to Idah and this may have been the reason we don’t usually have visitors to these sites (R42, 44, 33 & 35 Ibaji and Oyedega). Our festivals are not known outside Kogi state because we lack market access to other parts of the country and the international tourism market. The government has not supported our festivals to promote them for international recognition and the development policy in the state does not capture the development of tourism (FGD 1, 2, 3 & 4, Egume, Dekina, Odolu and Oyedega).

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism is a supervisory ministry saddled with the obligation of overseeing, formulating and regulating tourism policies. Considering the enormous cultural tourism potentials of Igala, this ministry was created to ensure optimum preservation, development, promotion and marketing of cultural heritage resources for effective tourist's flow in Kogi state. One of the officials remark:

The main objective of the ministry is to transform the state cultural resources into consumable products and also project them for visitor appreciation, but this vision is currently constraint by inadequate funding and lack of political will to drive the needed collaboration with other stakeholders. If these cultural assets are developed, it is expected that host communities will benefit more economically, socio-culturally and environmentally (Respondent 46, Kogi State Ministry of Culture and Tourism).

Apparently, the ministry is not actively involved in the promotion of cultural festivals in Igala land. Although some officials (respondents 47 and 48) have argued that it is the responsibility of government to provide funding for proper planning and successful staging of these festivals, government has consistently failed in its obligation. The promises made to local festival organizers in the form of support for artisans (costumes and mask makers), award of prizes to different categories of winners and best festival organizers have constantly been renege. It is believed that collaboration between the ministry and the local communities through sensitization and regular meetings can provide the local people with the sense of belonging and also encourage them to continue to practice and sustain their culture. This will not only help in harnessing the potentials, but also promote and market cultural events and festivals in Kogi State. However, for tourism to thrive in Kogi state, there is an urgent need for government to play a plausible role of developing private sector driven policies and also provide adequate funding for local actors to thrive especially in communities where the resources abound. Promoting cultural tourism through Igala festivals require high level of ethical orientation and re-orientation of the citizens (youths inclusive) towards cultural events and their attitude to visitors. Respondents at the ministry of culture and tourism noted:

At their low level of organization and celebration, festivals have brought remarkable changes to the people of Igala economically, especially for communities that celebrate Eka, Egwu, Egbe and Ogani. It is important at this point for government to realize the significance of festivals and swing into action to support or take full control of it by providing the necessary facilities and human capital required for effective promotion and marketing beyond Kogi state and Nigeria (R46, 47 and 48).

Local communities have been commended for their efforts over the years for active involvement in organizing festivals which has sustained their tradition. The passive involvement of government in the development and promotion of cultural resources has greatly affected the level of patronage to Igala festivals. Some members of the organizing committee (R1, 6, 16, 21, & 36) explained that government have in the past shown commitment in the area of sensitization, noting that the ministry had involved in carrying out sensitization programmes before it suddenly stopped. They added that sponsorship and the presence of government officials in these festivals are not only tenacious ways of wooing domestic and international tourists to the state, but will also boost business and create jobs for local residents in the communities. Respondents also believed that effective partnering and sponsorship by private sector organizations can become sure-ways to actualizing their dreams. However, they were disappointed in the lack of interest exhibited by some private organizations, while

admitting that only MTN have been involved in sponsoring certain festival in Igala. One of the organizing chairpersons commented:

MTN has supported Egbe and other festivals in Igala for the past two years, but their support is insufficient to expose our traditional legacy to the world. They also envisioned the government and prosperous Igala natives becoming more involved (R11, Dekina).

The aforementioned demonstrate the low level of participation and insignificance of major players in the promotion of the Igala festival. It also demonstrates a lack of collaboration amongst stakeholders. The organization of these festivals has remained in the sole hands of community members, with neither the government nor the commercial sector providing assistance. Although the private sector is willing, as seen by MTN's involvement over the previous two years, residents believe that the government has not created an environment conducive to their success.

Test of hypothesis

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between Igala cultural festivals and tourism development in Kogi State.

Table 5: Responses on the relationship between festivals and tourism development

| Responses | Local Government Areas | | | Total | Mean average |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| | Dekina | Igalamela | Ibaji | | |
| SA | 85(45.9%) | 40 (40%) | 25(29.4%) | 150 (40.5%) | 50 |
| A | 55(29.7%) | 28(28%) | 29(34.1%) | 112 (30.3%) | 37.3 |
| SD | 27(14.6%) | 15(15%) | 11(12.9%) | 53 (14.3%) | 17.7 |
| D | 18(9.7%) | 17(17%) | 20(23.5%) | 55 (14.9%) | 17.3 |
| Total | 185 | 100 | 85 | 370 | |

Source: Fieldwork (2021)

Table 5 shows the analysis of respondent's agreement and disagreement on the relationship between festivals and tourism development in Igala.

Table 6: Chi-square analysis for hypothesis 1

| O | E | (O-E) | (O-E) ² | (O-E) ² /E |
|------------|------|-------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 85 | 75 | 10 | 100 | 1.33 |
| 55 | 61 | -6 | 36 | 0.59 |
| 27 | 26.5 | 0.5 | 0.25 | 0.01 |
| 18 | 59.9 | -41.9 | 1,755.6 | 29.3 |
| 40 | 40.5 | -0.5 | 0.25 | 0.01 |
| 28 | 33 | -5 | 25 | 0.76 |
| 15 | 14.3 | 0.7 | 0.49 | 0.03 |
| 17 | 14.9 | 2.1 | 4.41 | 0.30 |
| 25 | 34.5 | -9.5 | 90.25 | 2.62 |
| 29 | 28 | 1 | 1 | 0.04 |
| 11 | 12.2 | -1.2 | 1.44 | 0.12 |
| 20 | 12.6 | 7.4 | 54.76 | 4.35 |
| 370 | | | | 39.5 |

From the analysis, a total of 150 respondents representing 40.5% agreed that there is a relationship between festivals and tourism development, 112(30.3%) respondents agreed in support of a significant relationship, 53(14.3%) strongly disagreed and was supported by 55(14.9%) respondents that also disagreed. In Dekina, a total of 85(respondents) strongly

agreed, 55(29.7%) respondents agreed, 27(14.6%) respondents strongly disagreed and 18(9.7%) respondents disagreed, while in Igalamela 40% strongly agreed, 28% agreed, 15% strongly disagreed and 17% disagreed. furthermore, a total 29.4% respondents strongly agreed, 34.1% agreed, 12.9% strongly disagreed and 23.5% disagreed.

With df of 6 at significant level of 0.05 percent, the critical or table value of χ^2 is 12.592 = 12.6, while the calculated χ^2 is 39.5. Since the calculated χ^2 is greater than the critical or table value of χ^2 at 0.05 level of significance, the null (H_0) hypothesis is therefore rejected, thus accepting the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is a strong relationship between Igalala festivals and tourism development in Kogi State.

H_{02} : There are no challenges facing the development of Igalala cultural festivals into tourism attractions.

Table 7: Responses on the challenges of cultural tourism development in Kogi

| Responses | Local Government Areas | | | Total | Mean average |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Dekina | Igalamela | Ibaji | | |
| SA | 81 (9.7%) | 25 (25%) | 20 (23.5%) | 126 (34.1%) | 42 |
| A | 77 (41.6%) | 22 (22%) | 11 (12.9%) | 110 (29.7%) | 36.7 |
| SD | 18 (9.7%) | 23 (23%) | 38 (44.7%) | 79 (21.4%) | 26.3 |
| D | 9 (4.9%) | 30 (30%) | 16 (18.8%) | 55 (14.9%) | 18.3 |
| Total | 185 | 100 | 85 | 370 | |

Source: Fieldwork (2021)

Table 7 revealed that a total of 126 respondents in all the sample communities across the three local government areas representing 34.1% strongly agreed that a number of factors are hindering the development of festivals in Igalala. This was supported by 110(29.7%) respondents who also agreed. However, 79(21.4%) and 55(14.9%) respondents strongly disagree and disagree to it.

At Dekina, 81(9.7%), 77(41.6%), 18(9.7%) and 9(4.9%) respondents strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree and disagree that there are challenges facing the development of festivals in Igalala. 25% strongly agreed, 22% agreed, 23% strongly disagreed and 30% disagreed in Igalamela, while at Ibaji 20(23.5%) strongly agreed, 11(12.9%) agreed, 38(44.7%) strongly disagreed and 16(18.8%) disagreed. The mean average score of all the respondents shows 42, 36.7, 26.3 and 18.3 for strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree and disagree respectively.

Table 8: Chi-square analysis of hypothesis 2

| O | E | (O-E) | (O-E) ² | (O-E) ² /E |
|------------|------|-------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 81 | 64.8 | 16.2 | 262.4 | 4.05 |
| 77 | 56.5 | 20.5 | 420.3 | 7.44 |
| 18 | 40.6 | -22.6 | 510.8 | 12.58 |
| 9 | 28.3 | -19.3 | 372.5 | 13.16 |
| 25 | 34.1 | -9.1 | 82.8 | 2.43 |
| 22 | 29.7 | -7.7 | 59.3 | 1.99 |
| 23 | 21.4 | 1.6 | 2.6 | 0.11 |
| 30 | 14.9 | 15.1 | 228.0 | 15.3 |
| 20 | 28.9 | 2.9 | 8.4 | 0.29 |
| 11 | 25.3 | -14.3 | 204.5 | 8.08 |
| 38 | 18.1 | 19.9 | 396.0 | 21.9 |
| 16 | 12.6 | 3.4 | 11.6 | 0.92 |
| 370 | | | | 88.25 |

The table value of chi-square (χ^2) under 0.05 percent level and df of 6 is 12.592 approximately 12.6. The calculated value of chi-square is 88.25. This implies that the calculated chi-square χ^2

value of 88.25 is significant at 0.05 percent. Since the calculated chi-square is greater than the table value of chi-square, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. We therefore conclude that Igala cultural festivals are faced with development challenges.

Discussion

Several factors were identified as challenges to the development of Igala cultural festivals into tourism attractions. The recent increase in kidnaping and armed robbery in host communities of some major festivals is posing a serious challenge that has scared intending tourists from visiting the area. Similar to the study result, Rotish (2012) reported that insecurity is rampant in the cultural sites and destinations of Africa, thus posing a threat to tourism development. The finding also corroborates the result of Ekechukwu et al. (2012) which revealed rising incidence of kidnaping, robbery, rape and insurgency that have scared a number of intending tourists to most African countries and also hamper the development of cultural tourist sites. Tourism thrives in a peaceful environment that is devoid of any form of security threat, insecurity of tourist's destinations has bedeviled the development of Nigeria's tourism industry especially in the north-east and north-central. It is therefore imperative for the government and local people alike to step up security in all tourists' destinations and sites for the safety of visitors and the attractions while boosting the growth and development of the industry.

Result shows that majority of Igala youths no longer participate in these festivals due to the influence of Christianity and Islam religions. They perceive the activities of these festivals as fetish especially those aspects that involve ritual sacrifices. Data also revealed that the number of performing masquerades at *egwu-afia* festival have decline because most people are no longer participating as a result of what they called "new faith". Diminyi and Okpoko (2017) revealed that the influence of western religion (Christianity and Islam) has contributed to the gradual disappearance of most aspect of traditional culture that would have been unique raw materials for cultural tourism in Nigeria. According to them Christianity and Islam are common place religions that have become major obstacle to cultural practices in Boki as most people now decline from participate in cultural activities of their communities because of their new religion. Rotish (2012) stated that the tourism industry has used local cultures as part of the tourism product by taking traditional rituals, dances, music and crafts that formed part of local people's cultural heritage and packaging it up for tourists (Martine, 2018).

Lack of government/private sector involvement and market access were also identified as major challenges facing the development of cultural festivals in Igala. From the responses, government and private sector were not simply acquiesced of lacking the knowledge of the potentials of festivals in cultural tourism development but also neglecting the tourism industry in the state. The policy trust of some Nigerian states is not supportive of tourism development. The tourism sector has often been left out of favourable development policies that would have encouraged government interference and participation in its development (Ekechukwu et al., 2012).

Residents believed that sponsorship and promotion of their festival is a function of government that could provide access to international tourism market. This further highlight what Ekechukwu et al. (2012) asserted as lack of market access and effective promotional strategies for cultural tourism products are the major challenges of cultural tourism development in Nigeria. The government was also acquiesced of not providing access roads to link communities with unique festivals to major highways which have hindered the movement of intending visitors to the festivals. Inadequate infrastructure and poor accessibility of cultural sites have constantly posed a challenge to cultural tourism development in developing countries. Some cultural festivals are celebrated in remote communities where most of the

infrastructure especially roads are in deplorable condition thus hindering the free flow of tourist (Diminyi et al., 2020; Samardali-kakai, 2013; Rotish, 2012).

Conclusion and recommendations

Culture is the total way of life of a group of people, which is transmitted from generation to generations. Cultural heritage are those unique traditions that we inherit from our first fathers, which not only direct our behavioural pattern but has also become objects and sources of attractions. Igala is endowed with rich cultural festivals which have been preserved for ages. Although some festivals have gone into extinction, while others have lost their efficacy as a result of modernization, a number of festivals still exist in Igala with slight cultural modification. Results revealed insecurity, lack of funding, market access and sponsorship, lack of government interest in the tourism sector and bad roads among others as challenges hindering the development of Igala festivals. However, despite these challenges, festivals generally have become the major focus of cultural tourists in the region, which has directed the attention of stakeholders to collectively put their resources together to develop a more attractive product to satisfy the needs of tourists' and also benefit host communities. Although Igala festivals are still celebrated locally without any projection to showcase their uniqueness to the world, host communities have tried their best to preserve this culture through continuous practice.

The findings of this study will offer the government with actionable data that will serve as a road map for the proper planning and development of festivals in Igala and other parts of the state. Using the results of this study, the local authorities of Dekina, Igalamela, and Ibaji Local Government Areas can develop positive methods to encourage involvement and stakeholder collaboration in the organization of these festivals.

The study offers local organizers with essential information on how to approach the government as a key partner, having identified the challenges impeding the growth of cultural tourism in the region. When fully developed, the findings of this study will contribute to the planning and implementation of initiatives that promote positive benefits and limit negative impacts of festivals. This study focuses mostly on selected festivals in Igala. Further research should be conducted on other festivals and cultural activities that may serve as tourism assets. In lieu of our findings, this study recommends that government should take full responsibility of documenting, evaluating and developing unique cultural festivals to tourism products that could attract both local and international tourists. The study also recommends that donor agencies, philanthropists, government and NGOs should collaborate with the local organizers by providing adequate funding to support the promotion of these cultural festivals in Igala.

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