

SIGNIFICANCE, IMPACT AND BENEFITS OF MARE FESTIVAL TO THE COMMUNITY OF IDANRE, ONDO STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Festivals are celebrations of important events that showcase the rich cultural heritage of the people in a particular community. This study is hinged on the need to explore significance, impacts and benefits of Mare Festival to the host communities of Idanre in Ondo-State, Nigeria. Data collection was through administration of structured questionnaires to 200 respondents and Key Informant Interview with the purposively selected Staff of Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism; and High Chief Soore of Idanre. Data was analyzed using SPSS 21 and presented descriptively in form of tables and figures. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data collected through interview was carried out. Greater percentage of the participants are in the age range of 20-39 (65%) and male (55.5%)/ Mare festival has cultural (52%), social (56%) and historic (48.5%) significance as expressed by the respondents. Mare festival has impacted the respondents positively (67%) through additional sales of goods and services (64.5%). This study recommends collaboration and partnership with other relevant organisations in celebrating this event. The need for improved infrastructure facilities and incorporating cultural attributes if people of Idanre in Mare festival are emphasized.*

KEYWORDS: benefits, cultural heritage, celebration, community, festivals, partnership

INTRODUCTION

Festival is an expression of culture of a particular group of the society with intricate social, economic and cultural values. Today, local festivals are regarded as important tourism resource, a prominent component in the culture of many societies and an inevitable part of the heritage of many nations (Kuude, Adongo and Abanga, 2010). The authors observed that today, as people wake up somewhere or go to bed elsewhere, within certain timeframes of the

year, in cities, towns and villages, people will be celebrating a festival or festivity of some kind.

There are many Festivals in Nigeria, some of which are dated to the period before the arrival of the major religions in this ethnically and culturally diverse society (Mathias, 2014). It was further reported that festivals in Nigeria can be categorized into four, which are music, film, cultural, Christian and Muslim festivals. Most importantly, celebration of cultural festivals such as Argungu fishing festival (Kebbi State, North western Nigeria), Calabar Carnival (Cross River State), Carniriv (River State) to mention a few is acclaimed to be a unifying force connecting people from different race and background together. This is because celebration of these cultural events in most cases remind people of their past. It is regarded as heritage resources that facilitate social cohesion. Celebration of cultural festivals serve as vehicle that drives the economy of a community through the derivable economic benefits especially during the festive period (Hackbert, 2009). The author observed that cultural festivals packaged with other special events provide excitement, fun, and art, cultural and heritage entertainment in communities and other recreational settings throughout the nation at an expand rate. For instance Calabar Carnival has been held in Calabar since 2006, it includes events such as band competitions, a parade, sales of local food and cultural dancing. This explains the reason why it has been called Nigeria's biggest street party (The Report: Nigeria 2010). In the same vein, Carniriv (English: Car-nee-rev) is an annual festival, held in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The Carnival starts few weeks before Christmas and lasts for seven days. During this time several ceremonial events are held, most of which hold some cultural and sacred significance (Okachi, 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW /THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Celebration of traditional festival plays prominent roles in the community which are very important in the social, economic and cultural context. Bonya (2011) identified two roles which are, traditional and contemporary roles in development. The author emphasized the need for preservation and maintenance of vital components of culture such as drumming, dancing, art, songs, belief systems, values, norms and practices for posterity. The need to ensure maintenance, that is continuous protective care of a place (including elements, objects, spaces and views) and its preservation in its existing state have earlier been acknowledged (Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013). Preservation and maintenance of places of significant value can therefore be considered as part of the essence of celebrating this vital cultural component. Consequently, Nigeria Government has put in place a Cultural Policy/mechanism that aims at protecting and promoting the diversity of the nation's cultural expressions. Administratively, Nigeria has 7 government agencies under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Information & Culture, each with statutory responsibilities covering the different aspects of protection, preservation and promotion of cultural diversity. They are involved in the creation, production, distribution/dissemination and management of the diverse Nigerian culture (Nigeria report, 2017).

Bonya (2011) further stressed that celebration of festivals offer opportunity for the community elders and leaders to enhance the perpetuation of values and belief systems and also pass on folklores to the younger generations. According to Appadurai (2002), festival is regarded as a

form of tourist attraction that is centered on the fundamental principles of exchange between people and is both an expression and experience of culture. The celebration of festivals is usually consciously planned with concrete action aimed at developing a particular project or activity. As Slam and Falola (2002) have argued that traditional festivals are centered not only on religion but also on socio- economic, political and cultural beliefs and values of a society. This could be said of Afiaolu (New yam festival) in Nigeria and Aluolie festival in Ghana.

The purpose of celebrating festival is equally very important as it reveals the structures of the culture from which it emerged. Boamah (1972) describes the *Aluolie* festival in Ghana as a social function which showcases the belief of the people of *Sehwi* who believe that celebrating the festival brings joy, unity and good tidings to them. Rosenberg, 2004, observed that in the streets of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), a popular festival known as *Mardi Gras* (Fat Tuesday) is held. The author opined that this festival brings people from all walks of life to mingle with the local people to eat, drink and entertain themselves by way of parades, dancing and carnivals hence making it a social function. The fact that popular Catholic practices are also associated with celebrations of this festival before the fasting and religious obligations associated with the penitential season of Lent , gives a clue that it has some religious connotations. The Empanada Festival held annually in the City of Batac, Ilocos Norte, Philippines, according to Orpia (2013) is a demonstration of creativity as revealed in the creatively-made floats, colourful themed costumes used during the street dancing parade. The festival also includes a dance drama, selling of souvenir products, concert by known artists in the country and fireworks display.

Festivals have a vital role to play in helping people understand themselves and the multi-layered relationships between humanity and the material and non-material world they occupy and journey through (Robinson and Phipps, 2004). Although cultural tourism is founded upon culture(s) through its practices and manifestations, it can also exist independently and for reasons other than tourism. In 2001 *UNESCO on Cultural Diversity* declared that, culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual–material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs (UNESCO, 2001a). Based on this declaration, culture according to Ojameruaye (2012) can be regarded as the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group, including not only the arts and letters but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value, system, tradition and belief.

In addition, Cultural Heritage Tourism (CHT) relates to the people who live in a region which, according to Shilling (2000) is regarded as the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry simply because of its ability to offer tourists unique products they cannot find elsewhere. As recalled by Onwujeogwu (1987), at the beginning of the 1960s, there were over 3,000 ethnic groups (tribes) in the world, about 1,000 were represented in the geographical space called Africa and about 445 were represented in the geo-political space called Nigeria. The diverse ethnic groups characterized in Nigeria has invariably positioned the country with potential opportunities for the development of cultural tourism. Suffice to say that internally, culture has been identified as the base for the development of tourism in Nigeria and so, a lot of development and promotion is being experienced in the cultural expressions of the people e.g. cultural festivals are now receiving more government attention and funding all over the states of the federation (Nigeria report, 2017). Sam *et al* (2014) earlier reported that some States in Nigeria such as Oyo, Ekiti and Ondo in the Western part of Nigeria

have been able to utilize the benefit of cultural tourism to sustain their economy. There are many festivals in Nigeria, like marriage, birth, farming, harvest, war victory and many other social institutions are celebrated some of which date back to the period before the arrival of the major religions (Online Nigeria, 2011). Oladeji (2016) emphasized that heritage sites offer opportunities for recreation, relaxation and education for the visiting tourist. The author indicated that proceeds realized from tourists visits to Argungu Fishing festival, Kebbi State, in Nigeria has a multiplying effect in the economy of the host communities, thereby facilitating development, maintenance, conservation and sustainable management of this cultural heritage resources.

Idanre boasts of a rich historic cultural landscape and is one of the ancient cities in Ondo-State, Nigeria. The city dates back to the 10th Century Common Era when the local population were led by the Chief's son, Aboogun to settle at a spot named Usualu and later moved to Ufe-Oke now known as Idanre (Oladeji and Akinrinola, 2009). The authors identified seven cultural festivals that are celebrated in Idanre communities, out of which four are associated with culture and history. The idea to celebrate *Mare* festival started in December, 2009 by the then executive Governor of the State as an event that stands to promote eco-tourism, mountain climbing, musical extravaganza, cultural carnival and educational fiesta (Hakeem, 2012). The festival was established against the backdrop of appreciating the impact and utilization of nature from the magnificent Hills at Idanre, Ondo State (Kashim *et al*, 2015). *Mare* festival is an ecotourism and cultural activity that showcase the inherent heritage resources of Idanre Hills and the host communities. To sustain *Mare* Festivals therefore, it is highly expedient to establish positive and negative impacts of the Festival on the people of Idanre. The organizer of this event, the government and other relevant stakeholders will benefit tremendously from the output from this research as basis for the growth and development of the festival. This study also explored the level of support the government can expect from the residents based on their perception of how significant the festival is to them.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study area

The study was conducted in Alade, Atosin and Odode, three communities in Idanre Town, Ondo State. Idanre town is located 20km South of Akure the Capital city of Ondo state. The town is a notable tourism site because of the Hills which occur in a chain forming a ridge with serrated outline. Idanre hills constitute one of the highest elevated parts of southwestern Nigeria (Figure 1). The study area lies between longitudes 07°00' and 7°10' and latitude 5°00 and 5°13. It covers an estimated area of 432sq km on the topographic map 1:100,000 sheet 264 of the Nigerian Ordinance Survey map. Idanre town is about 20 minutes' drive from Akure, the capital city of the state. The major occupation of the local people is farming, boasting of Cocoa, a major cash crop in Nigeria.

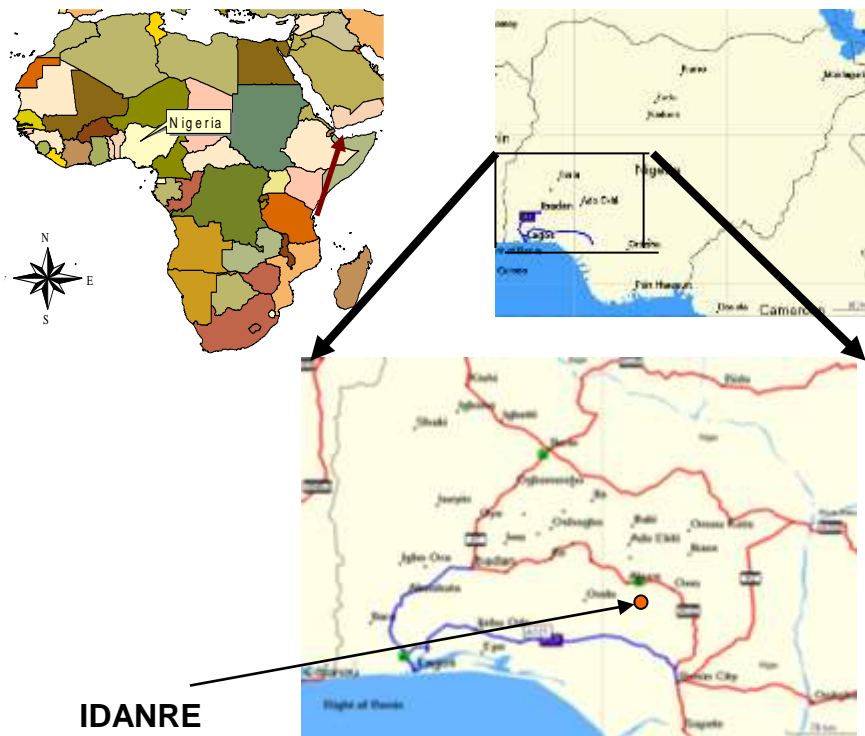


Fig. 1. Map Showing the Location of Idanre

METHODOLOGY

Three categories of stakeholders in public and community institutions that are involved in celebrating *Mare* Festival were interacted with through the use of two research instruments. The stakeholders include staff of Ondo State Culture and Tourism, the indigene of Idanre and the traditional Chief who is custodian of the culture in Idanre. The study population is the residents in three communities of Alade, Atosin and Odode. The three communities are purposively selected based on their proximity to Idanre Hill, Odode the venue of Mare festival. The sample size of 200 structure questionnaire was purposively administered based on the willingness and dispositions of the respondents to participate in the study. Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, individuals were approached to seek their consent and establish their pre-understanding of the study. Those that are willing to participate in the study were approached and questionnaire were administered to them. Key Informant Interview was conducted for High Chief Soore of Idanre and three of the Senior Staff of Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism including The Director of Culture and Tourism were purposively selected from three Department in the Ministry including tourism; culture; and art, museums and monuments. High Chief Dr. Charles Oladipo Akinde, the Soore of Idanre, is selected in

recognition of the roles of the Chief as the custodians of the culture and tradition of the people of Idanre and also member of the board of Trustee, Association of Critical Heritage Studies, Nigeria Chapter.

RESULTS

Key Informant Interview with Staff of Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism

Data obtained during the interview with the Staff of Ondo State Ministry of Tourism and High Chief Soore was presented qualitatively through thematic analysis of the key findings. Information obtained during the Interview with the Staff of the Ministry revealed evidence on three thematic issues that were raised. The three thematic issues raised include areas of involvement of the Ministry in organizing *Mare* festival, identified areas of collaboration with private or individuals and possible suggestions areas of improvement. Bryman (2008) considered qualitative focus group discussion as the most appropriate exploratory method for establishing all-inclusive representation of people's opinions about events that are held in the community.

Areas of involvement of the Ministry: There are indications that Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism is involved in sensitizing and organizing rally, erection of bill board, printing of posters, fliers and public announcement on media weeks before the commencement of this event. Other areas of involvement include packaging of daily itinerary for the event; organizing the participants for the various form of competition and award and cultural display. Prior to the commencement of this event invitations letters are sent to the Chairmen in the 18 Local Government Areas of Ondo State to mobilize their cultural troupe for cultural display. The staff expressed that the participation of cultural troupe from various Local Government Areas offer opportunity to showcase the rich cultural intangible heritage resources across the State.

Areas of collaboration: The Ministry collaborate with private organizations like breweries industries, food and beverages companies, hotels and recreational centers. These organizations registered with the Ministry to display, market and exhibit their products during the event. Musicians and notable Nollywood actors and film artistes also use the occasion to display their skill and talent.

Suggestions for improvement: The staffs of the Ministry solicited for the assistance of private investors in order to encourage financial investment and public private partnership in the development of cultural tourism in Ondo-State. The staff expressed that *Mare* festival is posed to generate revenue for the State with multiplier effect on the local economy if necessary organizations can collaborate and partner with State Government in this direction. Various suggestions that were recommended to improve participation and promotion of this event includes the need to expand the accessible roads and existing township roads network in Idanre. Others include provision of other social amenities and infrastructural facilities like electricity, pipe borne water, recreation and relaxation center that could make the visitors to have longer stay and enjoy their coming.

Key Informant Interview with High Chief Soore of Idanre

Information obtained through interview conducted for Chief Soore of Idanre revealed that celebration of *Mare* festival boost economic activities in the community, facilitate social interaction and encourage display of intangible cultural attributes and visitation to Idanre Hill for Heritage tourism. Idanre Hill is rich in tangible cultural heritage resources such as old palace, shrine, hills, ancient buildings and monuments. High Chief Akinde, declared that the youth constitute the larger percentage of the participants at Mare festival that are either single or married. The learned are equally not exempted in participating in the event as it was pointed out. Additional culture of the people of Idanre needs to be incorporated into the event to reflect cultural attributes than social characteristics. Based on the findings from the interview with High Chief Soore and the Focus Group Discussion conducted for the Staff of Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, a quantitative questionnaire was developed for the third stage of the research which sought the perceptions of larger group of people in order to gain a representative sample by which the concepts of the perception, significance, benefits of the events and socio-demographic character salience can be tested.

Administration of Questionnaire

Analysis of the data collected through administration of questionnaire is presented descriptively. Majority of the respondents 65.0% were in the age group of 20-39 years (table 1). The gender distribution of the respondents revealed that 55.5% were male and 44.5% were female. The results of marital status of the respondents indicated that both the single and the married attended Mare festival. It equally revealed that the highest category of those who attended the Mare festival (24.5%) as indicated by the respondents were students. In addition, 40.0% of the respondents were in the low-income group of between ₦20, 000 and ₦40, 000. This shows that even low-income earners participate in this festival.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
0-19	22	11.0
20-39	130	65.0
40-49	24	12.0
Above 50	24	12.0
Gender		
Male	111	55.5
Female	89	44.5
Marital Status		
Single	88	44.0
Married	88	44.0
Divorced/Separated	13	6.5
Widow/Widower	11	5.5
Religion		
Christianity	131	65.5
Islamic	47	23.5
Traditional	22	11.0

Education		
None	14	7.0
Primary	30	15.0
Secondary	90	45.0
Tertiary	66	33.0
Occupation		
Civil Servant	20	10.0
Trader	43	21.5
Farmer	14	7.0
Mechanic	10	5.0
Students	49	24.5
Security	6	3.0
Engineer	16	8.0
Bricklayer	9	4.5
Hairdressing	18	9.0
Tailor	15	7.5
Income (₦)		
Less than 20,000	59	29.5
20,000-40,000	80	40.0
40,000-60,000	38	19.0
60,000-80,000	8	4.0
80,000-100,000	8	4.0
Above 100,000	7	3.5

Respondents Perceived significance of *Mare* festival

Perceived cultural/heritage, social life, religious, historical and infrastructural significance attached to *Mare* festival by the respondents are presented (table 2). It shows that 52.0% of the respondents attached significant to cultural/heritage displayed at the event, while 56.0% of the respondents attached significant to social life and 18.5% affirmed that the festival has religion significance. Furthermore, the respondents went further to give reasons for their perceived significance earlier presented. Promotion of culture (30%), entertainment and general merry making (25%), it gives opportunities for different religion to offer prayer (21%), promote historical value (24%) and employment and job creation (34%) have the highest percentage in each of the five categories of the level of significance (table 3).

Table 2: The perceived significant of *Mare* festival to the respondents.

Variables	Significant (%)	Indifference (%)	Non-Significant (%)
Culture/Heritage	52.0	36.5	11.5
Social Life	56.0	35.5	8.5
Religious	18.5	33.5	48.0
History	48.5	35.5	16.0
Economic development	41.5	34.0	24.5

= Multiple response

Table 3: Reasons for perceived significant of *Mare* festival to the respondents.

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Cultural/Heritage		
Increase knowledge about the culture	19	18.26
Promotion of culture	30	28.84
Show case the culture	18	17.31
Preservation of culture	15	14.42
Foster cultural integration	22	21.15
Total	104	100
Social Life		
Entertainment and general merry making	25	22.32
Meeting new people and old friends	15	13.39
Showcasing of talent	18	16.07
Boosting town image	13	11.61
Interaction with people from different tribes and places	15	13.39
Promoting young artistes	10	8.92
Opportunity to see new artistes and the foreigners	16	14.29
Total	112	100
Religious activities		
It gives opportunities for different religion to offer prayer	21	56.76
It promotes traditional believe and culture	16	43.24
Total	37	100
History		
Promote historical value	24	25.80
To know more about Idanre and the festival's history	15	16.12
Opportunity to display/recite history	16	17.20
Improvement on tourism and tourist centers	21	22.58
The history is not well known by the foreigners	17	18.27
Total	93	100
Economic development		
Development of tourism and hill resort	21	25.30
Replacement of infrastructures in town	28	33.73
Employment and job creation	34	40.96
Total	83	100

Impact of *Mare* Festival on the Respondents.

The findings of the study on the impacts of *Mare* festival on the respondents are presented in figures 2 and 3. This result indicated that *Mare* festival had impact on 70.0% of the respondents while 30% of the respondents stated that the festival had no impact on them. Considering those that claimed the festival has impact on them, 67.0% of the respondents stated that the impact is positive while 13% stated that it has negative impact.

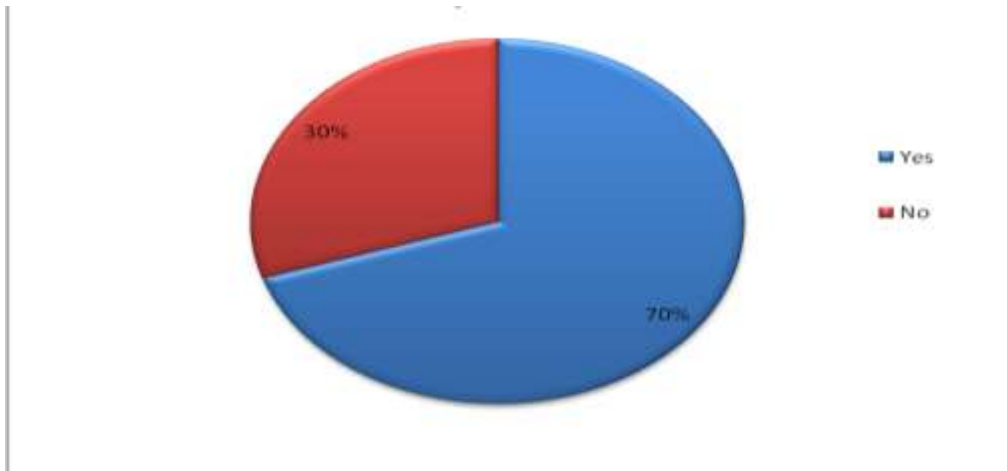


Figure 2: The perceived presence of impact of mare festival on the respondents

Source: Field Survey, 2016

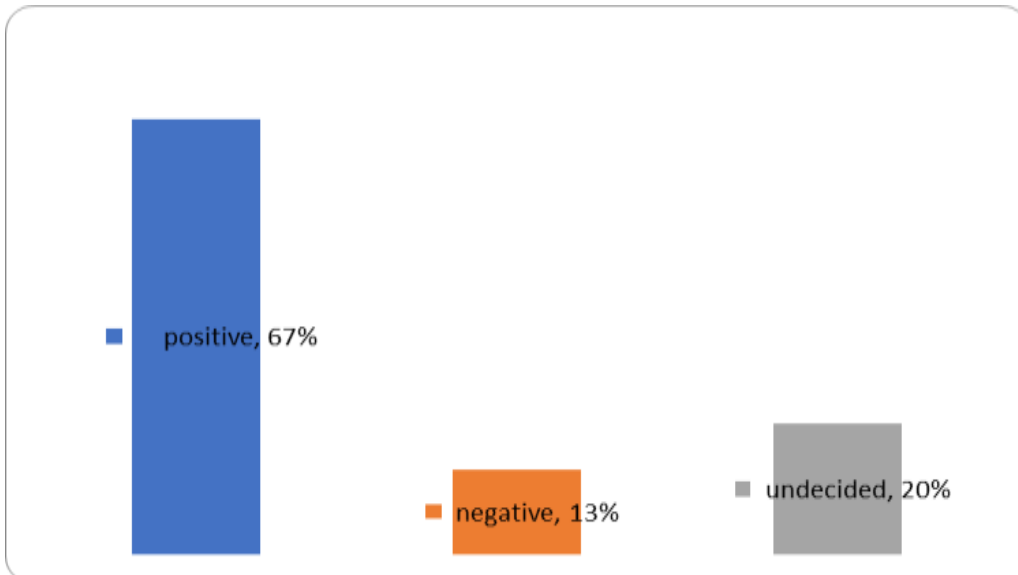


Figure 3: The respondents perceived type of impact from *Mare* festival

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Perceived Benefits Derived

The perceived benefits the respondents derived from *Mare* festival are presented in Figure 4. The result reveals that 64.5% respondents perceived an increased in the sales of goods and services with improved standard of living while 62.5% of the respondents benefited through socializing and meeting new people during this festival. However, 44% of the respondents perceived that the festival fosters unity among the community members and 42.5% of respondents have the opportunity to get job and employment during Mare festival.

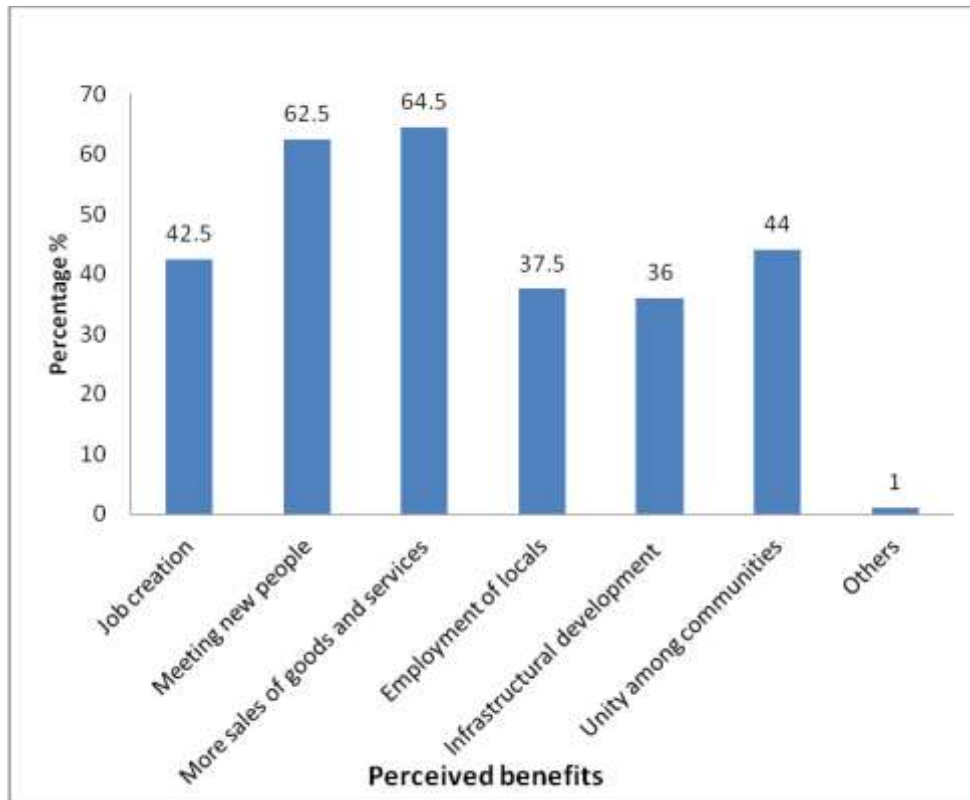


Figure 4: Perceived benefits derived from mare festival (Multiple responses obtained)

Awareness and Willingness to Promote *Mare* Festival

Majority (82%) of the respondents are willing to support celebration of *Mare* festival, while 18% think otherwise (table 4). This probably accounts for being highly willing (64.63%).

Table 4: willingness to support celebration of Mare festival

Willing to support celebration of Mare festival

Yes	164	82.0
No	36	18.0
Level of willingness		
Highly willing	106	64.63
Averagely willing	58	35.36

Reasons for respondents' willingness to promote the festival

The respondents that are willing to support the celebration of Mare festival (82%) went further to provide reasons for their decision (table 5). Greater percentage (35%) expressed the fact that celebration of this event promotes their culture as the rational for promotion, unlike 18.29% of the respondents that expressed willingness to support the continuation and promotion of the festival based because it promotes development of tourism and their culture. Among those that are not willing to support the celebration, 35.29% stated that the period of celebration

encourages the youths to become engaged in violent disputes because of the alcoholic drinks that are sold freely by the breweries company for sales promotion at the festival. In the same vein, some of those that are unwilling to promote celebration of Mare festival expressed that some of the activities lined up for the festival are not in line with the culture of the people of Idanre (32.35%).

Table 5: Reasons for their willingness to support mare festival.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Willing to support (reasons)		
Promote culture	35	21.34
Infrastructural development	20	12.19
Talent show	27	16.46
Development of Tourism and Culture	30	18.29
Entertainment	27	16.46
To meet new people	25	15.24
Total	164	100
Not willing to support (reasons)		
Some of the activities lined up are not part of the culture and tradition of Idanre community	11	32.35
It gives room for violence among the youth that get intoxicated with alcoholic drink	12	35.29
Cost of local foods high during the festival	11	32.35
Total	36	100

DISCUSSION

Socio demographic characteristics of respondents

Analysis of the data collected on the socio demographic characteristics of respondents revealed that those in the age range of 20-39 years constituted the highest population, it equally shows that majority of the participants are youths. Crompton and McKay (1997) gave reasons why youth constituted larger percentage of participants at an event. The authors observed that attending event provide young people with valuable social experiences to interact with their friends and meet new people. This finding was substantiated by Arowosafe and Omopariola (2015) that age range of majority of tourists to Idanre is between 20 and 29years representing 58.5% of the total population of the visitors. The authors observed that this is an indication that most of the visitors to the site are young people. It could be deduced from this study that few (12%) of the adults > 50 years that attended the festival might have come to experience their culture, based on the cultural significance attached to this event. Cudny (2014b), earlier reported the unique character of festivals in celebrating culture and the fact that they provide opportunities for the participants to meet people and places for people with specific cultural interests. Moreover, it was revealed that majority of the people that attend *Mare* festival are Christians followed by the Muslims while the traditional religion worshippers are the least. This is in line with Babalakin, (2000) who ascertain that both Christians and Moslems are

given the opportunity to interact with families, friends, non-indigenes of Oshogbo land and different people. Slam and Falola (2002) declared that traditional festivals are centered not only on religion but also on socio- economic, political and cultural beliefs and values of a society. The educational background studies of the respondent shows that festivals may be attended by those who are literate and those who are illiterate. Gibson and Stewart (2009), also shared the same view while describing festival as a point of convergence that offer social and cultural opportunities to the tourists. WIPO (2012), opined that festivals serve as rendezvous for meetings, contacts among people interested in a certain form of culture and art, as well as researchers and experts working in the fields related to cultural festivals. There are indications that there is apparently no gender inequality in participation or attending *Mare* cultural festival. This was in line with the information received from High Chief (Dr.) Akinde Charles, that most of the people that attend or participate in Mare festival are mostly the youths who are either single or married. This corroborated the findings of Schalkwyk, (2000); UNESCO (2014) that festivals are socio-cultural event with different types of entertainment integrating social, cultural, ethnic and gender background to showcase inherent talents as well as appreciating the creativity of others.

Perceived Significant of cultural festival on residence

Mare festival is perceived to be of Cultural, Social, historic and economic significant with little religion significant to the people of Idanre.

However, social significance of Mare festival is rated highest and this supports the findings of Derrett, (2003) that festivals are perceived to be of high social significance because it brings people from various different backgrounds together for a common cause. The historic significance of festival has earlier been reported by Bonye (2006) that festivals reflect the rich diversity of history and culture of tribal life in the various traditional groupings in Africa. *Mare* Festival has little or no significant on religion belief of the residents but rather serve as taboo for some religion. This result is better explained with findings of Babalakin, (2011) who stated that festival provides avenue through which man interacts with his physical environments. They are able to interact, understand and appreciate the different religion that exists.

Perceived Impacts and benefits of Mare Festivals.

Mare festival has more positive impacts than the negative impacts as expressed by the respondents. The positive impacts are as a result of the perceived Cultural, Social, historic and economic benefits. Social and Economic benefits of Mare festivals constitute the highest percentage of the impacts as expressed by the respondents. This supports the findings of Dwyer, Forsyth and Spurr, (2004) that economic benefits of festival predominantly dominated research on the impacts of festival on the community. The economic impacts of Mare festival are considered to be positive in the sense that it creates job and employment opportunities for the people. Brown *et al* (2011) observed that festival promotes tourism with increasing commercial activities as outcomes of the events. This explains the reason for including more sales in business as part of derivable economic benefits of Mare festival. This result agrees with Wang (2009), whose findings revealed that festival could succeed in attracting inhabitants and tourists and may stimulate domestic demand as well as economic growth thereby producing a positive impact on the residents. Provision of infrastructural facilities are part of the social positive impacts of Mare festival. It might be a bit difficult to separate the social benefits derivable from festival from the economic benefits mainly because the two are

mutually exclusive. This is in line with findings of Rosenberg (2004) who stated that festival is a rich source of tourism which also translate to increased income needed for provision of infrastructural facilities in the country. The ability of tourism to generate high levels of employment has responsible for the sustained demand for this sector of the economy (Yusuff and Akinde , 2015).

Other benefits as highlighted by the respondents include fostering local culture since the events offer opportunities for cultural display among the people drawn from different parts of the State. Kuude, Adongo and Abanga, (2010) reported that today, local festivals are regarded as important tourism resource, a prominent component in the culture of many societies and an inevitable part of the heritage of many nations. According to Fosu (1999), the economic contributions of festivals especially through visitors' spending, brings most of the citizens together to take part in cooperatives and savings schemes and this helps to initiate development projects. Economic benefits in term of job creation and increasing rate of sales of good and services are in short run as observed in Idanre. This agrees with the report of Khalil *et.al* (2007) on the roles of tourism in generating short run economic development for Pakistan economy. Similarly, Slabbert *et al.*, (2007); Jonkeri *et al.*, (2009) observed that South Africa's largest arts festival, the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (KKNK), generated R91.3 million in visitor spending in 2009.

The unwillingness to support celebration of Mare festival is as a result of changing lifestyles, preferences and tastes of participants that occasionally result into increasing price of local commodities and sometimes lead to problems of safety for festival participants (Lyck *et al.*, 2012)

Willingness to support celebration of Mare cultural festival

In view of the significance, positive impacts and benefits of Mare festival greater percentage of the respondents are willing to support celebration of this event. This is in line with Kashim *et al.*, (2015), who ascertained that cultural characteristics represents the resilience, sportsmanship, daring, heartedness, adventurousness, hard work, responsibility, reliability, doggedness, solidity and uncanny ability of the citizens of the state's willingness to promote culture. Since celebration of Mare festival promote job creation, make residence to meet new people, help in infrastructural development, improve sales of good and service and encourage unity among the communities. According to Binns and Nelt (2002), the promotion of tourism has been identified as a key strategy that can lead to indigenous craft development, economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Implication to research and practice

Output from this study has generated useful data on the significance of Mare festival to the host communities with attendant social, cultural and economic impacts with a view to maximise the perceived economic benefits while minimizing the negative impacts. Ondo State Government through the Ministry saddled with the responsibilities to organize this event will benefits tremendously in organizing the event in the future. This will assist the government in improving the packaging this event towards boosting the tourism base of the State. Other relevant stakeholders will equally benefit from this research output especially in the area of market promotion, sales and branding.

CONCLUSION

This research work has assessed the social and demographic characteristics of the people of Idanre and the significance of *Mare* festival to the residents of this community. The cultural, social, historic and economic significant of the festival notwithstanding, the positive economic impacts of the festival cannot be over emphasized. This explains the reason for the willingness of the people to support this annual celebration. Some of the derivable economic benefits include increase or additional sales from business, opportunity to meeting new people during and fostering of unity among the community members. The negative impacts of the festival are negligible compared to the positive economic and social impacts. The to support celebration is based on the economic and social benefits that outweigh the negative impacts. *Mare* festival is considered as one of the most entertaining cultural tourism celebration in Idanre, Ondo State Nigeria that attracts visitors from different part of the State with multiplier effect on the local economy thereby contributing the Nation Gross Domestic Product.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Construction of accessible roads and provision of other infrastructural facilities like regular supply of electricity will be increase influx of visitors to *Mare* festival.
2. Establishment of shops where souvenirs like indigenous handcrafted textiles, ceramic wares, paintings etc. could be sold and bought by the tourists during *Mare* festival will boost economy of the Idanre community.
3. There should be provision of incentives to the private to encourage partnership and collaboration with the Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism financial investment in developmental activities that adhere to the principles of sustainable cultural tourism
4. More awareness about *Mare* festival should be created in order to increase community involvement in activities being performed.

Future research

Blue print and policy framework can be developed from this research finding. There is need to quantify the economic returns accrued to the government, the people , private and individual organizations participating in one form or the other in this event .

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