

The Influence of Leboku New Yam Festival on Catchment Communities in Yakurr Local Government Area, Nigeria

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Festivals have become major contributor to destination development in most countries with great tourism potentials. This scenario is witness in Cross River State which harbor one of the biggest festival event in West- Africa. This research wish to evaluate the impact of Leboku new yam on catchment communities in Yakurr Local Government Area. Five catchment communities were used in this study of which one hundred and fifty copies of questionnaire were randomly administered to operators of businesses and community elders in each community. Findings show that the festival event has attracted more visitors from the catchment communities compared to domestic and international visitors. It was also noticed that there was seasonality in the annual visitors arrivals in the communities during the festival events. Besides, it was observed that the festival events has contributed socio-economically to the wellbeing of the people in the various communities. However, in spite of the above mentioned positive impact of the festival on the catchment communities, it activities are not devoid of socio-economic problems in the area. Therefore, measures must be put in place to guarantee the safety of visitors during the festival event.


Key Words: catchment, communities, destination, festival, visitors

Introduction

Over the years, community festivals have become major destination especially destinations with great tourism activities and potentials. The observation has been evidenced in the increase number of community festivals events listed by the tourism organizations (Mules & Ali, 2002). In most countries community festivals are depicted as public occasion designed to occur within a specific period that celebrate valued aspects of a community's way of life (Dimmock & Tiyce, 2001). Today, festival events provide a lot of socio-economic benefit especially to the host community even though negative consequences such as traffic congestion. Overcrowding, road closures and other social impacts that disrupt events (Small & Edwards, 2003). In Nigeria festivals are celebrated annually in all the states of the federation ranging from the Igbo festival and Arungu fishing festivals in Kebbi state which attract numerous visitors to the area. In Cross River State, festivals such as Leboku new yam festival and the carnival festival have tremendously led to destination development and the socio-economic wellbeing of the people in Cross River State (Eja, 2012) the emergence of tourism support services in the state such as hotels, communication services, confectionaries and other auxiliary tourism services in the state are attributed to festival event (Eja, 2011). This scenario is also

applicable to the big Leboku new yam festival which occurs every year and has significantly influence the rate of visitors arrivals in Cross River State and also contributed the growth and development of catchment communities in Yakurr Local Government Area. Besides, the communities livelihood have been enhanced as a result of the festival event through income generation sales of the local craft, employment creation and at the same time encourage the rapid growth of business which catered for numerous visitors in the state. However, despite the significant impacts of this great festival event on the communities, little or no research have been able to critically analyzed the impacts of this great festival on the catchment communities who are the major players in the event. It is on this note that one wish to ask if really the festival event is impacting on the socio-economic wellbeing of the people which is the bases of this research to evaluate the impact of this festival even on the host communities.

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Literature review

The concept of community is central to a discussion of community festivals and their social impacts. Given the several decades over which the term 'community' has been subject to research, definition and debate, it is not surprising that there is no one single definition of it. However, three characteristics have been identified in a number of definitions of community and therefore warrant further discussion: 1) geographic location; 2) social interaction; and 3) common ties (Bell & Newby, 1971). Geographic location represents the first characteristic of community, referring to a "cluster of people living within a specific geographic area" (Poplin, 1979, p. 9). Members of a community can be viewed as a group of people with something in common, with that commonality being explained in geographic terms (Willmott, 1986). A second defining characteristic of community is that it consists of a number of people interacting with one another (Poplin, 1979). Such interaction is typically structured around a set of common interests held by members of the community (Willmott, 1986; Taylor, 2003). Common interests can include religion or cultural heritage, occupation, leisure pursuits or any common experiences or interests that draw members of a community together, thus forming the basis for social relationships and interactions between members of a community. Further, beyond the geographic location and social interactions, a third defining characteristic is that a community represents a set of common ties or bonds between people (Poplin, 1979). Common ties are those aspects of a community, such as shared goals, values or norms, through which people can identify with each other and their community (Willmott, 1986; Taylor, 2003). In identifying with their community through these common ties or bonds, community members can gain a sense of identity and a feeling of security and belonging. The sense of identity that a person can gain from connecting with their community should not be underestimated. As Willmott (1986) explains, in an otherwise complex world certain people may heavily rely on their sense of identification with other members of a community as the key to making sense of their lives.

Butcher (1993) also outlines three meanings of the concept of community which although distinct, are each interrelated. He defines these as the 'descriptive', 'value', and 'active' meanings of community. The first meaning of community proposed by Butcher (1993) is the descriptive community, which depicts community as a group of people who have something in common. This commonality between people can be either geographic or interest-related. Butcher's descriptive meaning of community is similar to the

elements of geographic location and social interaction outlined above as two characteristics featuring in a majority of community definitions. Thus Butcher's (1993) descriptive meaning of community highlights a community as a place in which people come together because they have a geographic proximity and/or share common interests which encourage social interaction.

Secondly, Butcher (1993) proposes a meaning of community as 'value', recognizing that solidarity, participation and coherence are three intrinsic values of communities. Solidarity refers to the emotional relationships that exist between community members. Participation refers to shared activities of community members that help realise common goals and aspirations. Coherence refers to the adoption of a set of meanings and values by individual members of the community that contribute some overall sense of their world. This 'value' sense of community builds on the social interaction and common ties aspects of community, as discussed previously. This meaning of community as 'value' suggests what it is that community represents to its members, that is, a place where people share similar values. The third meaning of community outlined by Butcher (1993) is the idea of 'active community'. An active community is represented by collective action undertaken by groups of people with either a geographic or interest-related commonality, which embraces one or more of the community values of solidarity, participation or coherence. Collective action is typically undertaken by community groups, networks or organisations, working together towards a defined goal or purpose. This meaning of an 'active' community emphasizes how people behave and act in relation to their common interests and shared values.

The concept of community is relevant to community festivals for a number of reasons. First, a community festival is bound by the geographic location in which it takes place, i.e. within a specific community. Second, not only does the community host the festival in a geographic sense, but its members, the host population, "organise the event, support it through volunteer labour, and attend it as a community celebration" (Getz, 1995, p. 129). This represents an 'active community' that comes together around shared interests and values to realise a common goal of organizing and staging a festival in their community. Third, by hosting the festival in their community, members of the local population must cope with the potential impacts of the festival, both positive and negative. When a community comes together to undertake collective action, such as for the purpose of staging a community festival, positive outcomes for the community can be realised. One

such outcome can be an increased level of community wellbeing, as explored in the following section.

Methodology

This research was conducted in Yakurr Local Government Area between 2008 to 2014 taking into consideration five communities such as Ekori, Nko, Mkpani, Idomi and Agoi. One hundred and fifty copies of questionnaire were distributed to each community using random sampling technique while a checklist was used to capture information such as visitors arrivals and estimated income generation from tourism arrivals and estimated income generation from tourism support services during the festival events. Information such as emerging tourism support services, problems associated with the festival, estimated expenditure incurred by the operators of various tourism support services during the festival event and the estimated income generations were captured in the questionnaire. The sampled population constitutes the owners of tourism support services in the area while checklist was also distributed to those locations on yearly basis to capture visitors arrivals and visitors origin.

In order to collect data from the field, the questionnaires were distributed in the event day to owners of various tourism support services with the aid of field assistant who were familiar with the event activ-

ities and owners of the various business output. A checklist was used to captured information on origin and visitors arrivals between 2007 and 2013 while emerging tourism support services, estimated expenditure during the event, estimated income generation and problems associated with the festival events where captured in the questionnaires which was distributed during the 2 014 festival event to the operators of various businesses in the area

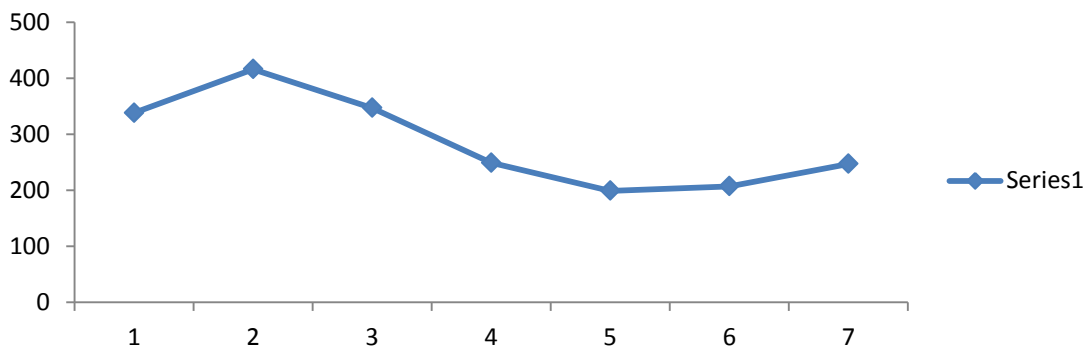
Findings

Annual inflow of visitors in festivals

The annual inflow of visitors during the festival event presented in table 1 shows that Nko and Eko recorded the highest number of visitors arrivals during 2008 to 2014 festival event with values of 23.3% and 21.8% followed by Mkpani with a value of 19.4% while Idomi community recorded the least number of visitors arrivals with a value of 16.9%. Besides, it was noticed in table 1 that 2008 and 2009 recorded the highest number of visitors arrivals with values of 20.76% and 17.33% followed by 2008 with a value of 161.87%. Although, it was observed that there was a drastic fluctuation in visitors arrivals between 2000 to 2014. However, for clarification a time series analysis is further used to show the rate of visitors arrivals in the area.

Table 1: Annual inflow of visitors in festivals

Communities	Annual Inflow of visitors							Total	Percentage
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014		
Ekori	65	80	73	58	47	51	63	437	21.8
Nko	75	59	81	79	41	60	71	466	23.2
Mkpani	51	98	93	38	39	28	43	390	19.4
Idomi	49	94	54	41	43	31	28	340	16.9
Agoi	98	83	46	33	29	37	42	370	18.4
Total	338 =	416 =	347 =	249 =	199 =	207 =	247 =	2003	100
	16.87	20.76*	17.32	12.43	9.93	10.33	12.33		



Visitors origin and arrivals in the events

Visitors origin and arrivals in the festival event presented in table 2 reveals that over 62.05% of the festival attendees were from adjoining communities within the catchment area followed by domestic visitors with a value of 25.46%. However, table 2 also

shows that out of two thousand and three attendees of the festival event only 12.48% constitute international visitors. Furthermore, it was noticed that 2009 recorded the highest number of visitors arrivals from adjoining communities compared to other visitors from other locations and countries over the years as presented in table 2.

Table 2: Visitors origin and arrivals in the festival events

Visitors arrivals	Visitors arrivals in the events							Total	Percentage
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014		
Adjoining communities	201	393	141	198	109	80	121	1243	62.05
Domestic visitors	89	116	125	48	44	47	41	510	25.46
International visitors	24	29	32	45	33	56	31	250	12.48
Total	314	538	298	291	186	183	193	2003	100

Emerging tourism support services

The emerging tourism support services presented in table 3 shows that all the mentioned variables were the emerging tourism support services as a result of the festival event organized in each community. It was noticed in table 3 that 35.3% and 25% of the opinion of the sampled population agreed to the fact

that restaurants and drinking parlours were the major emerging tourism support services as a result of festival events. Although, it was also observed that the festival event has contributed to hotel industry development and mechanic shops in the various community with values of 10.4 and 11% respectively while saloons and laundry services were on the least side with values of 6.9% and 1.2% respectively.

Table 3: Emerging tourism support services as a result of the festival

Tourism support services						Total	Percentage
	Ekori	Nko	Mkpani	Idomi	Agoi		
Restaurants	50	53	62	59	41	265	35.3
Drinking parlours	30	33	31	29	65	188	25.0
Hotels	20	21	15	12	10	78	10.4
Rental shops	15	17	13	14	43	16	7.5
Saloons	8	5	12	18	9	52	6.9
Laundry services	1	3	2	2	1	9	1.2
Mechanic shops	26	18	15	16	8	83	11.0
Total	150	150	150	150	150	750	

Estimated expenditure during the festival event

The estimated expenditure during the festival events presented in the table 4 shows that over 61% and 31% of the sampled population in the various communities incurred or spend over five to ten thousand naira during the festival event. It was also noticed that only 3.06% of the sampled population agreed to the fact that they spend up to thirty one thousand and

above during the festival event. Moreso, it was discovered from the findings that only a few people spend up to sixteen thousand as observed in table 4 with values of 2.53% and 2.26% respectively. However, this means that the operators of the various tourism support services in the area do not spend so much income to enable them provide the needed services to visitors.

Table 4: Estimated expenditure during the festival event

Expenders	Ekori	Nko	Mkpani	Idomi	Agoi	Total	Percentage
₦500-₦10,000	93	85	79	89	112	458	61.0
₦11,000-₦15,000	42	54	46	55	36	233	31.0
₦16,000-₦20,000	4	1	13	1	0	19	2.53
₦21,000-₦30,000	3	4	7	2	1	17	2.26
₦31,000 and above	8	6	5	3	1	23	3.06
Total	150	150	150	150	150	750	

The estimated income generated by the operators

The estimated income generated by the operators of the various tourism support services presented in table 5 revealed that out of the seven hundred and fifty sampled population, 73.8% are with the opinion that they generated up to fifteen to twenty five thousand naira as income during the 2014 festival followed by 15.3% of the sampled population who also attest to the fact that they generated income up to fifty five to sixty five thousand naira during of the festival event while only a few of the sampled population generate income up to ninety five thousand and above as presented in table 5.

The estimated income generated by the operators of the various tourism support services presented in table 5 revealed that out of the seven hundred and fifty sampled population, 73.8% are with the opinion that they generated up to fifteen to twenty five thousand naira as income during the 2014 festival followed by 15.3% of the sampled population who also attest to the fact that they generated income up to fifty five to sixty five thousand naira during of the festival event while only a few of the sampled population generate income up to ninety five thousand and above as presented in table 5.

Table 5: Estimated income generation in the festival

Expenders	Ekori	Nko	Mkpani	Idomi	Agoi	Total	Percentage
₦1500-₦25,000	38	61	65	63	81	308	41.0
₦35,000-₦45,000	56	49	49	51	41	246	32.8
₦55,000-₦65,000	32	18	21	23	21	115	15.3
₦75,000-₦85,000	9	19	1.3	8	4	53	7.0
₦95,000 and above	15	3	2	5	3	28	3.7
Total	150	150	150	150	150	750	

Nevertheless, the above assertion shows that the operators of the various tourism support services in each community during the festival events made

profits as also indicated in a line graph which shows estimated expenditure and the estimated income generator during the festival event.

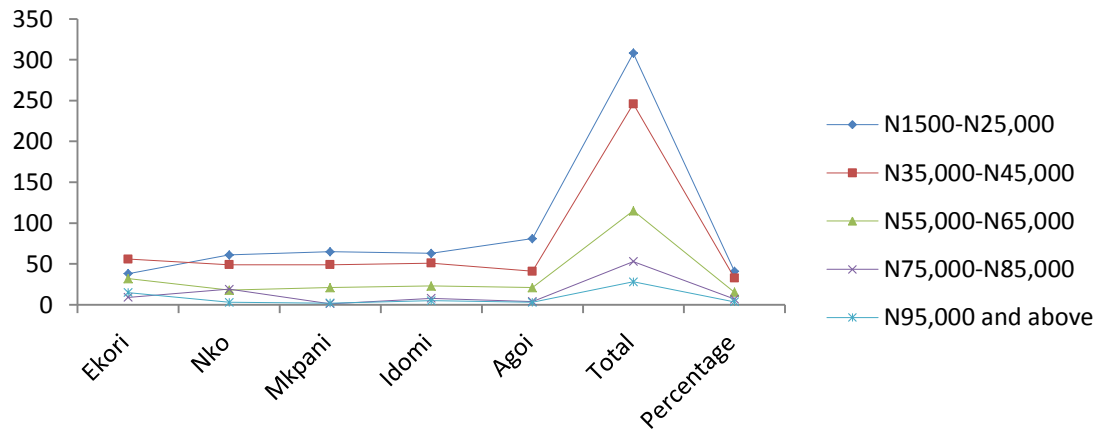


Figure 1: Estimated income generation in the festival

The problems of festival event

The associated problems of festival event in the various community as presented in table 6 shows that all the mentioned variables in table 6 are associated with festival event in the area as observed with a value of 30.6%. It was noticed in table 6 that the festival

event have increase the rate of divorce and loss of cultural values with values of 21.86% and 18.4%. Besides, it was also discovered that the festival events has encouraged prostitution and demand for housing with values of 15.73% and 10.9% respectively.

Table 6: Problems associated with the festival event

Problems	Ekori	Nko	Mkpani	Idomi	Agoi	Total	Percentage
Increase in prostitution	25	23	29	19	22	118	15.73
Loss of cultural values	36	22	25	23	32	138	18.4
Increase divorce	28	31	37	29	29	164	21.86
Demand for housing	16	19	15	18	14	82	10.9
All of the above	43	52	39	47	49	230	30.6
Others specify	2	3	5	4	4	18	2.4
Total	150	150	150	150	150	750	

Socio-economic characteristics of the people

The socio-economic characteristics of the people present in table 7 revealed that over 64% of the sampled population were male while only 36% of the remaining sampled population were female. It was noticed in table 7 that majority of the sampled population fall within the age bracket of 21 to 30 years

with values of 22.7% and 27.3% respectively. However, 64% of the sampled population constitute those who are not single while 32% of the sampled population were married and 4% were widows. Nevertheless, table 7 shows that 16.7% of the sampled population were those that have completed their first school leaving certificate while 41.3% are those that have obtained their degree certificate.

Table 7: Socio-economic characteristics of the people

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	96	64
Female	54	36
Total	150	100
Age	Frequency	Percentage
15-20	15	10
21-25	34	22.7
26-30	41	27.3
31-40	30	20
36-40	16	10.7
41 and above	14	9.3
Total	150	100
Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	96	64
Married	48	32
Widow/widower	6	4
Total	150	100
Educational level	Frequency	Percentage
FSLC	25	16.7
B.Sc./ B. Ed/ B. Eng/BA	62	41.3
Post graduate	4	2.7
Total	150	100

Conclusion

In recent times, festivals have played a major role in destination development. Its overwhelming impact is felt especially in communities where festival events are seen as one of the most famous cultural events in the area. Today, most communities have enjoyed the benefits accrued to festivals especially as it contributes to the socio-cultural and economic wellbeing of the people in such location. The scenario in communities in Yakurr Local Government Area is quite overwhelming as Leboku new Yam festival has tremendously given rise to the emergence of tourism support services which at the same time provide the local people with an alternative source of livelihood. The research findings have also shown that Leboku new Yam festival has contributed greatly to the development of catchment communities in Yakurr local government area. Therefore, adequate measures must be put in place to ensure the sustainability of the festival event in the area.

Recommendations

Tourism development in Cross River State has encouraged the development of cultural activities and events in the state. However, despite the significant contribution of the festival event such as Leboku, its activities are not devoid of socio-economic problems. In order to avert the problems associated with Leboku new Yam festival event, this study put forward the following recommendations:

- i. The government must liaise with the communities so as to provide a framework that would ensure tourism related activities during the events. This would help to ensure visitors' comfort and interest on the festival hence encouraging effective feedback from the various visitors
- ii. The government and the host community must provide adequate security and comfort to visitors that are willing to spend longer days in the area
- iii. The government and the community should provide enabling encouragement for private sector to invest in the state especially in area of accommodation. This would help reduce the high demand for housing during the events
- iv. The community must enact laws that would help to prevent individual wishing to be involved in illegal activities during the festival event and possible punishment be given to those who go contrary to the law.
- v. The government should provide adequate publicity with respect to the festival event. This would help to create public awareness about the events.

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