



# Harnessing the Tourism Potentials of Ibi Festival of Agbarho Community in Delta State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

Festivals have played major roles in the development and promotion of Tourism in Nigeria. Festivals are also a means for tourism, economic development, and local marketing. Nigeria is blessed with so many festivals which have not been harnessed by the government for tourism promotion. The study examined the tourism potentials of Ibi Festival of Agbarho Community in Delta State, Nigeria. Employing the qualitative and quantitative methods of research with emphasis on the literary, historical and sociological method of research, the study observed that Ibi festival has the potential to boost tourism in Delta State. The study identified that there are several obstacles to the development of tourism in Nigeria, such as resistance from the government, troubles with infrastructure, corruption, insecurity, environmental concerns, religious affiliation, and a low level of private sector involvement. The study also observed that community festivals like Ibi festival of Agbarho in Delta State which promote social connections, community cohesiveness and cultural understanding can be sustained via the active involvement of many stakeholders so as to boost tourism in Delta State. The study recommends that the government and other stakeholders should be involved in the planning, and execution of community festivals like Ibi festival as it will create visibility for such festivals, job opportunities, and contribute to the economic development of not just the host community but also the state and nation at large.

**Keywords:** festivals, tourism, culture, tourists, economy.

## INTRODUCTION

Festivals convey a sense of joy and thankfulness throughout the community while also acting as religious observances. They represent a community's history, customs, and way of life and are frequently used to mark important occasions or life events. Festivals, whether they are based on religious principles or developed naturally from daily life, offer opportunities for community celebration, relieving stress and promoting emotional health. Since festivals bring people from many backgrounds together, they play a crucial role in promoting social cohesion and nation-building. They provide friends and family members the chance to forge new relationships and improve existing ones, despite disparities in social class, economic background, and religion. Festivals are occasions that are regularly observed to commemorate exceptional occasions, usually as dictated by customs and cultural traditions. These joyful, energetic, and family-oriented gatherings work as significant cultural touchstones by uniting communities and fostering a sense of belonging. Essentially, festivals serve as catalysts for fostering harmony, appreciating cultural variety, and bringing life's monotony to a halt in addition to being joyful and celebratory occasions.

Nigeria is a culturally diversified country, and many of its celebrations have roots in pre-colonial periods, even before major faiths were introduced. Every festival has a certain function that is based on historical, social, religious, cultural, or economic elements. Many festivals have, in fact, endured across time and come to represent the timeless core of human custom. Festivals have a variety of roles in society, promoting harmony and communal togetherness as well as peace and progress. Serving as hubs for cultural tourism, they draw tourists who are keen to get fully immersed in regional traditions and customs, which stimulates economic growth on a local, state, and federal level. Festivals are now

essential to the development of tourism places, cultures and economies. Moreover, festivals significantly contribute to the promotion of cultural tourism by drawing visitors to community events, and facilitating cultural exchange between tourists and residents. This form of tourism fosters both direct and indirect interaction, enriching cultural experiences and promoting sustainable tourism practices on a global scale. The emphasis on cultural values further enhances the appeal and competitiveness of major cities worldwide. Within the scope of this study, the Ibi Festival of Agbarho Community in Delta State, Nigeria, emerge as potential major tourist attractions, capable of drawing visitors from local, regional, and international spheres.

Tourism emerges as one of the most remarkable growth phenomena of our era, exerting influence across various aspects of human life and society. It represents a pivotal component of world economy, offering unique intrinsic benefits unmatched by other human endeavours. More so, globalization has propelled tourism onto the global stage, presenting marketers with a plethora of diverse multicultural markets. This evolving landscape necessitates intercultural findings in hospitality and tourism to effectively navigate the complexities of the global tourism industry. Meanwhile, the necessity for intercultural research in the travel and hospitality industries is highlighted by this trend. An analysis of the benefits of festival activities reveals a multiplier impact, increased income, the creation of employment, the improvement of infrastructure, capital investments, and lively social and cultural areas that encourage company growth are all outcomes of this influence. Tourism, as explained by MalcineDz and Skarrone (2019), involves traveling away from home for experiences and enjoyment. Aronsoson (1994) highlighted that tourism involves leaving one's home environment. UNWTO (2014) stressed that tourism is an experience a traveler has while staying in a place away from home for leisure, business, or other reasons, usually for less than a year. Cultural festivals and tourism are closely intertwined. Festivals are praised for preserving history and improving community life. It also could serve as an economic booster by attracting tourists. Festivals, being short-term events are important in promoting cultural tourism (Chang, 2006; Getz, 2008). Tourism is essential for many countries' economies. Recognized worldwide for its enormous growth and development potential, tourism is one of the most important and quickly growing economies (UNWTO, 2016; Nayomi, 2015). Globally, tourism is recognized as a lucrative business sector, contributing significantly to the economy and job creation. It has the potential to elevate the standard of living in local communities by providing employment opportunities (Cooper et al., 2008). However, tourism also involves the consumption of delicate resources such as historical sites, natural landscapes, and cultural heritage, making sustainable development imperative (Cooper et al., 2008).

Again, the tourist industry frequently lacks government backing and advantageous development strategies (Ekechukwu et al., 2012). Festivals have a lot of potential to grow tourism in Delta State and Nigeria at large. The absence of strong development activities and backing from the government presents a serious obstacle. The purpose of this study is to identify the tourism potentials of Ibi Festival of Agbarho Community in Delta State, Nigeria. The research tackles important issues such as insufficient finance, a lack of cooperation between the public and commercial sectors, security worries, and the influence of religion and modern life as some of the challenges hindering the tourism potentials of Ibi Festival as a tourist destinations in Delta State, Nigeria.

Throughout this study, the Ibi Festival of Agbarho could likely become major attraction for visitors, whether they are from the local area, nearby regions, or even international tourists. It is a vital component of the global political economy, providing fundamental advantages that are incomparable to those of any other human enterprise. It is well known that the consequences of globalization have led to an increase in the globalization of tourism. Marketers have had to adjust to the growing diversity of multicultural marketplaces during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Rationale for the Study**

The study is prompted by several key factors, foremost among them being the prevailing low attendance at indigenous festivals, even among the local population who are the custodians, largely due to religious beliefs. The Ibi festival of Agbarho is no exception to this trend. Compounding this issue is the lack of concerted efforts to package and promote the festival, along with others, for the purpose of tourism development. The primary objective of the study is to recognize the obstacles hindering cultural festivals from contributing to event tourism development in Delta State, Nigeria. Another motivating factor is the scarcity of literature on the Ibi festival. There is a genuine concern that the festival may fade into obscurity if not properly documented. Furthermore, the tourism

potential of the Ibi festival of Agbarho has not been thoroughly explored, nor have the potential contributions to the development of the community been adequately studied. These factors, among others, serve as the driving force behind this research endeavour.

### **Research Method**

The study adopted the qualitative and quantitative method of research with emphasis on literary/analytical, historical and sociological methods. Relevant data were collected and used to discuss the challenges inhibiting the tourism potentials of Ibi festival of Delta State as cultural tourism products. In this study, useful information was gathered using the literary methodology where journal essays, relevant books and other materials were accessed. The sociological method also comes in with the researcher interacting with the host communities and key informants who are knowledgeable in the traditions and histories of the festival. Also, questionnaires were distributed in addition to oral interviews. Then, the historical methodology was also used where the history, traditions and cultures of Ibi festival of Agbarho were studied.

### **Festival and Tourism: A Brief Comment**

Falassi (1987) summed up the modern definition of a festival as a "special time of celebration." Older festivals usually have religious origins, although more contemporary events are generally secular and nonreligious. Festivals are expressions of joy and gratitude that typically involve food, dance, and cultural displays. They have long been a part of human history, serving as occasions for social gatherings and ritual. Indigenous customs and traditions are not complete without celebrations and dances, which also boost the tourism industry in the areas where they are performed (Chappel and Loades, 2006; Odouk, Omeobun, and Ephraim, 2013). Festivals are, broadly speaking, occasions to celebrate a community's past, present, and way of life. They commemorate important occasions or customs in a society and frequently act as a bridge between the living and their ancestors and gods. African festivals often incorporate traditional elements such as dance, masks, costumes, and theatrical performances, which are unique to the cultures they represent. These festivals are visually spectacular and attract audience participation. Festivals serve as platforms for tourism enriching, economic development, and local promotion. They are mass celebratory events held in various venues, including streets, parks, stadiums, or clubs, with the venue influencing the nature and structure of the festival. As tourism becomes increasingly international due to globalization, festivals play a crucial role in showcasing and contributing to human culture and social life. They also provide opportunities for host communities to generate income through business activities. Some well-known international festivals include the New Orleans Mardi Gras Carnival, the Rio de Janeiro Carnival, the Winter Carnival in Quebec City, and the Calabar Carnival, among others. The analysis of the positive impacts of festivals reveals a multiplier effect, including increased income, job creation, infrastructure development, and the creation of vibrant social and cultural spaces conducive for business (Bezirgan & Yetginer, 2020). Cultural festivals are significant cultural practices, attracting substantial capital investment in developed countries and contributing to overall cultural development. However, there is a risk of commercialization threatening the continuity of local culture as a tourism product (Bezirgan & Yetginer, 2020). Festivals can boost local economies, improve quality of life, and foster social solidarity, but they may also lead to environmental damage and traffic congestion if not properly planned (Volal et al., 2016).

Ezeh (2006) defines tourism as "a temporary shift from one's usual residence or workplace to another location for recreational purposes, involving an overnight stay and the facilities that cater to them." This definition, however, ignores the wider range of tourism, which goes beyond leisure activities to encompass a variety of other interests held by travelers. Okpoko and Okpoko (2002:p.21) defined purposes that encompass leisure activities such as recreation, holidays, health pursuits, educational trips, religious pilgrimages, and sporting events, as well as business trips, family visits, missions, and meetings. Additionally, Peace (1993) suggests that tourism, in its broad sense, encompasses phenomena related to spatial mobility, involving voluntary travel and personal interaction with the visited environment, including natural, cultural, and social elements. These varied perspectives underscore the complexity inherent in defining tourism, a subject that has been extensively debated among scholars.

Tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon with far-reaching impacts on society, influencing social dynamics, political landscapes, economic activities, cultural expressions, historical narratives, and environmental landscapes. From the author's viewpoint, tourism can be interpreted as a purpose-driven, temporary relocation of individuals to destinations of interest and attractions, involving overnight stays without engaging in paid services. Furthermore, it encompasses the provision of tourism products and associated experiences by businesses operating in the tourism sector. Infrastructure development is crucial for the thriving of tourism in any community or region. The long-term sustainability of the tourism industry relies on innovative ideas to enhance its status (Balogun KB & Raji K.R.E, 2021). Accessibility to routes, accommodations, amenities, attractions, and activities are fundamental prerequisites for tourism advancement. Tourism, as a developmental phenomenon, can capitalize on festivals as socio-cultural capital to promote economic growth. Festivals can be packaged as cultural commodities for tourism, both locally and internationally, enhancing a country's global reputation. They stimulate demand for the arts, improve venue infrastructure, energize local participation, and provide authentic experiences, ultimately enhancing tourism advancement (Quinn, 2006; Lee, Fu & Chang, 2015).

Cultural festivals and tourism are closely related, with the former being seen as a way to improve community well-being and conserve history (Grappi & Montanari, 2011). Notable Nigerian cultural festivals include the Argungun Fishing Festival, Osun Oshogbo Festival, New Yam Festival of Onitsha, Ojude Oba Festival of Ijebu-Ode, and Durbar Festivals in the Northern region. Delta State has abundant cultural resources that might contribute to sustainable growth and the economy. Utilizing and expanding these cultural celebrations may make a substantial contribution to the growth of tourism, which will benefit not just the host villages but the entire nation.

### **Agbarho Community**

This is a major town in Delta State, Nigeria. The town has communities like Oguname, Ovir, Oghara of Agbarho, Ophori; Uvmiamug; Uvwiam; Ughrughelli; Ekrahavwe; Ikwegwu; Oherhe, Orhokpokpor; Orho-Agbarho, and so on. It stands as one of the constituent kingdoms forming the Urhobo nationality. The primary language spoken in Agbarho is the Agbarho dialect of Urhobo, which serves as the standard dialect for literacy in the Urhobo language. The community is led by a traditional ruler "Osuivie of Gambaro". The inhabitants of Agbarho are predominantly engaged in farming and various business activities. Notable educational institutions in the area include Unity School Agbarho, Agbarho Grammar School, St. Endas College Agbarho, along with primary schools like Agbarho Model Primary School, Okrherhe Primary School, and Ekwerhe Primary School. Additionally, there is a government-owned hospital situated on the route to the Ohrehe Community of Agbarho.

### **Ibi Festival of Agbarho**

The Ibi festival is all about young warriors showing neighbouring communities their capability to defend their own in battle. It all begins at the town hall where the King (Osuivie) of Agbarho, along with chiefs, villagers, men, women, children, and guests gather for a seven-day celebration. Traditionally known as Ibi, meaning "war light," the festival brings warriors from different communities to the town hall, displaying their skills with dane guns loaded with gunpowder to showcase their readiness for battle. Each community follows with a dance, featuring young ladies dressed in vibrant Urhobo traditional attire, captivating the audience with their moves. Agbarho, nestled in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria, holds the festival every two years in November and December, spanning seven days. It's a carnival-like event, bringing together Agbarho's sons and daughters to reconnect with their roots. For them, Ibi symbolizes the valour of their ancestors. The young maidens, adorned in traditional attire, sing and dance, while older women join in with enthusiastic claps. This celebration is more than just festivity; it's a vital link to preserving the community's customs and traditions for future generations. It fosters unity among the people, strengthening social bonds and reinforcing cherished values in their way of life.

### **History of Ibi Festival**

According to history, Uvwiam is credited for founding the present-day Agbarho community, which other communities later migrated to, including Oguname and Orhokpokpo. Uvwiam originated from Uvwiam, while Okrherhe traces its roots to Uvwie, extending to Oguno town. The Agbarho clan comprises 13 villages/towns, including Ikwegwu, Ekrahwen, Ophori, Ughwughelli, and

Oghara, among others. The name "Agbarho" emerged when these villages faced threats from warlords, prompting them to unite under a common identity to confront external threats. They share a common language, culture, and customs, revering their king as a symbol of unity. The Festival Ibi of Agbarho originated in Orhokpokpo village during an attack by Ekerewhere from Ughelli town. Young warriors were armed to demonstrate their defense capabilities, leading to the festival's official inception as other villages pooled resources together. The festival, inspired by the desire to defend against external threats, honours the deity Oke, the goddess of War, worshipped at a shrine by the river bank. Rituals involved consulting the goddess for protection and fortifying young warriors. The festival, held every two years, features war dances and rituals, with participants gathering at the Agbarho town hall for seven days. The festival date is determined by the King of Agbarho in consultation with the chief priest, President General, and elder statesmen, with all communities participating in the festivities.

### **Performance of the Ibi Festival**

Agbarho Ibi festival is a bi-annual event held to celebrate the peace, unity, and progress of Agbarho kingdom. The activities of the festival include: Before the festival begins, the town crier visits each village in the kingdom to announce the date and time of the event, urging every member of the community, especially children, to participate fully. However, this tradition has become less prominent in recent times, as noted by Chief Alex Duruvwe JP.

On the day of the festival, all villages gather for the opening ceremony, which kicks off with young warriors showcasing their dance steps while holding Dane guns and firing into the air, symbolizing readiness for battle. Accompanying the young warriors are older men who provide guidance. Each village presents its dance, with the President General introducing the town's name, dance theme, and songs. Attendees include the King (Osuivie of Agbarho), the chief priest, other priests, President Generals from each village, chiefs, elders, men, women, boys, maidens, youths, children, and Agbarho indigenes from home and abroad (Duruvwe, Interview, 2023).

The opening ceremony, typically vibrant and engaging, sees friends and families from far and near coming together for pleasantries, merrymaking, dancing, singing, and enjoying local delicacies. The King opens the ceremony with a welcoming address, followed by performances from young warriors, chiefs, elders, and youths from each village. After all villages have presented their dances, the King welcomes them. According to them, the primary aim of the young warriors' performance is to demonstrate their preparedness for any potential conflict, with each warrior being fortified with charms and amulets by their respective priests. Following the young warriors are the young maidens, accompanied by older women, from each village, adorned in traditional attire and singing and dancing to the beats of drummers. Each of the 13 villages takes its turn to showcase its dance steps, signaling their readiness for the festivities ahead. For the remaining five (5) days, villages will gather each morning and evening to dance, sing, and entertain the villagers, community, and guests present at the festival. Their order of appearances is as follows:

- i. Day 2: Ekerhavwe and Ogunname villages will perform at the town hall, showcasing their dance steps alongside the festival's theme.
- ii. Day 3: It will be the turn of Oko-Erhavme and Okan-Ikwheghwu villages.
- iii. Day 4: Okherhe and Ikeweghu villages will take the stage.
- iv. Day 5: Orhokpokpo and Ophori villages will host and entertain the audience.
- v. Day 6: Ughrughelli and Oghara will wrap it up with their beautiful dances and songs.
- vi. Day 7: This marks the grand finale of the festival. On this day, all the villages will come together with notable men and women from each community to celebrate. This is also the award/prize-giving day.

The judges for this festival are usually elderly men, chiefs from the different villages, and the executive members of the community. On this day, the best dancers/village are greatly rewarded with gifts from the king in the form of cash and kind. In the olden days, beautiful female dancers were traditionally given to notable and wealthy men from each community as their wives.

## **Participants in Ibi Festival**

### **The Chief Priest:**

The Chief Priest plays a central role in the Ibi Festival. He fortifies the young warriors with amulets and charms, preparing them for battle. As a significant figure, he conducts sacrifices to the deity on behalf of the community. Additionally, the Chief Priest provides counsel to the President General and the executive members throughout the festival. Acting as a watchdog, he ensures the smooth proceedings of the event.

### **The Young Warriors:**

The Young Warriors are the central figures of the Ibi festival, embodying the role of defenders of their community. Armed with cutlasses instead of Dane guns for safety reasons, they symbolize readiness for battle by shooting into the air. Their primary goal is to assert control over their community, motivated by the looming threat of attacks from neighbouring communities. Accompanied by drummers and older men, their dance showcases their preparedness for conflict. Community members and visitors anticipate their vibrant dance performances, which highlight their cultural richness. Adorned in warrior costumes with cutlasses at their sides, the Young Warriors evoke admiration and respect. Participation in the Young Warriors' dances is highly coveted among young men in the community, offering them a platform to demonstrate their bravery and strength through vigorous movements by their whipping chest, legs, and arms.

### **The Old Men**

The Old Men play a crucial role in the festival, serving as educators and mentors to the young men. They impart knowledge on warfare tactics, strategies for battle, and the handling of weapons like Dane guns. Responsible for training and nurturing the young boys into warriors, they also coach them on dance steps and provide unwavering support during performances.

### **The Executive Chambers**

They oversee the festival's operations under the guidance of the chief priests. Comprising the Osuivie (king) of Agbarho, president generals from the 13 villages, and chiefs/elders from each village, they manage day-to-day activities and serve as judges for the dance competitions, awarding prizes to the best performers.

### **The Young Dancers**

They are the vibrant entertainers of the festival, representing the 13 villages with their captivating dances and songs accompanied by drummers. Their performances captivate the audience, marking the beginning and end of the festival with their energetic displays.

## **Pictures of Participants at the Ibi Festival of Agbarho Community, 2023**



**Figure 1- Youth dancers at the IBI Festival 2023**



**Figure 2- Middle aged men displaying their dance steps with cutlasses which is part of the activities of the Ibi festival**



**Figure 3-Oguname villagers dancing to the festival venue**



**Figure 4-The king of Agbarho community on his way to the festival venue**



**Figure 5-drummer displaying his talent at the IBI Festival**



**Tourism Potentials of Ibi Festival of Agbarho**

In this segment, the researcher distributed questionnaire to some of the indigenes of Agbarho Community in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria, who are the custodians of the Ibi festival to ascertain the tourism potentials of the Festival. In the report below, the data collected from these questionnaires were used to draw meaningful insights and conclusions regarding the research objectives. Each questionnaire response represents a valuable piece of information that contributes to our understanding of the community's perspectives and experiences. The researcher in designing the questionnaire considered the age bracket, gender, occupation, and the educational background of the respondents. For the purpose of this study, Section C and D of the questionnaire which focused on the tourism potentials of Ibi Festival are discussed below:

**Section C: Respondent’s Perception of Tourism Potentials in the Festival**

In this section, Six (6) questions/statements were passed to the respondents to gauge their perceptions of the tourism potentials of the Ibi festival.

Table- 4.3.1.21- If the tourism potentials of the festivals are properly harnessed, it would help to foster inter-community relationships among different groups in Delta State.

| <b>Question</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Agree             | 11               | 44                |
| Strongly Agree    | 14               | 56                |
| Disagree          | 0                | 0                 |
| Strongly Disagree | 0                | 0                 |
| Undecided         | 0                | 0                 |
| Total             | 25               | 100               |

From the analysis above, the table indicates that 44% representing 11 respondents agreed, 56% representing 14 respondents strongly agreed, 0% representing 0 respondent disagreed, 0% representing 0 respondent strongly disagreed while, 0% representing 0 respondent was undecided.

Table- 4.3.1.22- The festival, as a tourist attraction allows for the participation of different groups in communal engagement.

| <b>Question</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Agree             | 12               | 48                |
| Strongly Agree    | 12               | 48                |
| Disagree          | 0                | 0                 |
| Strongly Disagree | 0                | 0                 |
| Undecided         | 1                | 4                 |
| Total             | 25               | 100               |

From the analysis above, the table indicates that 48% representing 12 respondents agreed, 48% representing 12 respondents strongly agreed, 0% representing 0 respondent disagreed, 0% representing 0 respondent strongly disagreed while, 4% representing 1 respondent was undecided.

Table- 4.3.1.23- The Tourism industry is capable of maintaining and promoting the cultural heritage and festivals of the Nigerian People.

| <b>Question</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Agree             | 13               | 52                |
| Strongly Agree    | 11               | 44                |
| Disagree          | 0                | 0                 |
| Strongly Disagree | 0                | 0                 |
| Undecided         | 1                | 4                 |
| Total             | 25               | 100               |

From the analysis above, the table indicates that 25 participated in the exercise with 52% representing 13 respondents agreeing, 44% representing 11 respondents strongly agreeing, 0% representing 0

respondent disagreed, 0% representing 0 respondent strongly disagreed, and 4% representing 1 respondent was undecided.

Table- 4.3.1.24- Government policies and programs have adequately supported the promotion of their festival as a tourist attraction.

| Question          | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Agree             | 13        | 52         |
| Strongly Agree    | 10        | 40         |
| Disagree          | 0         | 0          |
| Strongly Disagree | 0         | 0          |
| Undecided         | 2         | 8          |
| Total             | 25        | 100        |

From the analysis above, the table indicates that 52% representing 13 respondents agreed, 40% representing 10 respondents strongly agreed, 0% representing 0 respondents disagreed, 0% representing 0 respondents strongly disagreed, 8% representing 2 respondents were undecided.

Table- 4.3.1.25- The festival contributes to the peaceful co-existence of the host community and her neighbours thereby promoting economic development.

| Question          | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Agree             | 12        | 48         |
| Strongly Agree    | 11        | 44         |
| Disagree          | 0         | 0          |
| Strongly Disagree | 1         | 4          |
| Undecided         | 1         | 4          |
| Total             | 25        | 100        |

From the analysis above, the table indicates that 48% representing 12 respondents agreed, 44% representing 11 respondents strongly agreed, 0% representing 0 respondents disagreed, 4% representing 1 respondent strongly disagreed, and 4% representing 1 respondent was undecided.

**Table- 4.3.1.26- Development of the festival for tourism contributes to curtailing of social vices among the youths in the state.**

| Question          | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Agree             | 9         | 36         |
| Strongly Agree    | 11        | 44         |
| Disagree          | 1         | 4          |
| Strongly Disagree | 1         | 4          |
| Undecided         | 3         | 12         |
| Total             | 25        | 100        |

From the analysis above, the table indicates that 36% representing 9 respondents agreed, 44% representing 11 respondents strongly agreed, 4% representing 1 respondent disagreed, 4% representing 1 respondent strongly disagreed 12% representing 3 respondents were undecided.

**Section D: Benefits of the Festival**

4.3.2.20- If the tourism potentials of the festivals are properly harnessed, it will help to foster inter-community relationships among different groups in Delta State.

The result indicates that 44% agreed, 56% strongly agreed, 0% disagreed, 0% strongly disagreed, and 0% were undecided that if the tourism potentials of the festivals are properly harnessed, it will help to foster inter-community relationships among different groups in Delta State.

4.3.2.21- The festival, as a tourist attraction, allows for the participation of different groups in communal engagement.

The result indicates that 48% agreed, 48% strongly agreed, 0% disagreed, 0% strongly disagreed, and 4% were undecided that the festival, as a tourist attraction allows for the participation of different groups in communal engagement.

4.3.2.22- The Tourism industry is capable of maintaining and promoting the cultural heritage and festivals of the Nigerian People.

The result indicates that 52% agreed, 44% strongly agreed, 0% disagreed, 0% strongly disagreed, and 4% undecided that the Tourism industry is capable of maintaining and promoting the cultural heritage festivals of the Nigerian People.

4.3.2.23- Government policies and programs have adequately supported the promotion of their festival as a tourist attraction.

The result indicates that 52% agreed, 40% strongly agreed, 0% disagreed, 0% strongly disagreed, and 8% were undecided that Government policies and programs have adequately supported the promotion of their festival as a tourist attraction.

4.3.2.24- The festival contributes to the peaceful co-existence of the host community and her neighbours thereby promoting economic development.

The result indicates that 48% agreed, 44% strongly agreed, 0% disagreed, 4% strongly disagreed, and 4% were undecided that their festival has contributed to the peaceful co-existence of the host community and her neighbors thereby promoting economic development.

4.3.2.25- The development of the festival for tourism can contribute to the curtailing of social vices among the youths in the state.

The result indicates that 36% agreed, 44% strongly agreed, 4% disagreed, 4% strongly disagreed, and 12% were undecided that the development of the festival for tourism could contribute to the curtailing of social vices among the youths in the state.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Festivals are occasions that encourage culture and make it accessible to the public. They also give visitors entertainment and a unique way to pass the time when they have spare time. Festivals also affect the infrastructure for tourists. They provide a chance to learn and to share ideas and information. People's economic activities during the festivals would raise the demand for goods and services in the nation and therefore boost production of such goods and services. The Ibi festival is a strong cultural tourism product with lots of traditional activities which should enhance the chances of tourists experiencing the traditional lifestyle thereby connecting tourists with the local people and their cultural expression. Some obstacles inhibiting the growth of tourism potentials of Ibi festivals are lack of government support, lack of awareness/publicity by the people, deteriorating state of infrastructure, market access and sponsorship, insecurity and so on. Thus, the study comes to the conclusion that Ibi festival of Agbarho Community in Delta State, Nigeria can become a potential tourist hub due its numerous benefits. Therefore, the research made the following submissions:

- i. That the government gives security a significant consideration. This is due to the fact that creating the perception of a secure environment inherently prompts investors to move quickly, particularly when it comes to concepts for structural tourism investment.
- ii. That festival planners include representatives from social and environmental groups, government officials, and members of the community in their planning meetings and festival implementation.
- iii. That the Policies for the growth of tourism must be revised and reinforced, but more importantly, they must be rigorously put into practice and upheld by means of unique laws and regulations.
- iv. That by branding cultural festivals in Delta State as event tourism goods, the government of Delta State and its stakeholders should collaborate.
- v. That the government ought to be in complete charge of recording, assessing, and creating distinctive cultural festivals in order to transform them into travel attractions that may draw both domestic and foreign visitors.

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