

Tourism festivals and Youth Development in Nigeria: The Emerging Social Dynamics of Calabar Carnival, Yakurr Leboku and Ogoja (Northfest) festivals in Cross River State

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Abstract

Tourism festivals are strategic development initiatives to promote cultural inclusion, heritage, identity and diversity to harness economic and sociocultural endowment to generate investments, and promote business climate, generate foreign earnings with a trickle-down effect to the host community. The Cross River State tourism development initiative (Calabar Carnival, Yakurr Leboku New Yam and Ogoja Northfest) festivals), are cultural and historical activities packaged together to promote heritage and identity while promoting investment and commerce in the state. However, these tourism initiatives have not only promoted the state socioeconomically and globally, but has equally promoted illicit drug and alcohol use and abuse among the youth which results to mental disorders. It has equally promoted noise and environmental pollution, traffic congestion, human and vehicular movement restrictions and heightened criminality among the youth in terms of rape, cybercrimes and bullying, pick pocketing and robbery, kidnapping, unprotected sexual escapade, and unwanted pregnancies with some resulting to abortions etc. These ugly trend poses a great risk to tourism development and environmental sustainability, and health promotion because it affects the socioeconomic wellbeing of the youth and state. This paper takes a descriptive theoretical look at the emerging social dynamics and implications tourism (Calabar Carnival, Yakurr Leboku and Ogoja (Northfest) festivals and youth development in Nigeria. The paper recommends that state governments and stakeholders should take critical planning and monitoring models, and strategic intelligence and information surveillance using modern technology, and innovative security solutions to ensure youths involved in tourism festivals are protected from these social vices. Government and stakeholders should invest in tourism infrastructures and social amenities for sustainable tourism development. There should sustained coordination of tourism activities, sensitization and awareness creation by state government and stakeholders with the involvement of development experts, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and other care-givers to mitigate the negative consequences to protect the youth population, development and environmental sustainability.

Key words: Tourism, festival, development, youth, social dynamics

Introduction

Tourism festivals in Cross River State are cultural and historical activities packaged together to promote heritage and identity creation while promoting investment and commerce. Culture is a unique phenomenon in all human societies because it carries historical figures, folk arts, architectural designs and styles with aesthetic values and, cultural representation and identity

(Zang and Brown, 2022; Zang et al, 2021; Haralambos, Holborn and Herald, 2004). It is the material and spiritual wealth created by human beings in the process of transforming the natural environment (Yang, Clen, Huang Xie, 2022), to benefit man and society in diverse ways. The Cross River State tourism development initiative christened 'Calabar Carnival Festival and tourism development' was an initiative of Cross River State government during the administration of Donald Duke between 1999- 2007, to promote cultural inclusion, heritage, identity and diversity, and a strategic development stimulus to harness economic and sociocultural potentials, as well as to generate investments and business climate, employment, foreign exchange earnings with a trickle-down effect to the host community. This initiative however was replicated across the state with the introduction of Yakurr *Leboku* New Yam festival and the Ogoja (Northfest) festivals, thus covering up the cultural space of the three Senatorial Districts in the state respectively. The objective is principally to create and boost local economies and employment opportunities and attract foreign earning and increase tourist population. This tourism festivals development initiatives according to Akpang and Obong (2012), are a catalyst for boosting private and public sector development, generating economic surplus to the rural localities, as most companies like MTN, Globacom, Multichoice Nigeria, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Channels Television and African Independent Television (AIT), Nigerian Breweries, Commercial Banks, Eateries etc, uses these festivals to promote their brand visibility and consumer awareness in the state and Nigeria in general. The investment of the state government in tourism development has boosted the economic profile of the state and Cross River State was adjudged to be the "greenest and cleanest city" in Nigeria in 2004 (CRS-MOFNEWS, 2005).

Cross River State tourism development is a nexus of cultural blend and industry, built within the three senatorial districts particularly to drive even tourism development and grow local economies of the state this assertion corroborates Weiyang, Quixia, Xiaoting Huang, Mei Xie and Quiqi Guol, (2022), assertion that aesthetics and tourist involvement influence cultural identity and heritage tourism with a mediating role of mental experience. The Southern senatorial district is the home of Calabar Christmas Carnival which celebrated annually in the month of December, Tinapa Business resort, Marina resort and Calabar Slave Park, Cross River National Park, Qua falls, Calabar Residency Museum and *Tinkoriko* street party, *Ekpe, Nyoro and Otomo-Obong* festival, Calabar boat Regatta Festival, Bakassi Peninsula fish festival and a host of other cultural activities. Central part of Cross River boosts tourism with the annual celebration of the Leboku festival (new yam festivals) which showcases abundance of crops and agricultural produce and cultural dance troupes like *Ngbele, Obon, Mkpe/Mgbe, Ebrimbin, Etangala* among Yakurr, Abi, Obubra, Ikom, Etung and Boki people, Ikom Monoliths, Agbokim water falls, Afi Mountains Wildlife Sanctuary and walkway, which attracts tourists to the state. *Otaba* Festival celebrated every 7 years and *Anaka Mbe* by the Mbembe people, Efut festival of Bahumono people. Aji festival of Abi, and *Alobeh* festival of Boki people memorial festival to mark the end of feminine during the tribal war. The northern part of the state is the home of NorthFest which is a mix of cultural activities and new yam celebrations among the Ogoja, Yala, Bekwara, Obudu and Obanliku people, *Atumibi* festival by Ogoja people. The North is blessed with a rare mix of temperate and tropical climate at the plateau of the famous Obudu Ranch Resort which attracts many tourists globally because of the favourable weather, the Obudu Ranch also play host to the Obudu Mountain Race an international athletic event that attracts athletics and tourists globally. Other notable events that have helped to scale up international participations in the state tourism drive are Calabar Bikers parade, Boat regatta, motor race, Beauty pageant (Miss Africa), Agricultural/farmers parade, and Local Government parades to showcase their social and economic potentials.

However, the three main festivals; Calabar carnival, Yakuur *Leboku* New Yam festival and the Ogoja Northfest festivals creates and attracts high tourist population traffic and bystanders with youth forming the majority of the population and participants during the carnival festivals and street parties. These festivals showcase the rich cultural heritage and identity, drums

and dances, cuisines, rituals, art and craft, artefacts and a host of other activities. In all of these, children, youth and adults find expression and indulge in the various activities which in turn affect their behaviour. Youth are a major determining segment of the world populations and form a major percentage of the productive age of any nation. The sociocultural, political, economic and tourism development are practically crucial for sustaining the lives and society, and children and youth are a combustible engine room driving the trim-tap wheels of the nation's prosperity and development. These socioeconomic gains from these tourism drive and festivals, affects the youth in a mirage of ways yielding positive outcomes or otherwise, given their productivity capacity and environment. Youth nay children are embroidered with constitutional and fundamental human rights which permits their involvement in all sphere of socio economic and cultural life. But the extent to which these rights are executed and protected deepen the outcomes of these activities and their participation. There are conventions, laws, legislations, protocols and protection regulations specifically addressing the life of the child and youth, more effectively to utilize resource systems, promote human development and facilitate interaction, modify and build network of relationships, to contribute to the overall good of society. Tourism is one of such development pillars that youth are actively involved.

Youth were often chastised by parents and caregivers for failing to meet prescribed societal expectation 'behavioural norms' in the preindustrial period and deviant culture was been frowned upon, as against the emerging contemporary trend of child independency and criminality. Most of these children and youth involve in certain activities during the festivals that negates these fundamental rights. One impetus of these protocols and conventions on the rights of the child and the philosophy of the Children Act 1989 was for protection regulation, to address the number of child abuses, neglects scandals, and reports of enquiry into the death of some children (Carr and Goosey, 2017; 155). These abuses expose children and youth to a number of deviant subcultures which impinge on their mental state, growth and development. Therefore, choice of this topic particularly is necessitated by the fact that tourism and tourism industries are growing exponentially in Cross River State and other states of the federation as exchange earner, and that without proper planning, monitoring and deployment of intelligence surveillance, the negative implications will outweigh the positive impact and may result to a moral decadence. Against these backdrops, it is absolutely necessary to examine the impacts these negative impacts might have on the youth at a long run and the society at large. These therefore, calls for effective planning and information surveillance, coordination of tourism activities by state government and managers to mitigate these negative impacts to avoid unforeseen social decay, and tragedies, to protect the youth population, development and environmental sustainability.

Statement of the Problem

Tourism and carnival festivals are no doubt a catalyst to socioeconomic development, cultural heritage and identity development that opens doors for investment promotions, opportunities and spatial employment outlets for youth and sundry. The three most dominant festivals in Cross River State are the Calabar Carnival, Yakuur *Leboku* new yam festival and Ogoja Northfest festivals and street parties. However, the Calabar Carnival has received national and international recognition broadly through its sustained publicity, patronage, utility, focus and aesthetics profile. Nigeria within the past two decades has witnessed increase and growth in the development of tourism industries and has contributed about 3.6 percent to Nigerian GDP in 2022, 6.11 % in 2015 and 2. 81% of the entire to GDP of the entire labour force (NBS,2016),

This according to Scholars has undoubtedly brought the state and nation to the tourism map of Africa and the globally because of the high traffic population to the state. However, the promotion of tourism in Cross River State has not only position the state in global tourism map, but there are noticeable deviant and criminal behavioural trends among the youth and other attendant social problems, like alcohol and drug abuse as seen in the number of youth mental

patients in mental clinic and hospital in the state. Though there is no available incidence data in Cross River State, but records from monthly, in-patients estimate about 3, 404 patients are admitted in the hospital with about 40-70 out-patients daily in and out patient of Federal Neuro Psychiatry hospital Calabar, from drug related disorders majority of which are youth (Urigwe 2020).

Nigeria within the past two decades has witnessed increase and growth in the development of tourism industries and has contributed about 6.11 % in 2015 and 2. 81% of the entire to GDP of the entire labour force (NBS,2016), and Cross River State contributed about 3.6% from tourism to the GPD in 2022. CRS-Planning Commission 2023. Although, the carnival festivals and street parties are outlets for publicity, image branding, cultural identity and a hub of socioeconomic activities in the state, the events promotes noise pollution, illicit drug and alcohol use and abuse, traffic congestion, human and vehicular movement restrictions, littering of the environment and ecosystem destruction, and sometimes hoodlums, disgruntle elements and bandits use the opportunity to commit crime like rape, risky and unprotected sexual escapade which may result to unplanned pregnancies, mental disorders, cybercrimes and bullying, pick pocketing and robbery etc. these ugly trend poses a great risk to health promotion and environment as well distortions in the overall social and economic wellbeing of the state. These indeed called for a sustained awareness creation and publicity to reawaken the consciousness and help curb these social maladies associated with carnival festivals as well as weigh the socioeconomic benefits against the social and health implications on the youth and children in the state. This paper therefore adopts theoretical position to examine these disturbing trend and phenomenon.

Literature review

Cross River State tourism and festival initiatives

Tourism is the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, in as much as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity, but for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (Hunziker & Krapft, 1994; World Tourism Organisation, 2010). Festivals on the other hand are relative but seasonal or annual events to celebrate specific cultural, religious and pilgrimage to identified sites or historical significance. Most often they include cultural and religious rituals, historical festivals e.g. renaissance fair and civil war re-enactment, victories food and drinks, art festivals and exhibition, parade and procession, street parties, theatre and drama performance films festivals, fireworks and light displays. The hallmark of the festivals is to bring people of same origin and diverse populations to celebrate, socialise and promote shared experiences (Adigun & Awe, 2009).

Cross River State tourism development is built within the three senatorial districts particularly to drive even tourism development and grow local economies of the state. The Southern senatorial district is the home of Calabar Christmas Carnival which celebrated annually in the month of December, Tinapa Business resort, Marina resort, and the Calabar Slave Park, Cross River National Park, Qua falls, Calabar Residency Museum tourist site, and *Tinkoriko* street party, *Ekpe, Nyoro and Otomo-Obong* festival, Bakassi Peninsula fish festival and a host of other cultural activities. Central part of Cross River boosts tourism with the annual celebration of the Leboku festival (new yam festivals) which showcases abundance of crops and agricultural produce and cultural dance troupes like *Obon, Ngbele dance, Mkpe/Mgbe, Ebrimbin, Kepu* (wrestling context), *Etangala* among Yakurr, Abi, Obubra, Ikom, Etung and Boki people, Ikom Monoliths, Agbokim water falls, Afi Mountains Wildlife Sanctuary and walkway, which attracts tourists to the state. The northern part of the state is the home of NorthFest and a mix of cultural activities and new yam celebrations among the Ogoja, Yala, Bekwara, Obudu and Obanliku people. The North is blessed with a rare mix of temperate and tropical climate at the plateau of

the famous Obudu Ranch Resort which attracts many tourists because of the favourable weather and, also play host to the Obudu Mountain Race an international athletic event that attracts athletics and tourists globally.

These three main festivals; Calabar carnival, Yakurr *Leboku* New Yam festival and the Ogoja Northfest festivals creates and attracts high tourist population traffic and bystanders with youth forming the majority of the population and participants during the carnival festivals and street parties. These festivals showcase the rich cultural heritage and identity, drums and dances, cuisines, rituals, art and craft, artefacts and a host of other activities. In all of these, children, youth and adults find expression and indulge in the various activities which in turn affect their behaviour (Sunday, Eugene and Ubong, 2013). Youth are a major determining segment of the world populations and form a major percentage of the productive age of any nation. The sociocultural, political, economic and tourism development are practically crucial for sustaining the lives and society, and children and youth are a combustible engine room driving the trim-tap wheels of the nation's prosperity and development.

The UNTW in 2014 noted that either direct or indirect employment is massively created by tourism. Accordingly, about 140million jobs are created in the Asian and Pacific region, and this account for about 8.9% of the total population. In Israel tourism 70%of the GPD is tourism driven, employment in the tourism sector of the North-East Asia approximately creates about 86 million jobs, or say 10.1% of the overall employment. In China about 1 in every 10 persons have jobs in an industry that is tourism related. A support of United Nation World Tourism organization (UNTWO), following a research, wrote that in Oceania the tourism sector accounts for about 14.5% of the total employment that is approximately 1 in every 6.9 jobs in the area (UNTWO, 2014). From all indicators, tourism holds a greater percentage of the productive work force and youth are in high concentrations in these industries (Hung, and Liu,2018).

Nigeria within the past two decades has witnessed increase and growth in the development of tourism initiatives and industries, and has contributed about travel and tourism contributed 3.6 percent to Nigerian GDP in 2022, (CRS- Wikipedia) 6.11 % in 2015 and 2. 81% of the entire to GDP of the entire labour force (NBS, 2016), thus, creating additional employment opportunities and foreign exchange earning that competes with agriculture and petroleum sector contributions (Osabuohien, Obiekwe, Urhie, and Osabuohien 2018). From 1999 - 2007 the former Governor of Cross River State, Donal Duke upscaled the tourism potentials of the state with the introduction of the Calabar Carnival, Yakurr *Leboku* festival and the Ogoja Northfest was added by the Liyel Imoke government 2007 - 2015, covering the three senatorial zones of the state. These cultural festivals are hinged on cultural heritage and diversity, which had now received international recognition, and ushered in a new tourism direction as nearly all states of the Nigerian federation dusted their cultural festivals to limelight igniting Nigeria tourism industry to flourish at geometrical scale, encouraging long term investment portfolio in that direction and regenerating sectorial socioeconomic growth and development by the promotion of indigenous Nigerian cultures. One major element that tends to hamper tourism development is the alarming rates of increasing number of youth and child abuse related cases, unplanned and unwanted pregnancies resulting in single parent syndrome, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual assaults and rape, deviant behavioural expression and criminality, and proliferation of small arms, and increased sexually transmitted infection and diseases like HIV/AIDS, Syphilis, gonorrhoea, and other airborne and respiratory infections etc following the carnival festivals. The way out is for the state government to fashion out a street-tight surveillance and deploy information and communication technology pre, during and post activities to drive the process and help curb the social malaise arising from the festivals.

The various festivals are maximization of heritage and community socio-cultural history, which can be a catalyst for the development of tourism. These can be achieved through the promotion of indigenous Nigerian cultural festivals like the Yakurr *Leboku* new yam festival, the Agungu fish festival, Dubar among the Hausas and Fulanis, Yoruba Eso festival and other

notable local festivals and street parties that promotes costumes, makeup, dance choreography, martial dances etc.

Akpang and Obang (2012), noted that the Calabar Carnival and street party has received national and international recognition broadly through its sustained publicity, patronage, utility, focus and aesthetics profile. This according to Scholars has undoubtedly brought the state and nation to the tourism map of Africa and globally because of the high traffic population to Calabar. When it was launched in 2005, the month of December was dedicated solely to showcase different cultural ambiance and troupes from and within the state and even beyond. It was an eye opener to the social blue economy that had remained untapped over the years. However, the Calabar carnival is now celebrated yearly 26 to 30 December with pump and pageantry.

Implication to youth development and society

Cross river state has been described by many as the pride and tourism destination of Nigeria, because of the three major festivals in Cross River State; Calabar Carnival Festival, Yakurr Leboku festival and Ogoja 'Northfest'. Calabar Carnival had variously been described as the biggest street party in Africa, essentially because it attracts migrant population across the world and parade the most amazing cultural diversities, and heritage, art and agricultural produce Akpang and Obong (2012), The Calabar festival is anchored by the southern senatorial district, while the Yakurr Leboku New Yam festival is celebrated in the central senatorial district, and the Ogoja Northfest is celebrated in the Northern fringes of the state, giving the state a close coverage of cultural and historical activities and celebrations. Though there are other notable communal festivals celebrated by almost all the villages and communities in cross river state, especially within the central and northern senatorial districts. These festivals are seasonally used to boost commerce, private and public sectors driven development initiative. Often times most companies like MTN, Globacom, Multichoice Nigeria, Television, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Nigerian, Channels Television and African Independent Television (AIT), and other print and electronic media houses and Television stations, Nigerian Breweries, Banks, Eateries etc, uses these festivals to promote their brand visibility and consumer awareness in the state and Nigeria in general, with high flow of direct sales in consumer goods and wares (Osabuohien, Obiekwe, Urhie, and Osabuohien, 2018). The Yakurr new yam festival and Northfest are promoted by state Government, and multinational business organizations, e.g. MTN Foundation, Digital Satellite Television (DSTv), etc, to mobilise and create potentials for subsistence farmers within the catchment area to showcase their farm produce, commerce and to boost food sufficiency and security, cultural heritage integration and identity. These festivals are trite, signalling the bond and identity creation of the people, creating a sense of communal cohesion, socioeconomic development, social capital (Falorunso and Bashir, 2016), with a multiplying effect on the overall development of the of the state and giving the people a sense of belongingness. According to Hung and Liu, (2018), many corporate worlds can use such opportunity to brand their image and travel benefits opportunities to tourists. Tourism impinges on the aesthetics of the host community and tourist involvement influence cultural identity and heritage with a multiplying effect based Mental Experience (Weiyang, Quixia, Xiaoting, Mei Xie and Quiqi, 2022).

In whatever form tourism festivals and other cultural and religious or films festivals bring children and youth together, and they engage in social activities and interaction, breed and cross pollinate ideas and contacts which may have a positive or negative implication a broad spectrum, and provides platforms for employment generation, education, infrastructure and social amenities development, health and sanitation, recreational activities and promotional advertorials and influencers, etc (Gursory, Kim and Uysal, 2002; Yolal, Gursory, Uysal, Lim and Karacoiglu 2016), with corresponding advantages to the local communities. Kim and Uysal (2003), noted that the primary and positive influence of festivals especially in an organized and community level are based on economic advantage, social cost/capital, community cohesion as

well as the inextricable factors which not be noticeable immediately. Sometimes these influencers can be negative reinforcing factors, and attention arousal to both positive and negative energy. Hall, (2007); Gursory et al (2016), noted that the benefits of festivals on the growth and development of the community are subjective wellbeing, while expressing concern on the nature, impacts; vandalism, deviant culture among youth, traffic congestion, noise pollution, environmental pollution most especially as the streets are littered with all sort of dirt, plastics etc. Emeka and Odey (2017), agreed that tourism boost economies and employment but stated that crime rate is increased during the peak period and causes, prostitution and environmental pollution.

Festivals play a significant role in shaping and awaking consciousness of our traditional and cultural institutions, enabling children, youth and tourist to learn, enrich, imbibe and deepen our cultural tenets and provide a link to continuity and promoting the local economies of the states and cross-cultural development as well as attracting financial gain, foreign exchange earnings and overall economic growth. (Stankova, and Vassenska, 2015). From the foregoing, one can assert that tourism as a foreign exchange earner has the spirit of increasing global reputation of the state and country in general. One major characteristic of these festival activities is the fact that children and youth are attracted by these activities and many of them uses these opportunities to engage on some deviant and criminal activities, abuse and misuse of alcohol, drugs and substances, especially the use of cannabis sativa like Marijuana stimulants, tobacco, cocaine, opioids and some substituted amphetamines with adoption related issues (Martin, Weinberg and Bealer, 2007), many indulge in illicit and unprotected sex and commercial sex work, abuse, and many resulting in unplanned and unwanted pregnancies, abortions with its attendant consequences. Also, other disgruntle elements and men of the underworld take advantage of the festival activities to engage of human and organ trafficking and sales of small arms and weapons.

To a great extent the involvement in the tourism industries and activities by certain individuals, business investors and multinationals has a serious implication in diverse ways especially, to maximise profit, while others take advantage of the opportunity and busy atmosphere to promote and engage in illicit trading, immoral and unsanitary activities like commercial sex work, small arms trading, alcohol, drug and substance misuse, and human trafficking, organ harvesting all in a bid to make money. Sometimes the managers and developers of these tourism industries could engage in quick fix, thereby resulting in the damage of the tourism destination and the natural environment (Aniah, Eja and Otu, 2009), with a multiplier effect which may be adverse or beneficial depending on some certain measurement scales or a function of certain form of activities undertaken by the tourists, the environment and socio-economic characteristic of the area and the degree to which the industry is planned and managed(Kigoth, 2000).

For tourism to strive and be sustained the impact on the environment, society and the young population is crucial (Mihalia, 2000). Tourism has the potential of bringing alive our historical heritage and identity and therefore, as an exchange earner should create employment opportunities, improve the living standard of the host community, increase the infrastructural growth and development, and social amenities while placing the host community on the world map with the increased influx of tourists visiting the area.

Tourism influence on youth activities - theoretical synthesis

Cognitive behavioural theories (CTBs) and behavioural paradigms explains the concept of ‘cost and effect relationship’ and the Isaac Newton third law of motion in physics, that ‘to every action there is equal and opposite reaction’. These theories explain that in as much as tourism has positive social and economic benefits, there are negative consequences associated with tourism. Sociologist, developmental theorists, psychologists, social workers agreed that every interaction and relationship in a society is capable of generating tensions and imbalances

Kascak, Knezevic, Binder, and Pelacz -Verdet (2023); Yang, Clen, Huang Xie, 2022). Also, the rational choice theorists like Friendman and Hechter in 1998, contended that individuals make decision based on the options and selecting the one that maximises their satisfaction through weighing the cost and benefit associated to it. That human behaviour and reactions are driven by rational decisions based on the information available (Ritzer 2006), therefore youth who involve in illicit activities and social vices like substance and drug misuse, commercial sex work, trafficking and small arms deal do so because of the available information and opportunity they are exposed to during these tourism and festival activities by rational considerations and self-interest, thus they seek to explore, maximise their utility or satisfaction when making decisions. Youth strive to choose the options that provide them highest gains and utility (social status, economic gains and emotional well-being and personal values) given their preferences and constraints. The cost may therefore include time, effort, monetary expenses, or social consequences while benefits are including rewards, pleasure, and desirable outcomes. Most people engage and participate in tourism for their self-interest, and goals. the rational choice theory holds that individuals, may not always have the and possess the perfect information, cognitive abilities or foresight to fully, maximises their choices and therefore their decision may be subject to cognitive biases, heuristics or social influences. Therefore, external factors such as institutional structures, social norms, peer influence, available information man and environmental conditions can influence youth behaviour indulge in these activities.

Coasta, McCrae and Lockeucroff (2019), discussing on the understanding of youth and children on social and cultural complexities of carnival festival and tourism noted that the perception of children can be influenced thus shaping their views on carnival tourism. Their views may therefore reflect what they perceive and what they are showcased in tourism festival and much attention had not been paid to children and youth, and how tourism can be used to shape more sustainable feature by plugging into positive pathways that can promote sustainable livelihood. Seraphin, Yallop, Seyfi and Hall (2020). This is broadened on the fact that children and youth perception and behaviour can be influenced by participating in carnival. Schill, Godefroit-Winkel and Hogg (2022), Mandie, Walia, Rasoolim and Nash (2023), and Mandie, Wials and Kautish, (2023), noted that this can help them to understand and be more sensitive of environmental awareness and these have implication for youth and children.

Conclusion and recommendations

Tourism is a tangible economic booster which promotes inclusive participation of all categories of the populations with youth and children dominating the population. Tourism is a huge foreign exchange earner and contributes to the GDP of the state and nation. The introduction of carnival and the reinventing of cultural festival to national recognition in Cross River State have not only widen economic and social capital, but has also opened investment opportunities and employment and boosting education through awareness creation within the state, which has helped to place the state in the tourism map of Nigeria and globally. More and more people are becoming aware of their cultural identity, heritage and history through tourism festivals. The participation of the youth and non-state actors who explore and use the opportunity to engage on illicit activities is hampering youth and state development and calls to main many questions on its sustainability.

The paper recommends that the state government should planning, monitoring and deployment of intelligence surveillance, build infrastructures and provide social amenities. information surveillance, coordination of tourism activities by state government and managers to mitigate these negative impacts to avoid unforeseen social decay, and tragedies, to protect the youth population, development and environmental sustainability.

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