

# The Impacts of Abuja Carnival on the Promotion of Tourism in Nigeria

Abutu N. Grace<sup>1,\*</sup>, Managwu Lilian C.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Leisure and Tourism Management, Federal Polytechnic Idah, Idah, Kogi State, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Hospitality Management, Federal Polytechnic Unwana-Afikpo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

## Email address

gnabutu@yahoo.com (A. N. Grace)

## To cite this article

Abutu N. Grace, Managwu Lilian C.. The Impacts of Abuja Carnival on the Promotion of Tourism in Nigeria. *American Journal of Business, Economics and Management*. Vol. 3, No. 6, 2015, pp. 320-323.

## Abstract

This study was aimed to examine the impact of Abuja Carnival on the promotion of tourism in Nigeria. The study has major objectives among others to evaluate the concept of Abuja Carnival, trace the history and origin of carnivals in the world whilst reviewing Abuja Carnival activities with a view to make obvious that Abuja Carnival activities have the potential to attract local and international tourists with significant impacts on Nigeria's Tourism Industry. The study identifies challenges of Abuja Carnival such as poor organization, poor rural infrastructure, insecurity, low participation amongst others. Solutions are however offered to identified problems; such as improved promotional activities and organization, improved security surveillance and operation, above all, engagement of tourism professionals for an effective event management. Data were collected using the random sampling technique with the aid of questionnaires administration being a primary source of data. Journals, magazines and the internet were also consulted. Simple percentage data analysis technique was employed for analysis, presentation and interpretation of results of findings which revealed that activities and displays at Abuja Carnival are highly enjoyable but more needs to be done in the aspect of promotion. Also findings further revealed that tourism can be a good alternative to Nigeria's oil in terms of revenue generation.

## Keywords

Impact, Promotion, Potential, Revenue Generation, Carnival

## 1. Introduction

Abuja National Carnival was initiated in the year 2004 under the administration of former Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo (GCFR). Abuja Carnival presents a platform to showcase the rich cultural heritage and tourism potentials of Nigeria to the world. At its maiden edition in 2005, The Minister of Culture Tourism and National Orientation, Ambassador Franklin Ogbuewu revealed that the Carnival is specially set up to be an Intra and Inter-cultural link which would serve as a foundation of knowledge and reference point for the promotion of the historical and cultural experience of the black people worldwide Mustapha Suleiman [1].

Abuja Carnival has developed significantly over the years to reflect and demonstrate Nigeria's unity in diversity as all the states of the federation display their unique heritages competitively through a carnival platform. The carnival since

inception has remained a means for building bridges, enhancing Inter-cultural and cross-ethnic friendships among the 36 states of the federation and beyond.

The National Carnival among other expectations has set out specific objectives among which are: Showcase traditional African Carnival of Music, Dance and Arts. Celebrate the individuality and unity of the State Governments and people of Nigeria. Celebrate the role of the city of Abuja as the unifier and centre of unity of Nigeria. Educate and inform the world of the rich culture and history of Nigeria. Highlight Nigeria as safe and secure destination for tourism. Showcase Nigeria as a country steeped in culture, history and modernity. Be the vehicle for active promotion of tourist attractions in Nigeria. Be the vehicle for the promotion and encouragement of domestic or Inter-state tourism in Nigeria.

In realizing the Carnival objectives, a Carnival Road show company was commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to advise and

assist in creating and hosting the first ever Carnival in its capital city of Abuja [2].

Abuja, the host city of the Carnival is Nigeria's seat of power. The city is strategically located and accessible from all parts of the country. Abuja city has a serene environment and quality infrastructure. The city is the headquarters of some International and Regional organizations. Embassies and consulates are also situated in Abuja. It is unarguable that the city of Abuja is Nigeria's leading conferencing destination [3]. Abuja is a good Carnival destination attracting tourists from all over the world. However, the insecurity situation in the country poses a huge challenge to the realization of an enduring Carnival objective. Thus, security of lives and properties is a panacea for a successful carnival destination.

Therefore this study was carried out with the aim of examining the impact of Abuja National Carnival in the promotion of tourism in Nigeria.

## 2. Methodology and Study Area

### Study area

Abuja is the Administrative Capital of Nigeria. It is located in the centre of the country at coordinates  $9^{\circ} 4' 0''$  N  $7^{\circ} 29' 0''$  E. The city has a landmark of  $713 \text{ km}^2$  with an elevation of 840m (2,760ft). The capital city was built mainly in the 1980s but officially assumed the Federal Capital on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1991[4].

The study was conducted in Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory where Abuja Carnival takes place annually. Although the activities at Abuja Carnival are decentralized, however the Eagle's square is used to mark the opening and closing ceremonies. The Jabi Dam, Millennium Park, Old Parade Ground and Aso Villa Banquet Hall are used for other

series of activities at the Carnival such as boat regatta, children fiesta, durbar etc. Abuja is centrally located, has good infrastructure and accessible from all parts of the country, hence, convenient for all states of the federation. Abuja Carnival has its secretariat located at plot 173, Aminu Kano crescent, Wuse II, Abuja. The secretariat is in charge of accreditation of Carnival participants and other logistics.

### 2.1. Method of Data Collection

In the course of the study, one hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were designed and administered. Out of this figure, ninety eight (98) questionnaires representing 83% were correctly completed and retrieved while the remaining 22 representing 17% were not returned, thus, remarkable for the study purpose.

Questionnaires were administered among staff of Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Abuja, staff of Cyprain Ekwensi center for Culture and Tourism, Abuja, staff of Kogi State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Nassarawa State Carnival Contingent, Niger State Carnival Contingent, Abuja Carnival Secretariat and Tourist/participants. More data were sourced from personal interview, personal observations, desk research and internet browsing. Analyses of date were made using simple percentage frequency, plates and tables. The percentage formula in the context is expressed as follows:

$$\frac{F}{N} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Where:

F = Frequency beginning the numbers of responses.

N = Total number of responses on the same

Population, 100 = Constant

### 2.2. Analysis of Questionnaire

*Table 1. Summary of questionnaire administered.*

Name of Organization	Number of Questionnaire administered	Number of Questionnaire Returned	Number of Questionnaire not Returned	% Returned	% not Returned
Fed. Min. of Culture & Tourism	20	14	6	70%	30%
Cyprian EkwensiCenter for Arts and Culture	15	11	4	73%	27%
Kogi State Ministry of Culture and Tourism	15	12	3	80%	20%
Nassarawa State Contingent	20	18	2	90%	10%
Niger State Contingent	20	15	5	75%	25%
Tourists & Spectators	20	18	2	90%	10%
Abuja Carnival Secretariat	10	10	0	100%	0%
	Total	98	22	83%	17%
		120		100%	

Source: Author's field survey, 2014.

The table above reveals a summary of questionnaires distributed among seven (7) organizations that participate in Abuja carnival. Out of the total of 120 questionnaires distributed, ninety eight (98) were completed and returned; thus this figure representing 83% were carefully analysed given that 98 questionnaires retrieved is well above average.

## 3. Summary of Major Findings

This section summarizes major findings from submissions of the analysis of data supplied by respondents as presented in table 1 above. The following are the major findings of data analyzed: Activities and displays at Abuja

carnival are highly enjoyable and a lot of people actively and passively participate in the carnival. Abuja carnival has strong impact on tourism development in Nigeria and capable of attracting both international and domestic tourists. More needs to be done in the aspect of promotion as many more people are yet to be aware of Abuja carnival across the world. Tourism can be a good alternative to Nigeria's oil in terms of revenue generation; thus the government should continue to invest in Abuja carnival with support from the private sector [5].

Apart from revenue generation, the impact of Abuja carnival can further attract foreign direct investments, foreign exchange earnings, employment generation and infrastructural development. Abuja carnival can be negatively affected by the insecurity situation in Nigeria by way of creating a bad image for the country and causing apprehension for tourists. Abuja carnival requires tourism professionals in its management towards a better organization and improved security operation to bring enduring peace to Nigeria which is a panacea for tourism growth and development [6-10].

#### **4. Conclusion**

The study examined the impact of Abuja carnival in the promotion of tourism in Nigeria. Data extracted from the literature review in chapter two and the submission of raw data collected from a population of 98 respondents, the following conclusion is drawn; Abuja carnival has developed significantly over the years to become a major tourist attraction for local, regional and international visitors to enjoy breathtaking sights and sounds of Nigeria. the carnival is a calendar event slated for the month of November each year as a show piece of the creative spirit of the Nigerian people, their hospitality and passion for festivities. The study confirmed that Abuja carnival has a huge impact on Nigeria's tourism growth and development. Nigeria's cultural diversity is phenomenal; Abuja carnival is a platform for the exploration of this diversity which without doubt takes an adventurer on a journey into hundreds of unique tourist attractions and cultures spread across the length and breadth of Nigeria.

However, economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts of Abuja carnival were acknowledged in this research; it cannot be quantified. Amongst others, the economic impact of event tourism is critical to every destination given its importance in enhancing the quality of life of the people. Tourism is a good alternative to Nigeria's oil in terms of revenue generation; as such, Abuja carnival generates employment and income earning opportunities for Nigerians. Similarly, the tourism sector is a magnet for foreign direct investments and foreign exchange earnings to the Nigerian nation. The negative impact of tourism must be checked, challenges of insecurity and infrastructural deficit must be tackled promptly for a sustainable tourism promotion in Nigeria in order to attain the aim and objectives of Abuja carnival.

#### **Recommendations**

Carnivals have major impacts on the socio-cultural and economic development of a destination; Abuja carnival is not an exception. The actual and potential impact of Abuja carnival on tourism development in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. However, certain challenges militate against the objectives of the carnival towards tourism development in Nigeria. Hence, the following are recommendations made based on the research findings.

The Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism in collaboration with state ministries of tourism, local government tourism committees should intensify efforts at sensitizing all state governments on the need to participate in Abuja carnival. However, the backing of the Federal Government is required as the highest authority, to encourage all states of the federation to actively participate in the carnival. Furthermore, it is highly necessary that a policy demanding all states to participate in Abuja carnival be established by law. This will help in enriching the content of the carnival and improve the prospects of tourism in Nigeria.

The criticism that the carnival and its activities are immoral and pagan-like is counterproductive. Thus, a vigorous effort at public orientation is sacrosanct. This task rests solely on the media, National Orientation Agency and Tourism Ministries. Every community across the world has her culture and tradition; Abuja carnival is only a platform to showcase Nigeria's rich culture and tradition which must not be eroded because of religion. Indeed, religion and tradition are both guiding principles for human beings which must not be conflicted. Therefore, massive public campaign should be launched to draw support for the carnival in order to achieve its aim and objectives.

Planning and organizing is critical in any event management. Abuja carnival requires professionalism in its management. Welfare and allowance of states contingents should be improved so as to motivate them to put in their best performance. Time management is also recommended. Carnival activities must be well scheduled and adhered to. All stakeholders involved in the carnival should be adequately communicated about the need to adhere to timing and management's decision to strictly observe timings accordingly.

Rural infrastructure must be developed and expanded to open up the hinterland where Nigeria's tourism potentials abound. Infrastructures like roads, airports, pipe-borne water, electricity, communication facilities, health and safety services etc should be provided to standards that encourages domestic and international tourism. Maintenance of existing infrastructures particularly in the urban areas should be prompt. A good infrastructure will improve the prospects of tourism in Nigeria through Abuja carnival. All activities at the carnival should basically be of local content. Performance of contemporary music should be reviewed. All performance should elicit Nigerian tradition and culture. Contemporary performance in

whatever guise erodes Nigeria's identity and therefore recommended to be stopped.

The Federal Government should use her might to fight insecurity and insurgency groups like Boko Haram, Niger Delta militancy, kidnappers, etc. Security experts should be engaged to proffer ways to tackle all forms of security threats to its minimum. Massive installation of Circuit Camera Televisions (CCTV) at flash points, strategic areas, crime-prone areas and tourist destinations should be a project for prompt attention. Job creation for the youth would also tackle insecurity; Nigerians should be vigilant and supportive in the fight against terrorism by cooperating with security agencies in areas of reporting suspicions and offering required information. Stakeholders in Tourism Industry must join hands to develop the sector sustainably in order to enhance the economic, environmental and socio-cultural sustainability of the tourist areas and Nigeria as a destination.

## Acknowledgement

The authors are grateful to Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Abuja Nigeria for access to some vital information on this research area and Mr. Cletus A. Ukwubile of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria for expert analysis of data.

## References

- [1] Andrew, I (2009). Abuja Carnival: The Hit, The Misses. The guardian life Magazine, (November), Abuja.
- [2] Chidi, U (2012).Abuja Carnival; Superlative fiesta of culture, National Mirror News Paper, (November) (pg 9).
- [3] Federal Ministry of Tourism, Cultural and National Orientation (2011).Carnival of Reconciliation, Abuja National Carnival Magazine, 26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>, November.
- [4] Federal Ministry of Tourism Culture and National Orientation (2012).Carnival of Peace and Harmony, Abuja National Carnival Magazine 24<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> November.
- [5] Federal Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation (2013).A People for a Century, a People for Ever, Abuja National Carnival Magazine 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> November.
- [6] Hornby, A. S (2006), Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, Oxford University Press Ltd. London.
- [7] Katherine, S (2012). Confessions of the night owl, New York Magazine U.S.A.
- [8] Lodging Econometrics (2012). Hotel Industry News.
- [9] Michael, R (2007). Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Macmillan Education Ltd. Oxford.
- [10] Mikhail, B (2011).Carnival Against Capital, Carnival Against Power, Mediterranean *Journal of Social Science*, MCSER Publishing, Rome – Italy.