



## **Potential Impact of CANIRIV on Socio-economic Activities in Rivers State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** There has been a growing increase in the range of cultural festivals and events globally and as the range grows over the years, their impacts have increasingly come under the scrutiny of funding agencies as well as, policy-makers and planners. It is encouraging to read how successful festivals are, not just in terms of the economy, but also in making people proud of where they live and the community-based feelings, which are rekindled through such events. This paper shows how far Rivers State as a people, have come and gives an indication of how it can build on this success to truly make Rivers State the home of festivals and hospitalities. To this extent, the main goal of this paper is to assess the potentials of Port Harcourt city festival, CARNIRIV, in impacting on the socio-economic activities in Rivers State, Nigeria as that would have implications for tourism development in the state.

**Keywords:** CARNIRIV, Cultural festivals, Socio-economic activities, Tourism.

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## Introduction

Cultural activities constitute one of the main motivations in the choice of the tourist destinations worldwide. The empowerment of the “civilization” of “leisure” contributes to the development of this leisure tourism. Cultural events generate important flows of population, and constitute a vector of regional promotion. To this end, cultural tourism, then appears to be a key in the narrative of the area, since the lives and existences of its people revolve around the heritage of their varied civilizations.

The cultural diversity and collective heritage of the local people is firmly rooted in the core of tourism in Rivers State, Nigeria. This heritage, as opulent as it is diverse, is a fine agglomeration of the customs and cultural practices of the various ethnicities making up Rivers State ([www.canirivnigeria.com](http://www.canirivnigeria.com)).

To a considerable degree, this accounts for the natural enthusiasm for festivals, jamborees, guided tours and other similar physical engagements as the principal preferences of tourism in Nigeria, channeled through the cultures and customs of the people. From a neo-modernist perspective, CARNIRIV represents a fitting rallying point. It has been a centripetal forces, attracting a lot of tourists from far and near to enjoy the rich cultural heritage of Rivers State. It represents the unity in diversity in the state. Studies have shown that cultural festivals confer a lot of socio-economic benefits on a people (Mmom, 2003). It has also been described as an engine and pivot for strengthening unity among a people. During cultural festivities as CARNIRIV, community people tend to forget their differences; warring communities down their weapons and their attention is diverted from wars to fun. Through this process, unity is enhanced between and among communities in a region.

Many festivals are organized to present different cultural practices, sites and symbols of places. Other festivals have contributed to the birth of non-mainstream urban identities and have created a new feeling of “festival moments”, as one of the key important

features of the modern “experience economy”, while some festivals play an important role in creating distraction for the people from the harsh reality of everyday life, a break away from work as a period of relaxation and occasionally upset the established social order (Kiwewa, 2012).

Whatever the background or purpose, these festivals all had in common that they are powerful experiences, bringing together audiences and performers in a momentum of excitement and high quality content and excellence and had – even when not originally intended as such – a great impact on local economies (Sapsford, & Southern, (2007). They create a lot of jobs and involve many services: in addition to the core group of artists, directors, designers, composers, you find sound and lighting technicians, printers, publicists and media, cleaners, ushers, caterers, ushers, ticket sellers, drivers and hotel owners and many more that benefit in one way or the other from the platform created by this festival.

There is boost in business during festivities; given that the influx of people into the area tends to boost the local economy. This is so because there is increasing demand for accommodation; increasing demand for food; increasing demand for transportation and other communication infrastructure. More money flows into the local economy due to increased patronage. Artistes/ artists, transporters and traders have reported increased patronage; high sales turnover to business and general rise in income. As the range of cultural festivals and major cultural events has grown over the years, various evaluations and more in-depth studies have found that large scale events have a variety of potential impacts, including economic, social, cultural, political, physical and environmental ones. What is more, these impacts are not always necessarily positive, but can be negative as well, or have a positive effect on one dimension (e.g. economic) while having a negative effect on another (e.g. environmental or cultural).

It is a truism that with the population influx into an area, there come with it increasing challenges such as increasing crime rates. For instance, increase in criminal activities

was reported in Calabar, Cross River State during the Calabar carnival season. There were reported cases of rape and robberies; increase in unwanted pregnancies is usually fall out of such festivities (Inah, 2003).

However, irrespective of the above ill associated with cultural festivities, theft, robberies as well as pockets of quarrels and fighting, the importance and contributions of cultural festivities on the socio-economic life of a region cannot be over emphasized.

### **CANIRIV: the “Port Harcourt Carnival”**

Rivers State, aptly referred to as the land of a thousand masquerades is at the epicentre of the country’s array of tourism resources and represents an expressive band of ethnic variations. Rivers State is one of the seven states in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, with 23 local government councils, 17 different languages and over 300 applicable dialects. This variation somewhat discern the beauty in the diversity of its peoples.

The Port Harcourt Carnival is Africa’s largest carnival and Nigeria’s oldest carnival- this owing largely to the pre-extant CARNIRIV ’88 franchise. CARNIRIV ’88 in its time was a one-off and without the requisite support to ensure continuance, the event slipped into obscurity. In every way conceivable, CARNIRIV ’88 was the direct ancestor of CARNIRIV: The Port Harcourt Carnival. From 1988, through to 2008, the idea of staging a carnival with state-wide participation morphed in a number of forms- most notably in the form of RIVIFEST- until the emergence of the current carnival. CARNIRIV: The Port Harcourt Carnival was construed and staged in 2008; and with it came the poignant allure to build a sturdy and ultimately attractive carnival brand ([www.canirivnigeria.com](http://www.canirivnigeria.com)).



**Plate 1: CARNIRIV '88**

The government of Rivers State recognizes CARNIRIV as its biggest tourism export. With economic interests increasingly identifying tourism as a viable alternative to the fossil fuel economy, the state government has exhibited its commitment to developing this carnival into a regionally unrivalled and globally reckoned tourist attraction. By allying a sound and strategic ideology with empirical business models and just the right amount of private-sector participation, this objective is realizable.

With a fine variety of spoken tongues, numbering over 300, Very many civilizations, ancient and seemingly ageless as they are, quite simply draw attention to the richness and unspeakable eminence of the collective heritage of the Rivers people. This to all intents and purposes, is at the core of the philosophy and guiding principle of CARNIRIV.

The Port Harcourt Carnival bears certain uniqueness as it combines two carnivals- a purely cultural carnival and a contemporary Caribbean style carnival-all in one. This

gives it an edge over all other regional and continental carnivals. Every edition of the carnival, since its inception, has brought citizens of the state and visitors alike out on to the streets of Port Harcourt in droves- just as it has implicitly, albeit spontaneously, concocted a micro-economy within and around attendant activities. CARNIRIV is good for the economy of Rivers State and of Nigeria, by extension; and with a future burning bright, the direct impact on the economy, in an entirely positive way, can only be fathomed with unbridled glee ([www.canirivnigeria.com](http://www.canirivnigeria.com),2014).

### **Rivers State: - Treasure base of the Nation**

Rivers State is one of the 36 states of the country, located south-south Nigeria, within the Niger Delta region. It was created in 1967 by the then military Government headed by Major General Yakubu Gowon with Lt Col. Zamani Lekwot as the first Military Administrator and Ft. Lt Alfred Diette-Spiff as the first indigenous military administrator. It is bounded on the South by the Atlantic Ocean, to the North by the Anambra, Imo and Abia States, to the East by Akwa Ibom State and to the West by the Bayelsa and Delta States.

The inland part of Rivers state consists of tropical rainforest; towards the coast the typical river delta environment features many mangrove swamps. Rivers state was part of the Oil Rivers Protectorate from 1885 till 1893, when it became part of the Niger Coast Protectorate. In 1900 the region was merged with the chartered territories of the Royal Niger Company to form the colony of Southern Nigeria (Alaogoa, 1994).

Rivers State is currently is currently made up of 23 local government areas. These are Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Ahoada East, Ikwerre, Etche, Andoni/Opobo, Bonny, Okrika, Oyigbo, Khana, Gokana Tai, Obio/Akpor, Emohua, Degema, Asari Toru, Akuku, Abua/Odual, Omuma, Opobo/Nkoro, Ogu/ Bolo, Ahaoda West and Eleme, Emohua & Port Harcourt city. The state has a population of about three million people occupying an area of 21,850 sq. km with two thirds of it in swampy terrain. The dominant ethnic groups are Ijaw, Ikwerre, Etche, Ogoni, and Ogba/Egbema. Ijaw and Ikwerre are the

most spoken languages, although British English and Pidgin English are widely used in radio and television broadcasts.



**Fig. 1** Administrative map of Rivers State

The state has Port Harcourt city as its capital and is the industrial nerve centre of Nigeria's oil and gas industries and over ninety industrial concerns, including the Shell Petroleum Development Company of (SPDC), Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC), Texaco, Total E & P, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Port Harcourt Refining Company (PHRC), Ndorama-Eleme Petro-chemicals Complex, Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas project (NLNG) and many more. Due to its beautiful layout and peculiar topography, Port Harcourt, christened "Garden City", is accessible by road, rail, air and sea. Apart from being a railway terminus and having one of the busiest airports in Nigeria, Port Harcourt has the unique natural advantage of being the nation's second largest sea port with another sea port, the Federal Ocean Terminal at Onne, a stone's throw from the city.

Educationally, Port Harcourt is the 2014 UNESCO World Book Capital with four (4)

Universities, namely: University of Port Harcourt, located in Choba-Port Harcourt; Rivers State University of Science & Technology at Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt and the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt & Madonna University, Elele. Other higher institutions in the state include: Federal College of Education, Omoku, Rivers State Polytechnic, Bori, Rivers State college of Arts & Science, Rumuola-Port Harcourt, Rivers State College of Health Sciences & Technology & College of Nursing, Rumueme-Port Harcourt. The state is regarded as one of the educationally advanced states of Nigeria with a myriad of both publicly and privately owned basic & secondary institutions located across the state.

Agriculture (Fishing & Farming) is the main occupation of the people of Rivers State and the agricultural policy of the state government is anchored on food production and employment generation as it is the purveyor of employment for young school leavers and university graduates. However, the dominance of Nigeria's economy by oil has greatly affected the traditional occupation of the people as there is rapid drift away from agriculture. The government of the state is however encouraging both crop & fish farming activities. To this end, the Government has set up commercial fish farm in Buguma-Kalabari and the Bannana and Songhai farm project in Bunu-Tai.

Rivers State is made most famous by her enormous reserves of crude oil and natural gas. In fact, she accounts for more than 45% of Nigeria crude oil production, harbours the first petroleum refinery in Nigeria & the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Complex; the only petro-chemicals complex and many more, no wonder she is regarded as the **'Treasure Base of the Nation'**.

### **Goal and Objectives of the paper**

It is encouraging to read how successful festivals are, not just in terms of the economy, but also in making people proud of where they live and the community-based feelings, which are rekindled through such events. This paper shows how far Rivers State as a



people, have come and gives an indication of how it can build on this success to truly make Rivers State, the home of festivals and hospitalities .To this extent, the main goal of this paper is to assess the impact CANIRIV has had on the social and economic life of Rivers State. Against the foregoing, the following objectives were set as follows:

- To assess current information gathered on CANIRIV festival in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- To identify the factors that would encourage sustainable growth of the festival.
- To establish assessment techniques to examine the economic impacts of other festivals in Nigeria
- To make recommendations about future policies concerning the development of the festival.

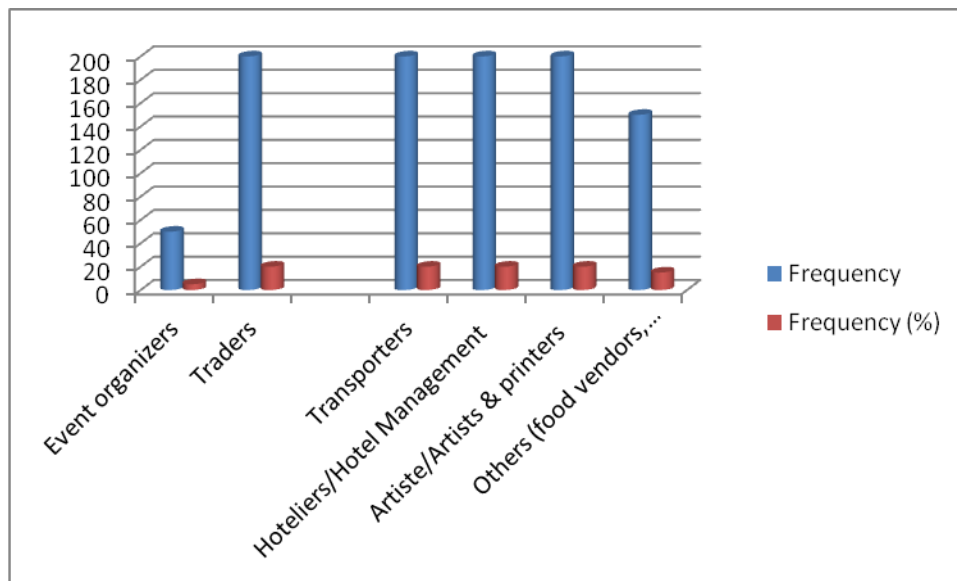
### **Methodology**

This paper may not be able to give you a full analysis and clear statistics of the economic contribution of Caniriv festivals to the economy of Rivers State simply because these data do not exist. However, even though this paper will not be able to present proper figures at this point in time, the main argument is that we need to nurture an understanding of the value of cultural festivals and events to economic development of a region, especially as the case of Rivers State, Nigeria.

This study adopted simple survey technique to generate the data used for this report. A total of 1,000 respondents distributed as below were used for this study. Structured questionnaires were used to elicit needed information from the respondents and the generated data were simply analyzed using percentages

**Table 1: Distribution of the respondents**

S/N	Type of respondents	Frequency	Frequency (%)
1	Event organizers	50	5
2	Traders	200	20
3	Transporters	200	20
4	Hoteliers/Hotel Management	200	20
5	Artiste/Artists & printers	200	20
6	Others (food vendors, participants/tourists)	150	15
	Total	1000	100%

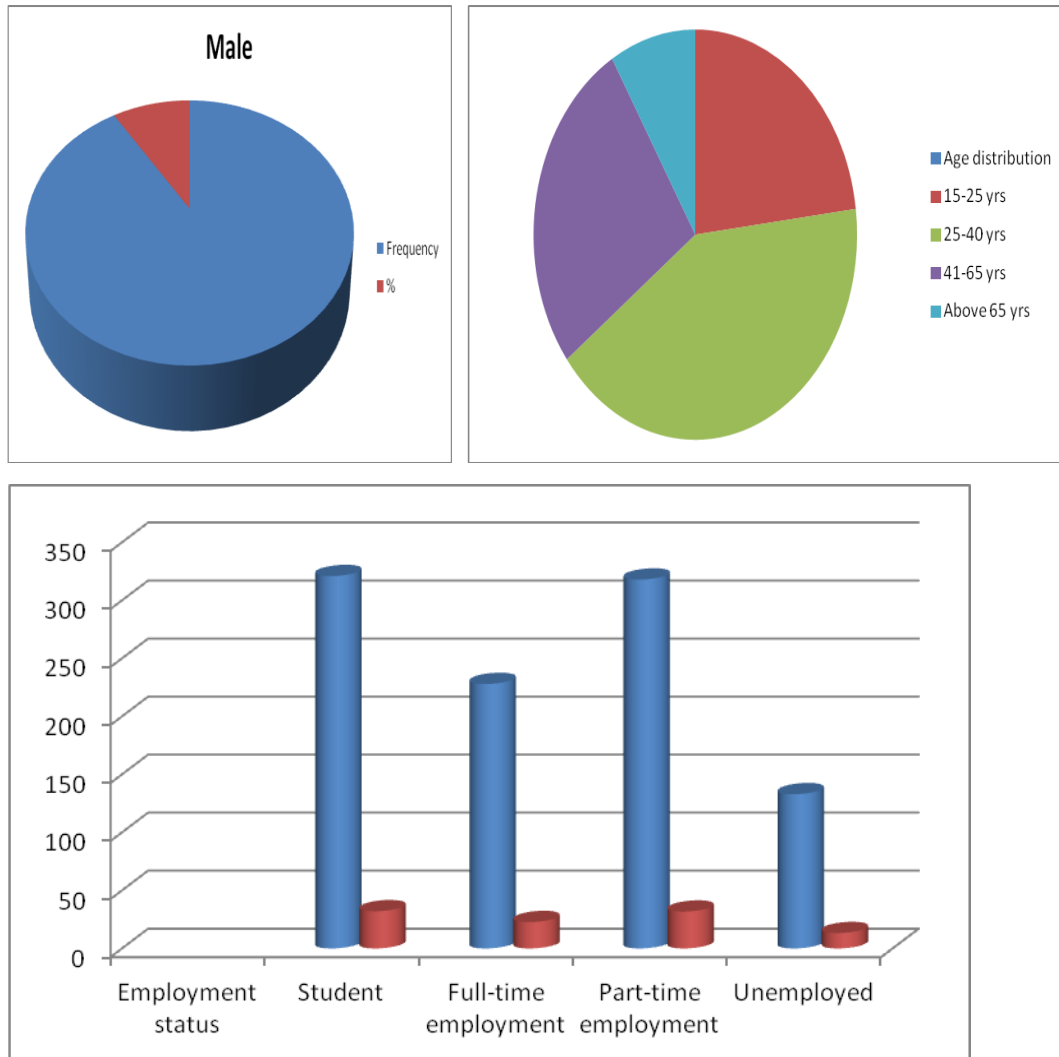
**Fig. 2 Bar graph showing frequency distribution of respondents**

Analysis of table 1 above shows that 5 % of the total respondents were organizers of the festival, while 20% each were traders, transporters, hotel owners/ management as well as artists, artiste and printers. Other respondents which included food vendors, publicist and many more constitute 15 % of the respondents. These were perceived as

critical stakeholders in carnival as such drawn as sample from which data were generated for the study

**Table 2: Demographic characteristics of respondents**

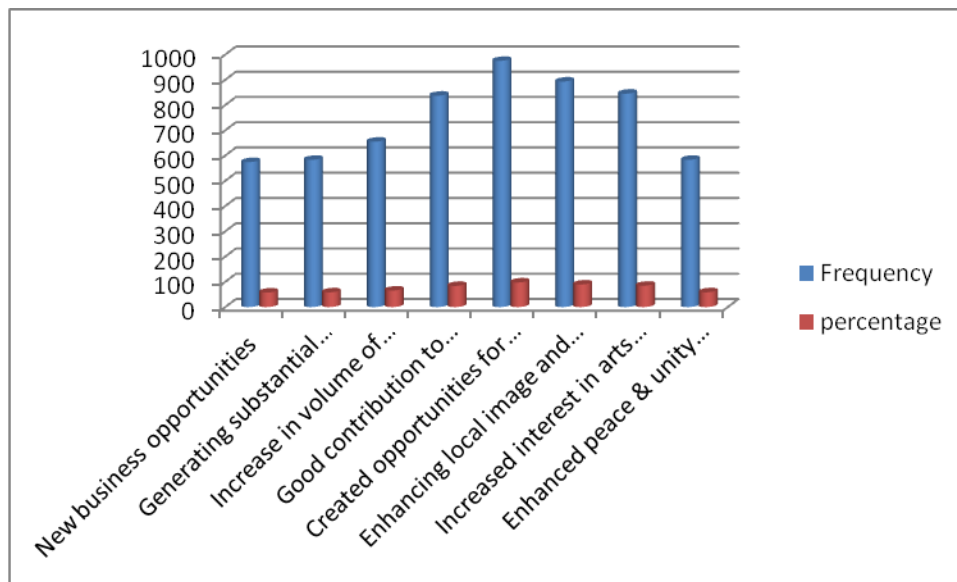
S/N	Sex	Frequency	%
1	Male	557	55.7
2	Female	443	44.3
3	None of the above	Nil	-
	Total	1000	100
	<b>Age distribution</b>		
1	15-25 yrs	230	23
2	25-40 yrs	416	41.6
3	41-65 yrs	268	26.8
4	Above 65 yrs	86	8.6
	<b>Other Profile</b>		
1	Single attendee	582	58.2
2	Group attendees	418	41.8
3	First time participants	361	36.1
4	Regular participants	639	63.9
	<b>Employment status</b>		
1	Student	321	32.1
2	Full-time employment	228	22.8
3	Part-time employment	318	31.8
4	Unemployed	133	13.3



From table 2 above, 55% of the respondents were male, while 44.3% were female. In terms of the age bracket of respondents, about 41% fall within the ages of 25-40 years, while 26.7 % are within the ages of 41-65 years. Others are 23 % for age bracket 15-25years and 8.6 % fall above 65 years of age. The survey also indicates that about 58.2 % of them were single attendees, while 41.8 attended as a group. Similarly, 31.6 % attended the festival for the first time, in other words, they were first-time attendees, while 63.9% were regular participants in Carniriv. In terms of employment status, 31.2 % were discovered to be students, 31.8 % were engaged in part-time employment, and 22.8 % were in full-time employment, while 13.3 % was reportedly unemployed.

**Table 3: Perceived socio-economic impact of Carniriv**

S/N	Perceived impact	Frequency	percentage
1	New business opportunities	574	57.4
2	Generating substantial wealth and employment	583	58.3
3	Increase in volume of sales/income	655	65.5
4	Good contribution to tourism development	837	83.7
5	Created opportunities for recreation & social interactions	975	97.5
6	Enhancing local image and identity	893	89.3
7	Increased interest in arts activities	845	84.5
8	Enhanced peace & unity among communities in the state	583	58.3



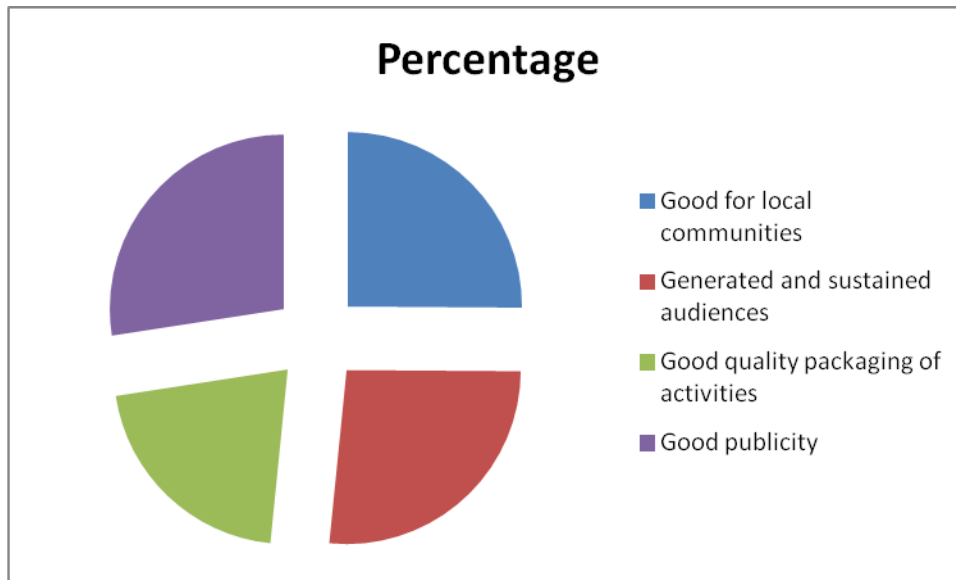
Analysis of perceived socioeconomic impact of Caniriv as presented on table 3 shows that 57.4 % of the respondents saw the festival as creating new business opportunities. So many young artistes/artists who have been looking for opportunity to showcase them availed themselves of that during caniriv. The analysis also shows that 58.3 % of the respondents indicated Caniriv generated employment. Our further interaction with the people revealed that though employment was generated, some of them saw the employment generated as being temporary as most of them fizzled out at the end of the

carnival. The analysis reveals increase in volume of sales and income as was indicated by 65.5 % of the respondents. Although the specific amount of fund injected into the festival may not easily be asserted, it is estimated that over ₦ 500,000.00 would have entered the local economy through income from employment generated, sales of products and services. The economic impact of this spending may have triple and trickledown effect on the local economy.

A substantial number of the people (83.7%) affirmed that the festival has contributed to growth and development of tourism in the state, while 97.5% indicated that the festival has created for interaction and recreation among people from within and outside the state. Many look forward to the festival season when friends who have not had opportunity of seeing themselves would meet and exchange pleasantries. In terms of local image and identity, about 89.9% affirmed that caniriv has enhanced local identity and corporate image of Rivers State as an entity. Most of the festival attendees said they felt more positive about the place where the festival was held. This demonstrates that festivals can be an important factor in improving perceptions of places and demonstrates that many festivals are rooted in the social and cultural life of the host community. About 84.5% indicated that the existence of caniriv has increased interest in arts activities in the state, while about 58.3% indicated that the festival has enhanced peace and unity among communities.

**Table 4: General perception about the CANIRIV Festival**

S/N	Perception	Percentage
1	Good for local communities	78.6
2	Generated and sustained audiences	83
3	Good quality packaging of activities	65.7
4	Good publicity	85.9



Analysis of table 5 on the general perception about Caniriv shows that 78.6 % noted that the festival is good for the local communities; 83 % indicated that Caniriv and sustained the audience; 65.7 % noted that the packaging of activities was generally good and 85.9 % affirmed that there was good publicity of the festival. The research shows that CANIRIV attracted the largest overall audience with approximately 100,000 people attending the festival annually. The research also shows that arts festivals in Nigeria (Arugungu Fishing Festival, Calabar Festival, Oguta, Ohafia, Abuja National festivals, etc) create a very high level of satisfaction with the event for audience members; a very high level of participation by the public; almost 70% of the audience would be more likely to attend this cultural event in the future.

### **Summary of Economic & Social Impact of Caniriv Festivals**

Although, it was difficult to ascertain the actual budgetary expenditure by government, 'customer effect,' expenditure by audiences and revenue accruable from the festival, our interactions with customers, traders, transporters, entertainers and other stakeholders show that the CARNIRIV has had serious impact on the local economy. Transporters reported high daily returns, traders reported high rate of turnover and artists and

artistes reported improved income during the CARNIRIV and wish the festival would be a quarterly event. The survey carried out on local businesses around the festival village reveals that there was increase in business activities during the festival period. Some of the business ventures surveyed said that that festivals provide economic benefits to them, as expressed in increases in the number of customers and in turnover. However, some businesses indicated that festivals were not important and were even disruptive as shown in reduced number of customers during the time of the festival. A similar result was evidenced by the fact that the percentage of those who replied that they did not think of the festival as a source of new business (42.6%) was fairly high. However, at a more general level the local businesses surveyed had a very positive attitude towards the festival. They saw them as good for the state and local communities, development of tourism and enhancing the image of the city and state at large

Socially, there is evidence that the festival makes a significant contribution to promoting peace in the place where they take place and to developing audiences for cultural events (Lim and Lee, 2006). As a result of attending festival events, audience members felt more positive about the Carniriv Village, where the festival normally takes place. More so, people felt more inclined to attend subsequent festivals, and said they had become more interested in the arts and culture of the Rivers people.

## **Conclusion**

To move to the level of a proper and adequate economic impact assessment, we have come to understand that we face some major challenges (based on the Bushfire experience): - The risk of an ad hoc approach – carrying out an assessment during an event when everything can be physically observed without looking at past and future plans – is considerable, largely due to insufficient funds to carry out comprehensive assessments and lack of data. - The standard model applied to such assessments –



governed by the multiplier effect – is nearly impossible when there is no data to estimate the indirect expenditure and induced effects of input and expenditures, thus risking an insufficiently complete process.

Thus, a successful and near to accurate assessment would need to apply both the Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) and Input-Output model (IO) because the CBA would help us attracting more public and private funding whereas the IO model helps us in estimating the total expansion in production, employment and income. Both models will be necessary to have an accurate estimate of the economic impact. These challenges show that it will not be an easy task to complete this economic impact assessment in a proper manner.

These challenges show that it will not be an easy task to complete this economic impact assessment in a proper manner. But, as a researcher, am ready to undertake this difficult task as I believe that it will not only assist the Rivers State Tourism Development Agency, but also the wider sector. If we truly understand the process of measuring and evaluating the economic impact of Carniriv festival, then other events will also benefit from this assessment as the research will clearly demonstrate the actual economic impact of festivals and events in Rivers State and Nigeria in general. It will assist in arguing for the need to support festivals and events as a key component of the modern “experience economy” while it might also trigger other festivals and events carrying out similar assessments of their own.

Finally, whereas it is important to nurture the understanding of the economic value of festivals and events, it remains equally important to continue to keep an eye on the cultural and social value. Traditionally, festivals celebrate some unique aspect of the community and offer a sense of belonging for religious, social, cultural or geographical groups. In the past times, festivals were organised to mark significant occasions in history or seasonal changes. They were times where elders shared stories and transferred knowledge to the next generation. Festivals in modern times still serve to

inform communities about their culture, their traditions. They are an important element in cultural development: they foster unity, social cohesion and promote diversity and mutual understanding.

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