

**ATTENDEES' SPENDING BEHAVIOR AND SATISFACTION DURING
CALABAR CARNIVAL IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64415/jams.v1i1.30>

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Abstract

The study evaluated attendees' spending behavior and satisfaction during Calabar carnival in Cross River State, Nigeria. It was motivated by the drive to improve service qualities of this globally-rising carnival. While past studies examined cultural, socio-economic, and developmental impacts of festivals globally and regionally, none specifically focused on attendees' satisfaction and spending behavior during festivals in Calabar. Hence, the study sought to: examine the correlation between socio-cultural factors, demographic characteristics, and attendees spending behavior and activities with regards to the services rendered during the carnival. A descriptive survey research approach was used in the study. These results revealed that socio-cultural, demographics, economic, and developmental factors are strongly associated with attendees' satisfaction and spending habits during the carnivals.

1.1 Background to the Study

Festivals are important cultural events that promote expression, social bonding, and economic activity worldwide. They function as cultural artifacts that preserve traditions and identities and are often tied to historical, religious, or seasonal practices (Sarghe, 2019; Gligorijević, 2022; Wang, Rowlands & Zhu, 2021). In Nigeria, festivals such as the Durbar, Osun-Osogbo, New Yam, and the Calabar Carnival highlight the nation's cultural diversity through music, dance, masquerades, and traditional rites (Adeola, 2020; Akpulu, 2021; Eja, Ajake & Ojikpong, 2012). The Owu-Arugbo festival in Bayelsa similarly showcases wrestling, regattas, and ancestral rituals that reinforce communal heritage (Woodall, 2022; Guanah, 2023). These events enhance cultural continuity while generating economic benefits through tourism and cultural participation (Dwyer, 2022; Eja et al., 2012).

Attendee satisfaction at festivals depends heavily on performance quality, service delivery, and event management (Lee, 2017; Welthagen & Lötter, 2020). High-quality cultural experiences and social interaction also increase satisfaction (Fiedler & Wickham, 2022). Spending behavior is shaped by demographic factors and motivations, with younger or higher-income attendees spending more on festival activities (Ho, Tiew & Adamu, 2022; Hsu, Agyeiwaah, Lynn & Chen, 2021). Effective marketing, accessibility, and diverse programming further boost expenditure (Kim & Barber, 2023; Koumoutsea, Boufounou &

Mergos, 2023). West African festivals such as the Calabar Carnival, Homowo, and Fête du Vodoun serve as cultural showcases and key economic drivers (Gamble, 2022; Balogun, 2023). Satisfaction is influenced by expectations, cultural value, and socio-economic diversity among attendees (Ahn, Choi & Joung, 2020; Crowe, 2020; Eniola, 2024).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Attendee satisfaction—driven by entertainment quality, facilities, services, and event management—is crucial for repeat participation and positive recommendations (Padlee, Thaw & Zulkiffli, 2019). Spending behavior at festivals spans accommodation, food, transport, and souvenirs, and is closely tied to satisfaction levels (Hsu et al., 2021; Ho, Tiew & Adamu, 2022). International examples such as the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and Sydney Festival show that satisfied attendees spend more on premium experiences (Ashcroft, 2022; Gibson & Connell, 2016).

In West Africa, satisfaction is shaped by cultural relevance, safety, accessibility, and activity diversity (Aideed, 2021; Dassah, 2023; Moreno-Ruiz & Stitz, 2024; Bishar & Robertine, 2023). Nigerian festivals face challenges such as inadequate facilities, lighting, and sanitation, especially in urban centers like Calabar, Port Harcourt, and Lagos (Abdullahi, 2021). Nonetheless, performance quality, organization, and cultural richness remain key drivers of satisfaction at events such as the Calabar and Abuja Carnivals (Eja et al., 2012; Fenton, 2022; Adedayo et al., 2023). Festivals also generate significant economic returns through tourism-related spending (Eniola, 2024).

While past studies have examined cultural, socio-economic, and developmental impacts of festivals globally and regionally (del Pilar Leal Londoño, Georgescu-Paquin & Arcos-Pumarola, 2022; Richards & Leal Londoño, 2022; Jæger, 2019; Yeboah & Kim, 2020; Ekundayo & Tella, 2021; Chibaya, 2021; Amaeze & Otabor, 2024), none have specifically focused on attendees' satisfaction and spending behavior during festivals in Calabar Metropolis, which is the central gap addressed by this study.

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the study was to assess Attendees' spending behavior and satisfaction during carnivals in Calabar, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the correlation between socio-cultural factors and attendees' spending behavior and satisfaction in the study area.
2. identify the relationship between demographic characteristics and attendees' spending behavior and satisfaction during the Calabar Carnival.
3. analyze the correlation between attendees spending behavior and activities and services during the carnival.

1.4 Research hypotheses

Three null-hypotheses were tested this research

1. H_0 : There is no significant relationship between socio-cultural activities and attendees' spending behavior and satisfaction in Calabar, Cross River State.
2. H_0 : There is no significant relationship between demographic characteristics and attendees' spending behavior and satisfaction during the Calabar Carnival.
3. H_0 : There is no significant relationship between attendees spending behavior and activities and services during the carnival.

2.0 Literature Review

Socio-Cultural Activities and Attendee Experience

Festivals function as cultural platforms that enhance satisfaction and stimulate spending through performances, culinary experiences, and crafts. Traditional music, dance, and art preserve heritage and attract spending on tickets and souvenirs (Gibson & Connell, 2016;

Olivier et al., 2023). Local cuisine remains a central economic driver (Şengül, Türkay & Yılmaz, 2022). Craft markets and workshops further deepen immersion and support artisans (Frew & Makua, 2023). Nigerian festivals such as Calabar Carnival and Osun-Osogbo demonstrate strong cultural and economic value (Eja et al., 2018; Ekong & Abia, 2020).

Determinants of Satisfaction

Satisfaction is shaped by performance quality, facilities, safety, organization, and authenticity. Good logistics, crowd control, and varied performances improve experiences (Adanan et al., 2023; Hartzenberg, 2021). Essential facilities such as seating and sanitation are fundamental (Hannonen & Väänänen, 2015). Security and clear communication strongly influence perceptions (Fiedler & Wickham, 2022; Brown, 2023). Authentic participation remains a core factor in long-term satisfaction (Mensah & Awuah, 2016; Bello, 2020).

Spending Behavior of Attendees

Festival spending centers on accommodation, food, transport, tickets, and premium services. Global events like Rio Carnival and Coachella show food and lodging as dominant expenditures (Ricke, 2023; Oliva-Codina, 2021). Nigerian attendees also purchase cultural items such as attire and crafts (Okonkwo & Mbonu, 2015). Wealthier or foreign visitors prefer VIP services, while locals emphasize cultural goods (Akinboade & Braimoh, 2010; Samuel, 2017). Such spending boosts tourism and local business development (Olajide & Adeyinka, 2016).

Socio-Demographic Influences

Age, gender, income, and education significantly influence spending and satisfaction. Younger attendees spend more on entertainment, while older visitors prioritize comfort (Choo, Ahn & Lee, 2020). Women spend more on food and souvenirs; men spend more on entertainment (Smith & Cheng, 2020). Higher socioeconomic status predicts greater discretionary spending (Adetola & Oluwole, 2019). Nigerian festivals like Calabar, Ojude Oba, and Ake Arts Fest show diverse demographic effects (Obrador, 2018; Adeyemi & Fashola, 2019).

2.1.5 Challenges Affecting Attendees' Spending and Satisfaction

Economic downturns and inflation reduce purchasing power (Choi & Murray, 2017; Richardson & Fluker, 2018). Infrastructure problems—transport, parking, venue maintenance—lower satisfaction (Vargas-Sánchez & Chaves, 2019; Olapade & Omisore, 2017). Safety threats, including crime and health risks, deter participation (Lee & Arcodia, 2016; Kakpovi, 2023). Extreme weather disrupts activities, reducing vendor sales (Gursoy & Kendall, 2016; Adeola & Evans, 2020). Overcrowding, poor sanitation, and traffic intensify frustration (Deery & Jago, 2010; Bada & Okechukwu, 2016). Cultural barriers and communication gaps also affect comfort (Richards & Munsters, 2017; García-Sánchez & Archila, 2020). Logistical inefficiencies reduce enjoyment (Kim et al., 2012; Ho, Tiew & Adamu, 2022). Conversely, digital ticketing and event apps enhance experiences (Tanford & Montgomery, 2015; Oyewole, 2018).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Consumer Behavior Theory

This theory focuses on decision-making in purchasing, influenced by psychological, social, and economic factors (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). It posits that consumers aim to maximize satisfaction within limits of information and cognitive constraints (Simon). Festival spending is shaped by affordability, quality, and demographics. Critics argue the theory overemphasizes rational decisions, overlooking emotional and cultural drivers (Kahneman,

2011; Arnould et al., 2019). Nevertheless, it remains useful for understanding Carnival Calabar attendees.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1943) suggests that behavior is driven by needs—from physiological to self-actualization. At festivals, basic needs (food, rest, safety) guide initial spending, while higher needs influence spending on socialization, VIP services, and cultural experiences. Security boosts confidence, while recognition and cultural expression raise satisfaction. Critics note cultural limitations and limited empirical support (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976; Neher, 1991), yet the model helps explain spending and satisfaction patterns at Carnival Calabar.

3.0 Research Methodology

Research Design

The study used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative inferential statistics with qualitative descriptions to provide comprehensive insights.

Data and Sources

It examined socio-cultural activities influencing satisfaction and spending, demographic factors, attendee and organizer challenges, marketing roles, and funding. Data came from primary sources—questionnaires and focus group discussions—and secondary sources such as festival records, magazines, and prior studies.

Population and Sampling

The population consisted of 2,400 Carnival Calabar attendees observed on December 29, 2024, across major adjudication points (Botanical Garden, Rabana, MCC, and Stadium). Using purposive sampling, 240 respondents (10% of the population) were selected (Israel, 2013; Nwana, 1982).

Data Collection Methods

Structured questionnaires (both closed- and open-ended) gathered data on socio-cultural activities, spending patterns, demographics, and challenges. Focus group discussions provided deeper qualitative insights. Fifty attendees were initially assigned to each adjudication point.

Sample Size

A total of 248 participants were used, including 60 attendees per adjudication point and 8 organizers for group discussions.

Data Analysis

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to test the three hypotheses relating socio-cultural activities, demographics, challenges, and spending behavior. SPSS was used for data management and statistical analysis due to its efficiency in handling quantitative data.

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents the data, analysis, and discussion of findings based on the study's objectives.

4.1 Socio-Cultural Activities Influencing Spending and Satisfaction

The results show that the craft markets (20.83%) and culinary experiences (18.75%) were the most influential socio-cultural activities shaping attendees' spending behavior, followed by music and dance (14.17%), art exhibitions (10.42%), and workshops (8.33%). Other activities such as parades, cultural competitions, fashion shows, theatre, and storytelling also contributed, though at lower levels.

4.2 Factors Influencing Attendees' Satisfaction

The key determinants of satisfaction included security and safety (20.42%), crowd management (16.25%), and food and beverage options (12.92%). Other significant factors were customer service, weather, and event atmosphere. Venue facilities, ticket pricing, and accessibility also shaped overall satisfaction, though to a lesser extent.

4.3 Spending Behavior of Attendees

Spending patterns indicate that alcoholic beverages (17.08%), food and beverages (15.83%), accommodation (15%), and transportation (13.33%) were the most notable expenses. VIP upgrades (12.5%), merchandise, ticket purchases, and apparel followed. Event activities, photography, and miscellaneous items accounted for smaller shares of spending.

4.4 Demographic Characteristics Affecting Spending and Satisfaction

Income (22.5%) and marital status (18.33%) emerged as the strongest demographic predictors of spending and satisfaction, with household composition (12.08%) also significant. Education level, travel distance, family size, gender, and age had moderate effects, while geographic location and religion played minor roles.

4.5 Challenges Affecting Spending and Satisfaction

Attendees identified poor crowd management (17.08%), lack of seating/shelter (14.17%), and inadequate parking (12.92%) as key challenges. Other issues included overpriced goods, limited food options, and safety concerns. Weather, sanitation, and transportation difficulties further reduced satisfaction.

4.6 Information Dissemination Methods

Festival information was mainly shared via social media (17.08%), hotlines (16.25%), and printed programs (14.58%). Announcements, mobile apps, and digital signage also supported communication, while websites, guides, newsletters, and push notifications contributed at lower levels.

4.7 Estimated Attendee Expenditure

Table 4.7 indicates that most attendees spent over ₦23,500 (20.83%) or ₦21,500–₦23,500 (13.75%). Mid-range spending (₦19,500–₦21,500, 10%) and ₦15,500–₦17,500 (8.33%) were also common, while fewer respondents reported expenditures below ₦9,500.

4.8 Hypotheses Testing

The Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between socio-cultural activities and satisfaction ($R = 0.766$; $p < 0.001$). There was also significant positive relationships between demographic characteristics and satisfaction ($R = 0.678$; $p < 0.001$). Again, there was a significant positive relationships between socio-cultural activities and challenges ($R = 0.857$; $p < 0.001$).

These results confirm that socio-cultural activities, demographics, and challenges are strongly associated with attendees' satisfaction and spending.

4.9 Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that socio-cultural activities—including craft markets, food experiences, and performances—significantly shaped attendees' spending and satisfaction, confirming earlier studies (Gibson & Connell, 2016; Olivier et al., 2023). Security, crowd control, and service quality were major determinants of satisfaction, echoing Obong (2014), Mensah (2022), and Nwosu & Igwe (2023). Spending was concentrated on food, drinks, accommodation, and transport, similar to trends reported by Ashcroft (2022) and Ricke (2023). Demographic factors such as income, education, and marital status strongly

influenced spending and satisfaction (Kim et al., 2013; Johnson, 2020). Challenges—poor facilities and overpriced goods—aligned with Richards & Munsters (2017). Information dissemination relied mainly on social media and printed materials (Olapade & Omisore, 2017). Overall analysis showed significant positive correlations among all variables, reinforcing patterns in festival studies (Almeida & Garrrod, 2022).

5.1 Summary of Results

The study examined spending behavior and satisfaction among festival attendees in Calabar. Five objectives and three hypotheses guided the research. Socio-cultural activities were found to significantly influence both spending and satisfaction. Several determinants—including parking fees, food, alcoholic beverages, and accommodation—shaped spending behavior. Income level and marital status were the major demographic factors affecting both spending and satisfaction. Challenges identified included poor crowd management, inadequate parking, lack of seating and shelter, and overpriced goods. All tested hypotheses showed significant relationships, leading to the acceptance of the alternative hypotheses. Most attendees spent over ₦23,000 during the event, and multiple communication channels were used to share festival information.

5.2 Conclusion

Carnival Calabar attracts large numbers of visitors and significantly influences spending patterns and satisfaction. Key socio-cultural drivers were craft markets and music/dance performances. Major satisfaction factors included security, crowd control, food/beverage options, and customer service. Spending was dominated by alcoholic drinks and food. Income and marital status were the main demographic determinants. Major challenges included inadequate crowd management and insufficient seating or shelter. Hotlines and printed programs were the primary information sources used.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The Cross River State Government should improve the Carnival's crowd management through increased and well-trained security personnel.
2. The Cross River State Government should strengthen the Carnival's security networks by involving all relevant state security agencies.
3. The relevant Cross River State governmental agency should regulate and monitor pricing during Carnival Calabar, to keep goods and services affordable to the Attendees.
4. The relevant Cross River State governmental agency should enhance sanitation during the Carnival through improved facilities and hospitality sector involvement.
5. The Cross River State Government should provide sufficient parking space to ease movement and reduce traffic congestions during Carnival Calabar.

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