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HARNESSING CHRISTMAS VILLAGE AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND CULTURAL RENAISSANCE IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Background: Festival tourism is increasingly recognized as a driver of economic growth, cultural promotion, and infrastructural development. The Ibom Christmas Village has emerged as a flagship event in Akwa Ibom State, yet its overall contribution to tourism development has not been empirically documented.

Objective: This study examined the impact of the Ibom Christmas Village on tourism development in Akwa Ibom State, with specific focus on its economic, social, and infrastructural contributions. The objectives were to evaluate the event's influence on local commerce, assess its role in cultural promotion, and analyse its effect on public utility enhancements.

Methods: A descriptive survey research design was adopted. Using a multi-stage sampling technique, 384 structured questionnaires were administered to attendees and vendors. Data were analysed using mean scores and percentage distributions.

Results: Findings reveal that the Christmas Village serves as a significant catalyst for economic growth. Local SMEs reported sales increases of up to 400%, while the hospitality sector experienced a surge in demand. Demographic analysis shows that the typical tourist is young (55.3%), female (66.84%), and educated, with high visitor satisfaction driving repeat visits.

Socially, the event fostered community integration and provided a platform to showcase the state's rich cultural heritage. In terms of infrastructure, the festival spurred improvements in electricity, security, and waste management. However, challenges regarding the availability of permanent venue facilities persist.

Conclusion: The study concludes that the Ibom Christmas Village has successfully positioned Akwa Ibom State as a premier tourist destination. To maximize its long-term developmental impact, further investment in permanent facilities and environmental sustainability is recommended.

Keywords: *Seasonal Tourism, Economic Growth, Akwa Ibom, Christmas Village, Cultural Heritage, Infrastructure.*

1. Introduction

Christmas is celebrated globally with various traditions that embody cultural, religious, and historical values. Among these traditions, Christmas villages, which are temporary festive markets and displays, have gained prominence as central features of tourism strategies, particularly during the holiday season. These villages often offer a wide array of attractions, including artisanal markets, festive decorations, entertainment, local food, and performances. Their universal appeal as family-friendly destinations makes them key players in seasonal tourism. Globally, Christmas villages have evolved into a significant tourism asset, drawing visitors from various regions and boosting local economies. Since 2019, the significance of Christmas villages has grown, spurred by the increasing desire for experiential travel, where tourists seek immersive, culturally relevant experiences. Moreover, the advent of social media has amplified the visibility of Christmas villages, with tourists sharing their experiences online, further driving interest and visitation. These villages are now not only commercial ventures but also cultural hubs that showcase local customs and traditions, integrating local artisanal crafts, gastronomy, and entertainment, thus creating a unique blend of tourism and cultural celebration (López-Guzmán, Sánchez-Cañizares, and Pavón, 2020).

Christmas is not traditionally celebrated across many regions in Asia. Countries like Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines have seen a steady rise in the establishment of Christmas villages, often aimed at international tourists as well as local visitors seeking festive experiences. Japan's Kobe Luminarie and Tokyo Midtown Christmas markets are examples of how Asian cities have integrated the concept of Christmas villages into their broader tourism frameworks. These attractions are not only popular among locals but also among tourists from other Asian countries and beyond (Ohashi, 2021). The rise of Christmas-themed parks and markets in Asia since 2019 has also been driven by the increasing popularity of experiential tourism in the region.

The Christmas village model in Asia often adapts to local cultural contexts, blending Western Christmas aesthetics with indigenous elements to create unique festive atmospheres. In South Korea, for instance, Christmas villages are infused with K-pop performances and traditional Korean food markets, which cater to both local and foreign visitors (Park and Kim, 2021). This fusion of global and local elements highlights the adaptability of the Christmas village concept, making it an integral part of Asia's growing festive tourism sector.

Europe has a long-standing tradition of Christmas markets, with some dating back several centuries. These markets, which are often set in historic town squares, have become a major draw for tourists. European Christmas villages, such as those in Germany, Austria, and France, are renowned for their authenticity, blending local culture, history, and craftsmanship. Germany's Christmas markets, like the Christ kindles market in Nuremberg, are perhaps the most iconic, drawing millions of visitors each year. These markets are deeply rooted in European history, with the first recorded market taking place in the middle Ages. By the 21st century, these Christmas markets have evolved into full-scale tourism attractions, with local governments investing significantly in their promotion and development as drivers of both local economies and international tourism (Tussyadiah and Park, 2020). The impact of COVID-19 between 2020 and 2021 had a significant effect on European Christmas villages, with many either scaling back or going digital. However, the resilience of these markets was evident in their quick rebound in 2022, where cities like Vienna, Prague, and Strasbourg witnessed record numbers of visitors as travel restrictions eased (Buhalis, 2022). The revival of Christmas villages post-pandemic has further underscored their importance as cultural and economic pillars within European tourism. Christmas villages in Europe have increasingly become platforms for promoting sustainability and local artisanship. Many markets now prioritize environmentally friendly practices, such as reducing plastic waste and using energy-efficient lighting, which appeal to the growing eco-conscious demography of tourists (Gossling, 2020). The integration of sustainability in these festive events aligns with the broader trends in European tourism, which increasingly focuses on responsible travel. This study is aimed at exploring the relevance of Christmas village in social and cultural milieu with identified objectives to; i. enalyze the Demographic Distribution of Christmas Village Tourists, ii. 2. assess the Level of Community Participation in the Christmas Village Setup, iii. examine the Socio-Economic Impact of the Christmas Village Setup and iv. evaluate the Role of the Christmas Village in Cultural Renaissance:

2. Literature Review

2.1 Demographic Distribution of Christmas Village Tourists

Recent studies have identified several demographic patterns among Christmas village tourists. A notable trend is the predominance of female visitors. For instance, research conducted at

the Zagreb Christmas Market during December 2017 and January 2018 revealed that a significant majority of attendees were women (Perić *et al*., 2018). This finding aligns with broader tourism research suggesting that women often play a central role in planning and participating in cultural and festive events. Age distribution is another critical aspect of visitor demographics. Studies indicate that Christmas markets attract a diverse age range, with a substantial proportion of visitors aged between 25 and 44 years. This age group often seeks unique cultural experiences and social interactions, which Christmas villages readily provide (Perić *et al.,* 2018).In contrast, younger tourists, particularly millennials, tended to make shorter, budget-conscious trips, primarily motivated by social media trends and the desire for unique, shareable experiences (Martínez-Raya and Garcia, 2021). Baker and Li (2020) concurred that the Millennials are more likely to seek out Instagrammable experiences in festive destinations, with Christmas villages in Asia capitalizing on this trend through social media marketing. Also, family groups, including children and older adults, frequently attend these events, highlighting their broad appeal across different life stages. Educational background and income levels also influence attendance at Christmas villages. Visitors often possess higher education degrees and disposable income, enabling them to engage in leisure travel and spending associated with such events. This demographic is particularly drawn to the artisanal products and gourmet food offerings typical of Christmas markets (Perić *et al.,* 2018).

Researchers employ a variety of methodological approaches to analyze the demographic profiles of Christmas village tourists. Surveys and questionnaires are the most common tools, allowing for the collection of quantitative data on visitor characteristics. For example, Perić *et al.* (2018) conducted structured surveys at the Zagreb Christmas Market, gathering data on variables such as gender, age, education level, and country of residence. This approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the visitor base and informed targeted marketing strategies. Cluster analysis is another technique utilized to segment visitors based on demographic and motivational factors. A study analyzing Italian Christmas market visitors employed sequential non-linear clustering to identify distinct visitor segments, such as "General Tourists," "Christmas Fans," and "Business People" (Perić *et al.,* 2018). This segmentation enables organizers to tailor experience and marketing efforts to the specific needs and preferences of each group. Several studies have yielded insights into the demographic profiles of Christmas village tourists. Perić *et al.* (2018) found that the majority of visitors to the Zagreb Christmas Market were domestic tourists, with a growing number of international visitors, particularly from neighboring countries. This trend suggests the event's expanding appeal and potential for boosting local economies through increased tourism.

In terms of motivation, research indicates that visitors are primarily driven by the desire to experience the festive atmosphere, purchase unique gifts, and enjoy traditional food and beverages. These motivations are consistent across different demographic groups, though the emphasis may vary. For instance, "Christmas Fans" prioritize the festive ambiance, while "Business People" may attend for networking opportunities (Perić *et al.,* 2018). The length of stay and spending patterns also correlate with demographic factors. Visitors with higher education and income levels tend to spend more and stay longer, contributing significantly to the local economy. Understanding these patterns allows organizers to develop strategies that encourage extended visits and increased expenditure, such as offering diverse entertainment options and premium products (Perić *et al.,* 2018).The demographic insights from these studies have practical implications for the management and promotion of Christmas villages. Recognizing the predominance of female visitors, organizers might design marketing campaigns that appeal specifically to women, highlighting aspects such as safety, family-friendly activities, and unique shopping opportunities. The diverse age range of attendees suggests the need for a variety of attractions catering to different age groups. For example, interactive workshops and performances can engage children, while gourmet food stalls and artisanal crafts may appeal to adults. Additionally, accessibility considerations are essential to accommodate older visitors and individuals with disabilities.

Understanding the educational and income profiles of visitors can inform the pricing strategies and product offerings at Christmas markets. Offering a range of products at various price points ensures inclusivity, allowing a broader audience to participate and enjoy the event. Moreover, collaborating with local artisans and producers can enhance the authenticity of the market, attracting culturally inclined tourists seeking genuine experiences. The demographic distribution of Christmas village tourists encompasses a diverse array of visitors, with notable trends in gender, age, education, and income levels. Methodological approaches such as surveys and

cluster analysis have been instrumental in uncovering these patterns, providing valuable insights for event organizers and policymakers. By tailoring experiences to the identified demographic segments, enhancing inclusivity, and promoting authentic cultural offerings, Christmas villages can continue to thrive as cherished festive destinations that bolster local economies and foster community engagement**.** The presence of young children significantly influenced families' overall spending, with higher expenditures on entertainment and themed merchandise, Jones and Smith (2023).

2.2 Socio-Economic Impact of Christmas Village Set Up

Christmas villages often serve as catalysts for local economic development. The influx of visitors during the festive season leads to increased spending in various sectors, including retail, hospitality, and entertainment. For instance, a study on the Calabar Carnival in Nigeria highlighted that the event significantly boosts the income of local residents through tourism-related activities (Akpan and Obang, 2019). Similarly, research on Christmas markets in city centers revealed that these events enhance the economic vitality of urban areas by attracting tourists and promoting local businesses (Egresi *et al.,* 2020).Christmas villages serve as vital economic stimulants, particularly during the holiday season. The increased consumer spending associated with these events boosts various sectors, including retail, hospitality, and entertainment. For instance, global Christmas spending reached approximately $1.15 trillion in 2023, with projections indicating an 8% year-over-year growth to $1.25 trillion in 2024 (Coupert, 2023). This surge is attributed to factors such as mobile commerce, AI-driven recommendations, and the influence of global platforms like Amazon and Alibaba. The luxury goods market also experiences a notable uptick during the festive season, driven by consumers' desire for high-quality, unique products. This trend reflects a broader shift towards premium experiences and exclusivity during holiday shopping (Frozenet, 2023). Additionally, the convenience of online shopping has led to a significant increase in digital sales, with online holiday sales projected to surpass $1.1 trillion in 2024 (CFI., 2024).

Moreover, the creation of temporary employment opportunities during the festive period is a notable economic benefit. Seasonal jobs in areas such as event management, security, and vendor services provide additional income for community members. The increased demand for local products and services during Christmas village events also stimulates small businesses and artisans, contributing to the local economy's diversification and resilience. The villages also created thousands of seasonal jobs, benefiting local communities, Adeyemi and Hlongwane (2022). Due to lucrative economic benefits, public and private sectors seems to invest in the growth of Christmas villages to maximize their economic potential, Christmas village in Akwa Ibom State has become a key contributor to the local economy, attracting thousands of visitors and generating millions in revenue each year (Udo, 2022). Beyond economic gains, Christmas villages play a vital role in fostering social cohesion and community engagement. These events provide platforms for cultural expression and communal participation, strengthening the social fabric of host communities. The festive atmosphere encourages interactions among diverse groups, promoting inclusivity and a sense of belonging. As noted by Egresi *et al.* (2020), residents perceive Christmas markets as opportunities for socialization and cultural exchange, enhancing community well-being.

However, the rapid growth of such events can also lead to challenges, including overcrowding and over-tourism. In Rovaniemi, Finland, the Santa Claus Village attracts over 600,000 visitors annually, a figure ten times the local population. This surge has raised concerns among residents about housing shortages and the strain on local infrastructure (Associated Press, 2023). Balancing tourist influx with community needs is essential to ensure sustainable social impacts. Christmas villages play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and community engagement. These events provide platforms for cultural expression and communal participation, enhancing the social fabric of host communities. However, the commercialization of Christmas markets has sparked debates about authenticity and cultural preservation. In the UK, expansive and early-opening Christmas markets have drawn mixed opinions, with some residents criticizing them for offering overpriced and repetitive products, suggesting a drift from traditional values (The Guardian, 2024). The festive season can highlight economic inequalities, as individuals with lower incomes may find it challenging to afford gifts and participate fully in celebrations. This disparity underscores the need for inclusive practices that ensure all community members can engage in festive activities (Right for Education, 2023).

Researchers employ various methodologies to assess the socio-economic impacts of Christmas villages. Quantitative approaches, such as surveys and economic impact analyses, are commonly used to measure variables like visitor spending,

employment rates, and business revenues. For example, Egresi *et al.* (2020) conducted surveys with local residents and businesses to evaluate the economic and social effects of Christmas markets in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Qualitative methods, including interviews and focus group discussions, provide deeper insights into community perceptions and experiences. Akpan and Obang (2019) utilized interviews to gather data on residents' views regarding the Calabar Carnival's influence on their livelihoods and social life. Combining both quantitative and qualitative data offers a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted impacts of Christmas village setups.

Recent studies have highlighted several critical findings which include economic stimulation that highlights that Christmas villages contribute to increased local spending and job creation. The Calabar Carnival study reported a significant rise in income for residents engaged in tourism-related activities during the festival period (Akpan and Obang, 2019). Also noted is the fact that these events enhance community spirit by providing spaces for social interaction and cultural exchange. Residents in Cluj-Napoca expressed that Christmas markets serve as communal hubs, fostering a sense of togetherness (Egresi *et al*., 2020).While tourism boosts the economy, it can also lead to overcrowding and strain on local resources. The situation in Rovaniemi underscores the need for sustainable tourism practices to mitigate adverse effects on the community (Associated Press, 2023).The increasing commercialization of Christmas markets has sparked debates about authenticity and cultural preservation. In the UK, some residents criticize these markets for offering overpriced and repetitive products, suggesting a drift from traditional values (The Guardian, 2024).

The socio-economic impacts of Christmas village setups are multifaceted, encompassing economic benefits, social enhancements, and challenges related to sustainability and commercialization. While these events can significantly boost local economies and foster community spirit, careful planning and management are essential to address potential drawbacks such as over-tourism and loss of cultural authenticity. Future research should focus on developing strategies that maximize benefits while mitigating negative impacts, ensuring that Christmas villages continue to serve as valuable assets to their communities.

2.3 Level of Community Participation in the Christmas Village Setup

Community participation is pivotal in organizing and sustaining Christmas villages. Local residents, artisans, and businesses often collaborate to create an immersive festive experience that reflects the unique cultural heritage of the area. This collective effort not only enhances the authenticity of the event but also fosters a sense of ownership and pride among community members. As noted by Christmas Market (2023), Christmas markets thrive on community involvement and volunteerism. Local individuals and organizations come together to organize and run these markets, fostering strong partnerships and bringing people closer. The diversity within communities is increasingly mirrored in the variety of Christmas markets and villages. For instance, Berlin's traditional Christmas markets have evolved to reflect the city's growing diversity, with specialized markets catering to different cultural and social groups. This inclusivity not only broadens the appeal of these events but also strengthens community bonds by celebrating the rich tapestry of cultural identities present within the city. Evaluating the level of community participation in Christmas village setups involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Surveys and interviews are commonly used to gather data on residents' involvement, perceptions, and motivations. These tools provide insights into the personal experiences of participants and help identify factors that encourage or hinder engagement. Case studies offer an in-depth examination of specific Christmas villages, highlighting successful strategies for community involvement and the challenges faced. For example, an analysis of Berlin's Christmas markets revealed how embracing cultural diversity through specialized markets has enhanced community participation and enriched the festive experience for both locals and visitors.

Economic impact assessments are also utilized to measure the tangible benefits of community participation. These assessments analyze data on local business revenues, employment rates, and tourism statistics during the festive period. The findings often indicate that active community involvement correlates with increased economic benefits, as locally organized events tend to attract more visitors and stimulate spending within the community. Evaluating the level of community participation in Christmas village setups involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Surveys and interviews are commonly used to gather data on residents' involvement, perceptions, and motivations. These tools provide insights into the personal experiences of participants and help identify factors that encourage or hinder engagement. For example, a study by Setiawan *et al.* (2022) utilized

structured interviews to assess community involvement in the development of tourism villages, revealing that active participation was driven by perceived economic benefits and cultural preservation efforts. An analysis by Risdanareni *et al.* (2023) of a village in Malang Regency demonstrated how a participatory approach in designing a master plan for water tourism led to increased community engagement and a sense of ownership over the project. The study emphasized the importance of involving local residents in every stage of the planning process to ensure the sustainability and success of such initiatives. Findings from a study by Sari and Padnyawati (2020) indicated that villages with higher levels of community involvement in event planning experienced significant boosts in local economies, as active participation attracted more visitors and stimulated spending within the community.

Recent studies have underscored several critical aspects of community participation in Christmas village setups culminating involvement in organizing and managing Christmas villages fosters a sense of unity and collective identity among community members. The collaborative nature of these events encourages residents to work together towards a common goal, strengthening social ties and community resilience. Community-driven Christmas villages provide platforms for local artisans and small businesses to showcase their products, leading to increased economic opportunities. As highlighted by Its ChristmasNow (2022), Christmas markets provide a platform for local artisans and small businesses to showcase their unique products and gain exposure. Cultural Preservation and Innovation: Engaging the community in the planning and execution of Christmas villages ensures that local traditions are preserved while also allowing for the incorporation of new, diverse cultural elements. This blend of tradition and innovation enriches the cultural fabric of the community and enhances the appeal of the event. Community participation is a cornerstone of successful and vibrant Christmas village setups. The collective efforts of local residents, businesses, and organizations not only enhance the festive atmosphere but also contribute to social cohesion, economic vitality, and cultural richness. To maximize these benefits, it is essential to employ comprehensive methodologies to assess participation levels and address challenges proactively. Through community participation, culture and traditions are revived as revealed by Rossi (2022) study on revitalizing local culture through Christmas Villages in Rural Italy.

3. Materials and Methods

Study Area

The study was conducted in Uyo LGA, Akwa Ibom State. In 1991 the population census of Uyo was 244,762 (National Population Commission, 1991). These represent the Urban agglomeration of Uyo which typically includes Uyo's population in addition to adjacent suburban areas. As at 2006 population census, the area recorded a population of 498,622 (NPC, 2006). According to the 2022 projected population figure, Uyo Capital City has a population of 1,265,000 persons at an annual growth rate of 3.5%. This made up the population of the study area.

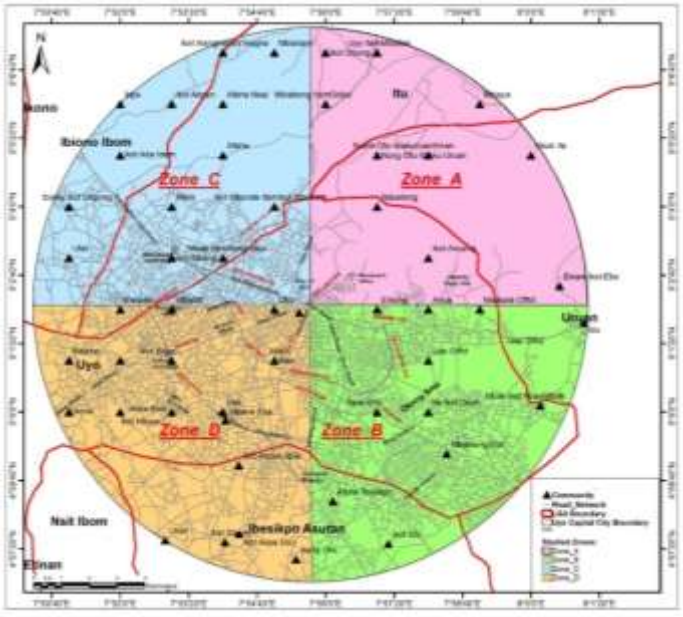

Figure 1: Uyo Capital City showing study area
Source: Authors GIS Lab UNIUYO (2026)

Sampling and Analysis

This study adopted a survey research design approach. With this survey approach, questionnaires were used in collecting data from the respondents. This implies those studies that aim at collecting data and describing them in a systematic way. In this study, both stratified and simple random sampling techniques will be adopted. In the stratified sampling technique, Uyo capital city was divided into four (4) zones for comprehensive study. The demarcation shows that minimum of 15-20 communities are found in each zone, as such, 5 communities representing 25% of communities in each zone were randomly selected for the study. Bill Godden (2004) formula for finite population was adopted in determining sample size. The 384 questionnaires were further divided into 2 equal parts. Furthermore, 189 questionnaires were distributed within Uyo Capital City while another part of 189 questionnaires were distributed within the Christmas Village which was one of the core sample location of the study area. Data collected were subjected to rigorous statistical manipulation including frequency, mean, percentages and regression.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Demographic Data of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	127	33.16
Female	256	66.84
Age		
18-24	101	26.37
22-34	84	21.93
35-44	60	15.67
45-54	80	20.89
Above 54	58	15.14
Marital Status		
Single	208	54.31
Married	109	28.46
Divorce	18	4.70
Widow/widower	48	12.53
Educational Status		
FSLC	147	38.38
SSCE	139	36.29
TERTIARY	97	25.33
Occupation		
Student	84	21.93
Employed	80	20.89
Self employed	60	15.67
Retired	84	21.93
Unemployed	101	26.37

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 2: Mean Score of Demographic distribution of Christmas Village tourists

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Age	383	2.7650	1.42789	2.039
Gender	383	1.6710	.47046	.221
Income level	383	1.8903	.77830	.606
Occupation	383	3.1645	1.46212	2.138
Education level	383	1.8695	.78845	.622
Geographic level	383	2.1149	.77754	.605
Valid N (listwise)	383			

Source: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 2026

4.2 Socio-economic impact of Christmas Village set up

This objective seeks to examine the impact of Christmas Village on tourism development in the study area. Hence, regression analysis was adopted. Table 3 highlights the model summary of Regression for the socio-economic impact of Christmas Village set up in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 3: Model summary of Regression for Hypothesis testing

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.991[a]	.982	.981	.13649259	.558

Table 4: ANOVA Table for Regression Analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	374.512	12	31.209	1775.066	.000[b]
	Residual	6.488	369	.018		
	Total	381.000	381			

The regression analysis result of 0.991 indicates a very strong positive correlation between socio-economic factors and the dependent variable, which likely encompasses a composite measure combining elements such as visitor satisfaction, infrastructure development, economic benefits, and other related indicators. Table 4 shows F-value of 1775 and p-value of 0.000. This exceptionally high correlation coefficient suggests that socio-economic factors play a pivotal role in shaping the overall success and quality of the Christmas village event in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The strength of this relationship implies that variations in socio-economic factors such as income levels, employment status, educational attainment, and residential location are closely linked to variations in the outcomes associated with the Christmas village. For instance, individuals with higher income and education levels may be more likely to engage with the event, contribute to increased spending, and positively influence visitor satisfaction. Similarly, improvements in infrastructure driven by socio-economic advancements could enhance the overall experience for attendees, boosting the event's reputation and encouraging repeat visits.

Given the strength of the correlation, the null hypothesis, which posits that there is no significant relationship between socio-economic factors and the dependent variable, is rejected. This statistical outcome confirms that socio-economic factors significantly influence key aspects of the event, including visitor engagement, economic impact, infrastructure growth, and overall tourism development.

Consequently, it can be inferred that Christmas Village has a significant and positive impact on tourism development in Akwa Ibom State. The findings suggest that the event not only serves as a festive attraction but also acts as a catalyst for broader economic growth and infrastructural development within the region. By attracting a diverse range of visitors, particularly those from higher socio-economic backgrounds, the Christmas village can stimulate local businesses, create employment opportunities, and enhance the visibility of Akwa Ibom State as a desirable tourist destination. This clearly shows that improving socio-economic conditions can have positive environmental implications. For example, increased education can lead to greater environmental awareness and a stronger emphasis on sustainable practices. Higher income levels may enable individuals to invest in environmentally friendly technologies and support sustainable tourism initiatives.

Table 5: Total Revenue Generated

	Frequency	Percent
Over 100,000	176	46.0
100,000-500,000	106	27.7
50,000-25,000	63	16.4
Less than 25,000	38	9.9
Total	383	100.0

Table 6: Increased Business Activity

	Frequency	Percent
Significant increase	144	37.6
Moderate increase	131	34.2
Minor increase	95	24.8
No increase	13	3.4
Total	383	100.0

Tables 1 to 6 indicate that the Christmas Village creates an atmosphere where people from different ethnic and social backgrounds can interact and celebrate together. This interaction fosters unity, reduces social tensions, and strengthens community bonds. Visitors from other states and countries engage with locals, leading to cultural exchange and mutual appreciation. The Ibom Christmas Village provides a safe and festive space for families to bond and create lasting memories. The event attracts individuals of all age groups, from children enjoying amusement rides to the elderly reliving traditional performances. This multi-generational appeal strengthens family and social ties. Findings from the research indicate that, to accommodate the influx of visitors, the state government made efforts by improving road networks and transport facilities around the Christmas Village venue. Major roads leading to the event site have been upgraded, easing traffic congestion and enhancing accessibility. These improvements remain beneficial beyond the festive period, improving overall urban mobility. Due to an increase in tourist arrivals during the Christmas period, the hospitality sector in Akwa Ibom has seen substantial growth. Hotels, lodges, and guesthouses experience high occupancy rates during the festival, prompting investments in additional accommodation facilities. Some entrepreneurs have established short-term rental services to meet the growing demand. The success of the Christmas Village has also led to improvements in public utilities such as electricity, water supply, and waste management. The state government has upgraded lighting systems, enhanced sanitation facilities, and deployed additional security personnel to ensure the safety of attendees. These infrastructural enhancements contribute to the long-term development of Akwa Ibom as a tourism-friendly state.

The findings from the study reveal that the Christmas Village in Akwa Ibom State has significantly contributed to tourism development across various dimensions, including economic growth, social engagement, and cultural promotion. Economically, the event has stimulated local commerce through increased visitor spending, job creation, and business growth, benefiting sectors such as hospitality, transportation, and retail. Local businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, reported increased visibility and profitability during the festive season. Socially, the Christmas Village fostered community participation, with residents actively engaging in event organisation, volunteering, and cultural exhibitions. The event also served as a platform to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Akwa Ibom, attracting tourists from within and outside Nigeria and enhancing the state's cultural identity.

The study further reveals that the Christmas Village played a pivotal role in promoting Akwa Ibom as a tourist destination, attracting a diverse demographic, particularly younger, educated, and economically active visitors. A high level of visitor satisfaction was recorded, with many expressing a willingness to revisit the event, thereby boosting local tourism through repeat visits and word-of-mouth promotion. Infrastructure development, though indirectly influenced by the event, has seen notable improvements in public spaces and facilities. However, challenges remain regarding venue availability, highlighting the need for increased investments in infrastructure to support future editions of the event. The results also point to the event's commitment to environmental sustainability, with effective measures implemented for waste management and eco-friendly practices, though continuous improvements are necessary to enhance environmental impact reduction.

4. 2 Discussions

Findings of the study relied on statistical analysis, questionnaire administration and discussion of data collection based on the objectives are presented below. Table 4.1 shows the demographic details of the respondents. In terms of gender, 33.16% of the respondents were male while the remaining (66.84) were female. Regarding age, 26.37% were between the ages of 18-24 years, 21.93% were between the ages of 22-34 years, 15.67% were between the ages of 35-44 years, 20.89% were between the ages of 45-54 years while 15.14% were above 54. 28.46% of the respondents were married, singles were 54.31%, 12.53% were

Widow/widower while the least percent (4.70%) were divorced. The literacy level of respondents shows that 38.38% had FSLC and 36.29% had SSCE while 25.33% had tertiary education. Most of the respondents (26.37%) were unemployed, 21.93% were students, with another 21.93% as retired, 20.895 were employed while 15.67% of the respondents were self-employed.

The results suggest that the typical Christmas village tourist in Uyo is likely to be younger, with a mean age score of 2.7650, which approximately 55.3% when expressed as a percentage. This indicates that the majority of visitors are likely from a younger demographic, possibly including young adults and middle-aged individuals who are more inclined to engage in festive events and social activities. This age group is generally more receptive to new experiences, making them an ideal target audience for the Christmas village initiative. In terms of income level, the mean score of 1.8903 approximately 37.8%, suggesting that visitors tend to have a relatively higher income. This finding implies that the typical tourist likely possesses sufficient disposable income, which could enhance spending on entertainment, food, merchandise, and other services within the Christmas village. Higher income levels among visitors also increase the potential for economic benefits to local businesses and vendors participating in the event.

Regarding educational attainment, the mean score of 1.8695 corresponds to approximately 37.4%, indicating that a significant portion of tourists are likely to have higher education qualifications, such as tertiary education degrees or equivalent certifications. This suggests that visitors may be more informed, value cultural experiences, and have a higher appreciation for organized events, which could contribute to the overall success and reputation of Christmas village. The employment status of visitors shows a mean occupation score of 3.1645, approximately 63.3%. This suggests that the majority of tourists are likely to be employed, either in formal or informal sectors. Employed individuals typically have stable financial resources, making them more likely to participate in leisure activities and contribute economically to the local market through spending on goods and services offered within the Christmas village. The geographic distribution of visitors, with a mean score of 2.1149 (approximately 42.3%), indicates that most tourists are likely to reside in urban areas. Urban dwellers tend to have better access to information, infrastructure, and transportation, making it easier for them to attend such events. Additionally, city residents often seek recreational activities that provide a break from routine urban life, enhancing the appeal of a festive and immersive experience like a Christmas village. The mean gender score of 1.6710 approximately 33.4%, suggesting a slight skew towards one gender, possibly indicating a higher proportion of female attendees if the scoring system follows a binary classification where lower scores represent female respondents. This could reflect a trend where women are more engaged in holiday-themed activities, family outings, or festive shopping.

This clearly shows that understanding the demographic profile of tourists can inform environmental sustainability efforts. For example, targeting younger, more environmentally conscious segments through educational campaigns and sustainable offerings can encourage eco-friendly behavior among visitors. Findings from study indicate that the Ibom Christmas Village has had a profound impact on tourism development in Akwa Ibom State. The event has contributed significantly to economic growth, cultural preservation, social integration, and infrastructural development. These impacts demonstrate how seasonal tourism activities can transform a local economy, promote heritage, and enhance the overall well-being of a community.

The findings reveal that the event generates millions of naira in revenue, providing direct and indirect financial benefits to individuals, businesses, and the government. The Christmas Village serves as a commercial hub where local businesses, entrepreneurs, and traders experience a significant increase in sales. Various business sectors, including food and beverage vendors, fashion designers, artisans, transportation providers, and accommodation services, all benefit from the increased influx of tourists. Many vendors report that their sales triple or even quadruple during the festival period compared to other times of the year.

The Ibom Christmas Village provides a marketplace for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to showcase and sell their products. Handmade crafts, locally produced textiles, and indigenous artworks find a ready market among visitors. The festival thus stimulates economic activity and enhances entrepreneurial growth in the state. The findings also indicate that the Ibom Christmas Village creates a significant number of temporary and permanent jobs. The festival requires a large workforce to handle logistics, security, entertainment, catering, and other essential services. Event organizers hire workers to manage ticketing, stage setup, sound systems, cleaning, and other operational needs. Musicians, cultural performers, and artisans also benefit from employment opportunities created by the event. Beyond direct

employment, the event provides indirect job opportunities for transport operators, fashion designers, photographers, and hospitality workers. The increase in demand for services such as car rentals, hotel bookings, and catering expands employment opportunities across different sectors. Another important economic contribution of the Ibom Christmas Village is the revenue it generates for the government through taxes, permits, and sponsorship deals. The state government earns revenue from business registrations, vendor permits, ticket sales, and advertising fees. These funds can be reinvested into further tourism development and infrastructure projects. The success of the Christmas Village has positioned Akwa Ibom State as a viable destination for tourism investment. Private investors, recognising the potential of tourism in the region, are increasingly interested in funding tourism-related projects, including hotels, recreational parks, and transport facilities.

The study clearly revealed that the development of a Christmas Village in Uyo Capital City is primarily driven by active community participation. The findings suggest that there is widespread enthusiasm among residents and visitors for a festive event of this nature, which has the potential to become a major seasonal attraction. This strong public interest reflects a genuine demand for recreational and cultural experiences that foster social interaction, community bonding, and a vibrant festive atmosphere. The positive public reception indicates that the Christmas Village could become a highly anticipated annual event, drawing both local and international tourists to Uyo. The various activities that captured public interest are listed below;



Figure 2: Researcher with the Engineer at the stage construction site



Figure 3: Stage Construction workers



Figure 4: Stage Setting

Figures 2 - 4 show the construction of the stage, which spanned several weeks. The process commences with site preparation, which involves clearing the designated area and laying the foundation. Successively, the steel framework was erected, followed by the installation of flooring and other structural components. Concurrently, specialised teams work on electrical wiring, lighting installations, and sound system setups. The final stages involve aesthetic enhancements, such as painting, decorative installations, and the setup of multimedia equipment. The stage was equipped with state-of-the-art lighting systems, including programmable LED fixtures that offer dynamic lighting effects synchronised with performances. This involves the strategic placement of high-fidelity speakers and the use of digital soundboards for precise audio control. Visual elements, such as large LED screens, are also installed to provide live feeds and multimedia presentations, ensuring that even attendees at a distance can enjoy the performances fully.



Figure 5: Researcher during kiosk construction



Figure 6: Construction of Kiosk

Figures 5 - 6 show the construction of kiosks by carpenters at Christmas Village. Over 210 kiosks were constructed to accommodate micro-businesses operating within the Christmas Village, with employment numbers doubling from the 721 jobs created in previous years. Each Kiosk was subsidised by the governor to a hundred thousand naira (N100,000) from the two hundred thousand naira (N200,000) of the previous year. Entrepreneurs benefit from the high foot traffic, transforming ordinary vendors into full-fledged business owners. The design of the kiosks in the Ibom Christmas Village is a harmonious blend of functionality and aesthetics. Each kiosk is meticulously crafted to reflect the local architectural setting using bamboo stands, incorporating elements that pay homage to Akwa Ibom's cultural motifs. The structures are typically constructed using locally sourced materials, ensuring sustainability and promoting the local economy. Each kiosk is constructed to offer vendors sufficient space to display their merchandise while ensuring accessibility for visitors. The layout is meticulously planned to facilitate smooth foot traffic, allowing patrons to navigate the market with ease and explore the diverse offerings available.

The construction of the kiosk generated so much revenue for the carpenters constructing the kiosk, and this act has complete improve their livelihood.



Figure 7: Researcher at the tailoring section



Figure 8: The tailoring section

Figures 7 - 8 show that the tailoring section in the Christmas Village was strategically situated within the centre of the Christmas Village. The tailoring unit ensured that all nylon material for the kiosk roofing was designed and sewn within the premises of the Christmas Village to support the livelihood of the tailors. The area is designed to accommodate multiple tailoring kiosks, each reflecting the unique aesthetic of Akwa Ibom's rich cultural heritage. The kiosks are constructed using locally sourced materials, ensuring sustainability and promoting the local economy. The tailoring section was fully equipped with essential tailoring tools, including sewing machines, cutting tables, and display racks. The layout is thoughtfully planned to ensure that all tailoring work is done by people within the state. The tailoring section significantly contributes to the economic vitality of the Ibom Christmas Village. By providing a platform for local tailors to showcase and sell their creations. The presence of the tailoring section attracts a diverse clientele, including locals and tourists, leading to increased sales and revenue for the tailors. This economic boost enables tailors to invest in better equipment, expand their businesses, and improve their livelihoods.



Figure 9: Mini market



Figure 10: Hotel near the Christmas Village

Figure 13 shows the mini market that was established before the commencement of the Christmas Village, where workers on the site can buy food and drinks during break times before commencing their work again. The mini market is strategically designed to accommodate a multitude of vendors within the expansive grounds of the Ibom Christmas Village. The mini market serves as a significant economic catalyst during the festive season. By providing a platform for micro-businesses, it stimulates local entrepreneurship and creates employment opportunities. Figure 14 shows the hotel around the Christmas village. The Ibom Christmas Village attracts numerous visitors, leading

to high demand for accommodation. Booking in advance secures preferred lodging options.



Figure 4.15 Reseacher at the game section

Figure 15 shows the game section at the Ibom Christmas Village designed to provide entertainment that appeals to a wide audience. It features a range of games and activities, from traditional Nigerian games to modern amusement rides, ensuring that visitors of all ages find something enjoyable. The layout was thoughtfully organized to accommodate large crowds, with safety measures in place to ensure a secure environment for all participants. Feedback from attendees indicates that the game section is a major draw of the Ibom Christmas Village. Families appreciate the variety of activities available, noting that there is something for everyone to enjoy. The lively atmosphere, coupled with the opportunity to participate in both modern and traditional games, creates a memorable experience that keeps visitors returning year after year. The game section also generated money for owners of the game stand whenever a participate loses because money have been staked before anyone can be allow to play.

5. Conclusion

The setting up of Christmas village in Uyo appears to be a viable option, supported by strong public interest and favorable conditions. However, careful financial planning is crucial for its success. The findings revealed that the Christmas village in Uyo has the potential to attract a significant segment of the population, particularly those with higher disposable incomes and educational attainment. The findings strongly showed that improving socio-economic conditions is crucial for enhancing the quality and success of the event. By addressing factors such as income levels, education, and cultural diversity, event organizers can create a more positive and impactful experience for visitors and stakeholders. While the community demonstrates interest and willingness to participate, efforts are needed to further increase community engagement, particularly in terms of financial and in-kind contributions. Strategies to enhance community ownership and increase awareness of donation opportunities are crucial for the success of the Christmas village. The findings indicated that the Christmas village in Uyo Capital City has the potential to be a successful and impactful community event. However, addressing the identified challenges, particularly those related to venue availability, is crucial for its continued growth and sustainability.

6. Recommendation2

Based on the study, integrating sustainable infrastructure and waste management, promoting eco-conscious practices through targeted marketing, and enhancing community socio-economic benefits via local support and education. Additionally, effective communication, community involvement in monitoring, and environmentally sensitive venue development are crucial. Overall, a holistic approach combining environmental, social, and communicative strategies is essential for the Christmas village's long-term sustainability.

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