

Security Agencies and Tourists' Perception of Safety During Carnival Calabar in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Security remains a major determinant of the success and sustainability of tourism and cultural events across the world. Carnival Calabar, popularly regarded as Africa's biggest street party, attracts thousands of tourists, residents, investors, and cultural enthusiasts annually. However, the ability of the carnival to achieve its tourism and developmental objectives depends largely on the effectiveness of security agencies in ensuring public safety. This study examined the influence of security agencies on tourists' perception of safety and willingness to participate in Carnival Calabar in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study assessed the role of security agencies in crime reduction, crowd management, and enhancement of tourist confidence during the carnival. A survey research design was adopted, while data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 280 respondents comprising tourists, residents, vendors, carnival participants, and security personnel. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics including percentages, correlation analysis, ANOVA, and linear regression. The findings revealed that security agencies significantly contribute to perceived safety during the carnival. The regression result showed that perception of crime reduction significantly influenced tourist attendance ($\beta = 0.944$, $t = 47.534$, $p < 0.05$). Correlation analysis also revealed a strong positive relationship between security collaboration and effective carnival management ($r = 0.947$, $p < 0.01$). The study concluded that effective security measures improve tourist confidence, increase participation, and support the development of Carnival Calabar. The study recommended improved inter-agency collaboration, increased manpower, enhanced surveillance technology, and adequate funding for security operations.

Keywords: Security agencies, tourism development, Carnival Calabar, tourist perception, event security.

Introduction

Security is widely recognized as a critical factor in the success of tourism and cultural events globally. Large public events such as carnivals, festivals, concerts, and sporting activities often attract massive crowds, thereby creating significant security concerns relating to crowd control, crime prevention, emergency response, and public safety. In many countries, the effectiveness of security arrangements largely determines the level of participation, tourist satisfaction, and sustainability of such events.

Tourism scholars have consistently argued that tourists are more likely to visit destinations perceived as safe and secure. Insecurity, violence, terrorism, theft, and crowd-related incidents negatively affect tourists' confidence and reduce participation in tourism-related activities. Consequently, governments and event organizers increasingly invest in security infrastructure and inter-agency collaboration to protect participants and maintain order during major events (Ololo and Dieke 2022; Ajayi and Oyebade 2021).

In Nigeria, Carnival Calabar has emerged as one of the largest cultural and tourism events in Africa. Organized annually in Cross River State, the carnival showcases cultural heritage, entertainment, music, dance, and tourism attractions. The event attracts both local and international tourists and contributes significantly to the economic development of the state through revenue generation, hospitality services, and employment opportunities. Studies have shown that the Carnival contributes significantly to the state's economy through job creation, hospitality patronage, and infrastructural development (Okwajie et al., 2024; Egbe and Ojong 2018).

Despite its growing popularity, Carnival Calabar faces several security challenges associated with crowd management, theft, traffic congestion, disorderly conduct, and emergency response. The influx of large crowds during the carnival places enormous pressure on security agencies such as the Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Federal Road Safety Corps, and other relevant agencies responsible for maintaining safety.

The presence and effectiveness of security agencies therefore remain essential to ensuring a peaceful environment capable of attracting tourists and encouraging stakeholder participation. Effective security measures such as visible patrols, surveillance systems, checkpoints, traffic control, and inter-agency collaboration can significantly reduce crime and improve tourists' perception of safety (Okonkwo and Ekechi 2021; Ojo and Akintoye 2020).

However, despite the importance of security in tourism development, limited studies have specifically examined the role of security agencies in shaping tourists' perception of safety during Carnival Calabar. Existing studies have largely focused on the economic and cultural impacts of the carnival, with less emphasis on security management and tourists' confidence.

This study therefore sought to examine the influence of security agencies on tourists' perception of safety and willingness to participate in Carnival Calabar. The study contributes to the growing

discourse on event security and tourism development by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between security effectiveness and tourist participation.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine the influence of security agencies on tourists' perception of safety during Carnival Calabar in Cross River State. The specific objectives were to:

1. Examine the role of security agencies in maintaining safety during Carnival Calabar;
2. Assess tourists' perception of security effectiveness during the carnival;
3. Determine the influence of security measures on tourists' willingness to participate in the carnival;
4. Identify challenges confronting security agencies during the carnival; and

Literature Review

Concept of Security

Security refers to the protection of lives, property, and public spaces from threats, dangers, and criminal activities. It encompasses measures designed to ensure safety, orderliness, and stability within society. In tourism and event management, security involves strategies aimed at protecting tourists, participants, and stakeholders during public events. According to Buzan (1991), security extends beyond military protection and includes political, social, economic, and human dimensions. Security in tourism environments involves the prevention of crimes, crowd violence, terrorism, theft, and other risks capable of disrupting tourist activities. Security agencies therefore play a vital role in maintaining order during public gatherings by deploying personnel, controlling crowds, enforcing laws, and responding to emergencies.

Security and Tourism Development

Tourism development is strongly influenced by safety perception. Destinations perceived as unsafe often experience low tourist patronage and reduced economic benefits. Researchers have argued that tourists consider safety as one of the most important factors when selecting destinations.

Perić, Đurkin, and Vitezić (2018) observed that effective security measures enhance tourists' confidence and satisfaction during events. Similarly, Šerić, Jakšić Stojanović, and Bagarić (2022) found that tourists' perception of security significantly affects destination competitiveness.

Security also contributes to economic development by encouraging investment, increasing tourist inflow, and promoting positive destination image. Event tourism thrives in environments where participants feel safe and protected.

Security Agencies and Event Management

Security agencies are responsible for maintaining law and order during public events. Their functions include crowd management, traffic control, surveillance, emergency response, and crime

prevention. According to Ismail et al. (2022), collaboration among security agencies enhances effective event management and reduces operational challenges during festivals. Joint security operations improve information sharing and rapid response to incidents. During Carnival Calabar, agencies such as the police, civil defence corps, and road safety officials collaborate to ensure safety. Their visible presence contributes to public reassurance and deterrence of criminal activities.

Challenges of Event Security

Despite the importance of security agencies, several challenges affect their performance during mega events. These include inadequate manpower, poor funding, overcrowding, insufficient logistics, and weak inter-agency communication. Brondoni (2016) argued that increasing crowd size and evolving security threats complicate event management globally. In developing countries, logistical and technological deficiencies further limit effective security operations. Studies have also identified inadequate surveillance equipment and limited training as major constraints affecting event security management.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a survey research design because it enabled the researcher to obtain information directly from respondents concerning their perceptions and experiences regarding security during Carnival Calabar. The population of the study comprised tourists, carnival participants, vendors, residents, and security personnel involved in Carnival Calabar. A sample size of 280 respondents was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique involving purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling methods. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered directly to respondents during and after the carnival activities. The questionnaire contained close-ended questions relating to security presence, crime reduction, crowd control, tourist perception, and challenges confronting security agencies. Secondary data were obtained from textbooks, journal articles, government publications, conference papers, newspapers, and internet sources related to security and tourism development.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, while inferential statistical tools including Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and Linear Regression were used to test hypotheses and determine relationships among variables.

Results

Demographic characteristics of Respondent

The table 1 revealed different age groups and shows how many respondents fall into each age group, as well as what percentage of the total respondents each group represents. It was observed that 18–25, this group includes young adults. There are 72 respondents in this category, which

makes up 25.7% of the total respondents. While 26–35 followed as the next group, which includes people in their late twenties to mid-thirties. There are 88 respondents here, representing 31.4% of the total. Also, 36–45 category includes people in their late thirties to mid-forties. There are 52 individuals in this age group, which is 18.6% of the total. Meanwhile 46–55: This group consists of people in their late forties to mid-fifties. There are 40 respondents, making up 14.3% of the total. Whereas, 56 and above.

TABLE 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–25	72	25.7%
26–35	88	31.4%
36–45	52	18.6%
46–55	40	14.3%
56 and above	28	10.0%
Total	280	100%

Source: Researchers' fieldwork, (2025).

The table 2 presents information on gender distribution of the 280 respondents reveals a relatively balanced sample, characterized by a slight male majority. Specifically, males constitute the largest segment of the population at 52.5% (n=147), followed closely by females at 45.7% (n=128). The remaining 1.8% (n=5) of participants opted not to disclose their gender, reflecting an inclusive data collection approach. The narrow 6.8% margin between the two primary gender groups suggests that the sample is sufficiently diverse to provide a broad perspective, ensuring that the study's findings are not heavily skewed toward a single gender identity and lending greater credibility to any subsequent comparative analysis.

TABLE 2: Gender Distribution of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	147	52.5%
Female	128	45.7%
Prefer not to say	5	1.8%
Total	280	100%

Source: Researchers' fieldwork, (2025).

The data in Table 3 revealed a diverse distribution of respondents, where it was observed that Tourists/Visitors comprise the largest stakeholder group at 28.2% (f=79). This finding demonstrates the carnival's significant pull for external audiences, while the 22.5% (f=63) representation of Security Personnel discovered during the survey ensures that professional safety perspectives are well-integrated into the study. Furthermore, the inclusion of Business Owners (18.6%), Carnival Participants (17.1%), and a combined 13.5% from Government Officials and Residents reveals a comprehensive sampling strategy that accounts for the economic, administrative, and local impact of the event. Ultimately, the results demonstrate a well-rounded engagement across the entire carnival ecosystem, ensuring that the insights gathered reflect a holistic view of all involved parties.

TABLE 3: Stakeholder category of the respondents

Stakeholder Group	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Security Personnel	63	22.5%
Tourists/Visitors	79	28.2%
Carnival Participants	48	17.1%
Business Owners/Traders	52	18.6%
Government Officials	20	7.1%
Residents of Calabar	18	6.4%
Total	280	100%

Source: Researchers' fieldwork, (2025).

The findings revealed that respondents generally perceived security agencies as effective in maintaining safety during Carnival Calabar. Most respondents acknowledged the visible presence of police officers, civil defence personnel, and traffic control officials during the carnival.

The ANOVA result presented in table 4 showed a statistically significant contribution of security agencies to perceived safety during the carnival ($F = 650.546$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that security operations significantly influence participants' perception of safety.

TABLE 4: The ANOVA result

ANOVA

Perceived safety during carnival Calabar

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	377.479	4	94.370	650.546	.000
Within Groups	39.892	275	.145		
Total	417.371	279			

Correlation analysis in table 5 further revealed a very strong positive relationship between logistical challenges and security concerns ($r = 0.944$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that inadequate logistics, poor communication gadgets, and insufficient surveillance equipment contribute significantly to security concerns during the carnival.

TABLE 5: Correlation analysis

Correlations

		Most security concerns during carnival	Logistical challenge during carnival
Most security concerns during carnival	Pearson Correlation	1	.944**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	280	280
Logistical challenge during carnival	Pearson Correlation	.944**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	280	280

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Another correlation result presented in table 7 revealed a strong positive relationship between collaboration among security agencies and effective carnival management ($r = 0.947$, $p < 0.01$). The result indicates that coordinated operations and information sharing among agencies enhance effective management and public safety.

TABLE 7: Correlation result

Correlations

		collaboration among security agencies to ensure safety	Management during carnival Calabar
collaboration among security agencies to ensure safety	Pearson Correlation	1	.947**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	280	280
Management during carnival Calabar	Pearson Correlation	.947**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	280	280

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Linear regression analysis as presented in table 8 also showed that perception of crime reduction significantly influenced tourist attendance ($\beta = 0.944$, $t = 47.534$, $p < 0.05$). This finding demonstrates that tourists are more willing to participate in Carnival Calabar when they perceive the environment as safe. The findings further identified overcrowding, inadequate manpower, insufficient funding, poor planning, and limited surveillance technology as major challenges confronting security agencies during the carnival.

TABLE 8: Linear regression analysis

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.057	.084		-.681	.496
	Perception of crime reduction during Carnival	1.043	.022	.944	47.534	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Factors Influencing Tourist Attendance

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that security agencies play a significant role in maintaining safety and enhancing tourists' confidence during Carnival Calabar. The significant ANOVA result confirms that effective security operations contribute positively to perceived safety among participants.

The strong relationship between logistical challenges and security concerns suggests that operational deficiencies directly affect public confidence and increase perceived vulnerability. This finding agrees with Brondoni (2016), who argued that inadequate logistics and technological limitations weaken event security management.

The study also revealed that collaboration among security agencies significantly enhances carnival management. Effective communication, joint patrols, and coordinated crowd control operations improve operational efficiency and reduce security lapses. This finding supports Ismail et al. (2022), who emphasized the importance of inter-agency collaboration in festival security management.

Furthermore, the regression result indicates that tourists' willingness to attend Carnival Calabar depends significantly on their perception of safety. This finding aligns with Perić et al. (2018), who observed that safety and security strongly influence tourists' satisfaction and participation in event tourism.

The identification of challenges such as overcrowding, inadequate funding, and manpower shortages suggests the need for continuous improvement in security planning and resource allocation. Night events and entertainment venues were particularly identified as difficult areas to secure due to increased crowd density and social activities. The findings demonstrate that security effectiveness is a major determinant of successful carnival management, tourist participation, and tourism development.

Conclusion

The study examined the influence of security agencies on tourists' perception of safety during Carnival Calabar in Cross River State. The findings established that security agencies significantly contribute to maintaining safety, reducing crime, enhancing tourist confidence, and promoting effective carnival management. The study further revealed that effective security measures positively influence tourists' willingness to participate in the carnival. However, challenges such as overcrowding, logistical deficiencies, inadequate manpower, and insufficient funding continue to affect security operations.

The study therefore concludes that strengthening security management is essential for sustaining the growth and development of Carnival Calabar as a major tourism and cultural event in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should increase funding for security operations during Carnival Calabar.
2. Security agencies should improve inter-agency collaboration and information sharing.
3. Modern surveillance technology such as CCTV cameras and drones should be deployed during the carnival.
4. More security personnel should be recruited and strategically deployed, especially during night events.

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