

Residents' perceptions of the sociocultural effects of cultural festivals in Igala Kingdom, Nigeria

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Abstract

Cultural festivals constitute important platforms for the expression, preservation and transmission of indigenous heritage and may influence the social and cultural life of host communities in significant ways. This study examined the sociocultural impacts of *Egwu*, *Egbe*, *Eka* and *Ogani* cultural festivals on host communities in Igala Kingdom, Nigeria. The study adopted a mixed-method research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Three Local Government Areas—Dekina, Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu and Ibaji—and nine host communities were purposively selected for the study. A sample of 400 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane formula, while 48 key informants were selected through snowball sampling. Structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. Out of the 400 questionnaires administered, 370 were validly completed and returned. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores and chi-square statistics, while qualitative data were coded and analysed thematically. The findings revealed predominantly positive perceptions of the sociocultural effects associated with the festivals. The chi-square analysis revealed a statistically significant association between respondents' Local Government Areas and their perceptions of the sociocultural effects of the festivals, $\chi^2(6, N = 370) = 91.48, p < .001$, with Cramer's $V = .352$. Qualitative findings further revealed that the festivals promote social integration, family reunion, cultural revitalization, community pride and intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. However, concerns were identified regarding resource wastage, child labour, substance use, language barriers and possible external influences on traditional values. The study concludes that residents generally perceive the selected cultural festivals as having positive sociocultural relevance, although these perceptions vary across locations and include some reported negative consequences.

Keywords: Cultural festivals, sociocultural impacts, host communities, cultural heritage, Igala Kingdom, community identity.

Introduction

Cultural festivals have increasingly become important components of cultural tourism and destination development because they provide opportunities for communities to display their history, traditions, beliefs, artistic expressions and indigenous ways of life. Beyond their recreational function, festivals provide social spaces where residents and visitors interact, cultural knowledge is transmitted and collective identities are publicly expressed. Cultural events can therefore contribute to community cohesion, cultural pride and the preservation of heritage while simultaneously exposing host communities to new social and cultural influences. Recent research continues to demonstrate that the impacts of festivals are multidimensional and may include both beneficial and adverse consequences for host communities (Abbasian, 2023; Agbabiaka, 2026;

Ayanlowo & Bui, 2025). The sociocultural significance of festivals is particularly important in communities where oral traditions, indigenous performances, food, music, dance, folklore, masquerades and communal participation constitute important mechanisms for preserving collective memory. Festivals create occasions for these cultural expressions to be performed publicly and transferred between generations. They can also provide opportunities for younger members of communities to learn cultural practices that might otherwise be weakened by modernization, migration and changing lifestyles. Recent studies suggest that cultural tourism destinations can strengthen social cohesion when cultural expressions, destination management and community spaces encourage interaction and participation (Luo et al., 2024).

Festivals may also create opportunities for social integration. The gathering of people from different communities and cultural backgrounds allows residents to encounter alternative lifestyles, beliefs and practices. Abbasian (2023), for instance, found that festival participation can facilitate social integration and inclusion by creating spaces for interaction among people from different backgrounds. Similarly, research on cultural tourism destinations has shown that cultural expressions and appropriate destination management can contribute to social cohesion within host communities (Luo et al., 2024). These findings suggest that festivals should not be regarded merely as entertainment activities but also as social institutions through which communities negotiate identity, belonging and cultural interaction. The relationship between festivals and host communities, however, is not exclusively positive. The arrival of large numbers of visitors may generate congestion, waste, noise, pressure on local resources and other social disturbances. Increased interaction between visitors and residents may also contribute to changes in local lifestyles, values and traditional practices. Recent evidence from Southwestern Nigeria demonstrates that festival tourism produces both positive and negative impacts on host communities, highlighting the need for impact mitigation and effective festival management (Agbabiaka, 2026). Similarly, a recent study of tourism development in Nigeria's Niger Delta found that perceived sociocultural effects can improve residents' quality of life, while negative sociocultural impacts—including social problems, cultural conflicts and discomfort—can undermine residents' well-being (Ejikeme, 2025). Thus, the sociocultural consequences of festivals need to be assessed from both positive and negative perspectives.

Nigeria possesses a rich cultural heritage expressed through numerous traditional festivals celebrated by different ethnic groups. Cultural festivals such as the Osun-Osogbo Festival, Ojude-Oba Festival, Eyo Festival and Calabar Carnival have attracted considerable attention because of their cultural and tourism significance. Recent research has demonstrated that festivals in Nigeria can contribute to cultural preservation, community pride, tourism development and local participation, although challenges relating to infrastructure, marketing, management and sustainability remain evident. Ejikeme (2024), for example, identifies indigenous festivals as important platforms for cultural tourism, preservation of indigenous practices and promotion of cultural identity. Similarly, research on the Inyi cultural festival indicates that festival activities can stimulate community participation and provide opportunities for local cultural expression and economic activity.

Within this broader Nigerian context, the cultural festivals of the Igala people constitute an important but relatively under-researched aspect of the country's cultural heritage. The Igala people occupy an area around the confluence of the Benue and Niger rivers in present-day Kogi State, Nigeria. Igala land covers approximately 8,000 square kilometres, and its strategic geographical location has historically facilitated interaction with neighbouring Nigerian peoples and external groups (Miachi, 2012). The cultural life of the Igala people is expressed through traditional institutions, indigenous knowledge, ceremonies, festivals, music, dance, masquerades, food and

other forms of cultural performance (Laguo & Diminyi, 2025). Among the festivals celebrated in different Igala communities are Egwu, Egbe, Eka and Ogan. These festivals provide occasions for community members to return to their ancestral communities, participate in cultural activities, interact with relatives and visitors, and publicly display aspects of Igala heritage. They therefore represent potentially important platforms for social interaction, cultural revitalization, community identity and the intergenerational transmission of indigenous knowledge.

The growing visibility of indigenous festivals and their exposure to visitors may, however, generate complex consequences for host communities. Interaction between residents and visitors can promote cultural exchange, social integration and openness to other cultural perspectives, but it can also expose communities, particularly younger people, to external lifestyles, behaviours and values (Diminyi et al., 2022). Similarly, modernization and the increasing tourism orientation of traditional festivals may generate tensions between the preservation of cultural authenticity and the adaptation of festivals to contemporary audiences. Language, commercialization, changing patterns of participation and the management of large gatherings may further shape residents' experiences of festivals. Consequently, the sociocultural effects of indigenous festivals cannot be assumed to be uniformly positive or identical across host communities; they require empirical examination from the perspective of the people who experience and participate in them (Danie et al., 2020). Although the sociocultural consequences of festivals have received increasing scholarly attention, important empirical and contextual gaps remain. Existing studies have examined festival participation and social integration (Abbasian, 2023), social cohesion in cultural tourism destinations (Luo et al., 2024), community resilience associated with the Calabar Carnival (Ayanlowo & Bui, 2025), tourism and residents' quality of life in the Niger Delta (Ejikeme, 2025), and the positive and negative effects of major festivals in Southwestern Nigeria (Agbabiaka, 2026). These studies provide valuable evidence that festivals and cultural tourism can strengthen social relationships, cultural identity and community resilience while simultaneously generating undesirable consequences. However, their findings cannot automatically be generalized to indigenous festival settings in Igala Kingdom because festival meanings, forms of participation, cultural practices and host-community experiences are embedded within particular sociocultural contexts.

More specifically, empirical knowledge of Igala festivals has remained comparatively limited. Previous research has identified challenges associated with developing cultural tourism through local festivals in Igala communities (Diminyi et al., 2022), while other scholarship has documented aspects of Igala cultural heritage and festival-related tourism (Laguo & Diminyi, 2025; Abutu, 2018; Miachi, 2012). Nevertheless, insufficient attention has been devoted to how residents themselves perceive the sociocultural effects of individual indigenous festivals across different host communities within Igala Kingdom. In particular, there is limited comparative empirical evidence on Egwu, Egbe, Eka and Ogan festivals concerning their roles in social and cultural integration, family and community cohesion, cultural revitalization, community identity, cultural learning and the transmission of indigenous heritage. Equally important, relatively little is known about whether residents' perceptions of these effects are consistent across different Igala host communities or vary according to local festival and community contexts.

The need to understand festival effects through complementary forms of evidence is imperative. Quantitative measures of residents' perceptions can indicate the pattern and distribution of perceived festival effects, but they may provide limited explanation of how residents experience cultural interaction, family reunion, cultural revitalization, identity formation and emerging social challenges. Conversely, qualitative accounts can provide contextual depth but may not indicate how widely particular perceptions are shared among the wider study population.

Examining the phenomenon through a mixed-methods approach therefore provides an opportunity to bring quantitative patterns into dialogue with the lived accounts and interpretations of community members and knowledgeable festival stakeholders. Against this background, this study examines the perceived sociocultural effects of Egwu, Egbe, Eka and Oguni cultural festivals on host communities in Igala Kingdom, Nigeria. Rather than treating Igala cultural festivals as a homogeneous phenomenon, the study draws evidence from nine host communities across Dekina, Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu and Ibaji Local Government Areas and considers variations in residents' perceptions across the three locations. It specifically examines social and cultural integration, family and community cohesion, cultural revitalization, community identity, cultural learning and the transmission of indigenous knowledge, while also identifying perceived undesirable consequences associated with festival activities.

Literature review

Cultural festivals

Cultural festivals are organized social and cultural events through which communities celebrate, display and transmit elements of their shared heritage. They may involve traditional music, dance, food, dress, folklore, religious or historical ceremonies, masquerades, sporting activities, storytelling, crafts and other forms of indigenous expression. Unlike ordinary entertainment events, cultural festivals are closely connected to the history, identity and values of the communities in which they occur (Laguo & Diminyi, 2025). They provide structured occasions for cultural practices to be performed publicly and experienced collectively. The tourism significance of cultural festivals derives partly from their ability to transform cultural resources into experiences that can attract visitors. Festivals can create opportunities for residents to display their cultural heritage while allowing visitors to encounter the traditions of host communities. Ejikeme (2024) argues that indigenous festivals possess considerable potential for cultural tourism because they can promote cultural diversity, preserve indigenous practices and strengthen cultural identity. Similarly, recent studies of Nigerian festivals demonstrate that cultural events can generate community-level benefits while also producing challenges that require appropriate planning and management (Agbabiaka, 2026).

Cultural festivals may also be understood as temporary social spaces in which normal social relationships are intensified and cultural boundaries become more visible. Residents who may live in different towns or cities often return to their communities during festival periods, creating opportunities for family reunification and renewed social relationships (Laguo & Diminyi, 2025). Visitors from outside the community also become temporary participants in the cultural environment. Consequently, festivals can facilitate social interaction, cultural exchange and the development of community networks. In the Igala context, festivals such as *Egwu*, *Egbe*, *Eka* and *Oguni* constitute important expressions of indigenous cultural heritage. Their activities provide opportunities for the performance of traditional practices and for younger generations to encounter aspects of Igala history and identity (Abutu, 2021). The continued celebration of these festivals can therefore contribute to cultural continuity by providing a social setting in which cultural knowledge is demonstrated and transmitted.

Sociocultural impacts

Sociocultural impacts refer to changes that tourism, festivals or other forms of development produce in the social relationships, cultural values, lifestyles, identity, traditions and quality of life of people within host communities. Such impacts may be positive or negative and may occur at

individual, family, community or wider societal levels. Perceived sociocultural effects may include increased social interaction, community cohesion, cultural pride, preservation of traditions, intercultural understanding, development of cultural skills and improved recognition of local heritage (Abutu, 2021). Festivals may strengthen community identity by creating opportunities for residents to participate in activities that symbolize their shared history and cultural values. They may also provide opportunities for younger people to learn indigenous practices and for older generations to pass cultural knowledge to them (Diminyi et al., 2022). The social dimension of festival impacts is particularly associated with relationships among community members and between residents and visitors. Festivals bring people together and can create opportunities for interaction that may strengthen friendships, family ties and community networks. Research on cultural tourism destinations has shown that cultural expressions and destination management can influence social cohesion, indicating that the social consequences of cultural tourism are closely related to how cultural spaces are organized and managed (Luo et al., 2024).

The cultural dimension concern changes in cultural identity, traditions, values, language, heritage and patterns of cultural expression. Festivals can strengthen these elements by providing opportunities for public performance and recognition. However, tourism and increased contact with external visitors may also create cultural diffusion and changes in traditional practices (Diminyi et al., 2025). Thus, cultural festivals may simultaneously function as mechanisms of cultural preservation and cultural transformation. Negative sociocultural impacts may include cultural commodification, erosion of traditional values, substance abuse, social conflict, congestion, noise, inappropriate behaviour and other disturbances. Recent evidence from Nigerian tourism destinations shows that tourism development can simultaneously generate positive sociocultural benefits and negative consequences such as crime, substance abuse, cultural conflict and discomfort among residents (Ejikeme, 2025). This duality demonstrates why festival impact assessment should not focus exclusively on benefits.

Suffice to say that, for the purpose of this study, sociocultural impacts are principally understood in terms of changes in social relationships, community interaction, well-being, cultural identity, traditions, values, cultural participation and the transmission of indigenous heritage. However, festivals may also generate environmental, public-health and resource-related consequences that interact with residents' social experiences. Accordingly, issues such as waste generation, resource use, disease concerns, congestion and noise are conceptually distinguished from the core sociocultural dimensions of the study. Where such issues are reported, they are treated as ancillary festival-related consequences that may influence residents' experiences and perceptions rather than as direct indicators of cultural impact.

Cultural festivals and social integration

Social integration refers to the process through which individuals and groups establish relationships, interact and develop a sense of belonging within a social environment. Cultural festivals can promote social integration by bringing together residents, visitors, families, community groups and people from different cultural backgrounds. During festival celebrations, people interact through performances, food, ceremonies, games, discussions and other shared activities. These interactions can increase cultural understanding and reduce social distance between groups. Abbasian (2023) reported that festival participation can support cultural integration and inclusion by providing opportunities for interaction among participants from different backgrounds. In a similar vein, Luo et al. (2024) stated that cultural expressions and destination management can contribute to social cohesion in cultural tourism destinations. For Igala communities, the presence of visitors from other parts of Nigeria and outside the country

during cultural festivals can create opportunities for intercultural interaction. Such encounters can expose residents to different lifestyles and perspectives while allowing visitors to learn about Igala culture. When appropriately managed, this interaction can promote cultural tolerance without necessarily undermining local identity.

Festival played an important role in integrating different lineages and groups through the renewal of kinship, identity and social relationships (Onipede, 2017). He further argues that festival rituals promoted peace, cooperation and social stability within the community. Participation in festivals can generate social, cognitive and affective benefits that encourage interaction and social harmony among culturally diverse groups (Lee et al., 2012). Orfega (2024) emphasize the capacity of festivals to reinforce cultural identity, promote cultural exchange, strengthen community values and contribute to social stability. Thus, cultural festivals can be regarded as platforms for social integration through which communities strengthen interpersonal relationships, reinforce collective identity, encourage cooperation and promote peaceful coexistence.

Cultural festivals and community cohesion

Community cohesion concerns the strength of relationships among people who share a geographical or cultural environment. Festivals can strengthen cohesion by creating occasions for collective participation and shared experiences. Family members living in different locations may return to their communities during festival periods, while local groups may work together to organize performances, ceremonies, hospitality and other festival activities. Such collective participation can reinforce social bonds and create a stronger sense of belonging. Recent research on cultural festivals also supports the relationship between festivals and community resilience. Ayanlowo and Bui (2025) stated that during festival celebrations the sociocultural and economic dimensions of the community are important to overall community resilience. According to them, cultural events such as festivals can serve as mechanisms through which communities strengthen their capacity, identity and collective response to change.

Ekechukwu et al. (2012) argue that cultural festivals are important social and cultural institutions through which communities celebrate their shared heritage, values, traditions and collective identity. Beyond their recreational and tourism functions, festivals provide spaces where members of a community gather, interact and participate in common cultural activities, thereby strengthening social relationships and community cohesion. Through music, dance, food, rituals, storytelling and other cultural performances, festivals create opportunities for individuals and groups to express a shared identity and reaffirm their sense of belonging to a particular community (Ekechukwu et al., 2012). Similarly, Zhang et al. (2019) maintain that regular cultural festivals can facilitate identity formation and strengthen emotional attachment to places by providing occasions for people to negotiate and celebrate their collective identities.

Community cohesion is further promoted through the participatory nature of festivals. The collective preparation and celebration of festivals encourage cooperation among different groups, including community leaders, youths, women, cultural associations, traditional institutions and visitors (Ekechukwu et al., 2012). Such interactions can generate trust, social networks and a sense of collective responsibility. In multicultural festival settings, participation has also been associated with enhanced psychological sense of community, social inclusion and interaction among groups that may otherwise have limited opportunities to engage with one another (Hassanli et al., 2021).

Cultural festivals and community revitalization

Cultural festivals can serve as important instruments for community revitalization by stimulating the social, cultural, economic and physical renewal of host communities. Community revitalization refers to deliberate efforts to restore or strengthen the vitality, attractiveness, economic activity and social wellbeing of communities whose cultural, economic or social resources may have experienced decline (Qu & Zollet, 2023). Cultural festivals contribute to this process by transforming local cultural resources into occasions for community participation, tourism promotion, entrepreneurship and investment. They can also restore interest in neglected cultural practices and create renewed community pride and place identity. Recent scholarship identifies festivals as potential catalysts for economic revitalization, social capital formation, environmental improvement and community wellbeing when they are incorporated into broader community-development strategies (Ghazali et al., 2025). Cultural revitalization involves the strengthening, renewal and continued practice of cultural traditions that may be threatened by modernization, migration, globalization or declining participation.

Cultural festivals provide public platforms for cultural performances and therefore offer opportunities for traditions to remain visible and relevant. Traditional music, dance, masquerades, folklore, indigenous cuisine, dress and sporting activities can be incorporated into festival programmes. Through repeated public performance, these cultural practices can be transmitted to younger generations and introduced to visitors. The process can strengthen community pride and increase awareness of cultural heritage. The importance of festivals in cultural preservation is particularly relevant in developing societies where rapid social change may weaken traditional practices. Ejikeme (2024) identifies indigenous festivals as potential instruments for preserving cultural practices and strengthening cultural identity. The revitalizing effects of festivals can be observed particularly through their capacity to attract visitors, generate income for local businesses, create employment and stimulate improvements in community infrastructure and services.

Cultural festivals and community identity

Community identity refers to the shared sense of belonging and collective characteristics through which members identify themselves with a particular community. Cultural festivals play a significant role in the construction, preservation and expression of community identity because they provide occasions through which people collectively celebrate their history, values, traditions and shared cultural heritage (Laguo & Diminyi, 2025). Festivals can strengthen community identity because they provide symbolic representations of the history, values and traditions of the community (Abutu, 2021). It provides visible and symbolic expressions of this identity through traditional activities during celebration. The public performance of indigenous traditions can therefore reinforce residents' awareness of their cultural distinctiveness. Community identity is particularly important where cultural traditions are increasingly exposed to external influences.

Festivals can create institutionalized occasions for communities to reaffirm their cultural identity while interacting with visitors. However, this process requires careful management because excessive commercialization or external influence may transform cultural practices in ways that weaken their original meanings. Consequently, participation in festivals enables community members to reaffirm who they are, where they come from and the cultural values that distinguish them from other groups. Zhang et al. (2019) observed that cultural festivals can strengthen collective identity by celebrating community values, historical experiences and cultural continuity. The identity-building function of festivals is also associated with place attachment, cultural pride and intergenerational continuity. Through collective participation, younger

generations are exposed to indigenous knowledge and cultural practices, while older generations have opportunities to transmit traditions and historical narratives.

Empirical review

Agbabiaka (2026) examined festival tourism impacts on host communities in Southwestern Nigeria, focusing on the Eyo, Ojude-Oba and Osun festivals. The study used 786 questionnaires administered to residents around festival locations and employed a mean index to categorize festival impacts into high positive, low positive, high negative and low negative dimensions. The findings showed that festivals produced both positive and negative impacts across the study locations. Although positive outcomes were identified, several negative impacts were also observed, leading the researcher to propose a Tourism Impact Mitigation Plan. The study is relevant to the present research because it demonstrates empirically that Nigerian festivals can generate substantial sociocultural benefits while simultaneously producing challenges requiring effective management. Ayanlowo and Bui (2025) investigated whether cultural festivals contribute to community resilience using the Calabar Carnival as a case study. The researchers adopted a convergent parallel mixed-method design, surveying 398 community members and conducting 15 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in Calabar. The study found that sociocultural and economic dimensions of the community significantly influenced overall community resilience. Qualitative findings further emphasized the importance of traditional rituals and beliefs in community resilience and highlighted the relevance of effective event planning and execution. The study provides important support for the argument that cultural festivals can extend beyond entertainment and contribute to community capacity and resilience.

Similarly, Ejikeme (2025) examined the impact of tourism development on the quality of life of residents of host communities in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. The study surveyed residents of communities associated with Tinapa Business Resort, Obudu Mountain Resort and Mary Slessor Cottage. Using data from 399 respondents, the study found that positive sociocultural, economic and environmental impacts of tourism development were associated with improved quality of life, whereas negative impacts reduced residents' quality of life. The findings also revealed that tourism development could strengthen cultural conservation and preservation of historical resources while simultaneously contributing to social problems, cultural conflicts, congestion and discomfort. The study is relevant because it reinforces the need to consider both positive and negative dimensions of tourism-related sociocultural change. Luo et al. (2024) examined social cohesion in cultural tourism destinations using survey data from 349 respondents in two tourism districts in Shanghai. The researchers employed structural equation modelling and identified cultural expressions, spatial features and management as important attributes of cultural tourism destinations. The findings indicated that cultural expressions can positively influence social cohesion. The study demonstrates that cultural tourism does not merely generate visitor experiences but can also influence social relationships among residents. Its relevance to the present study lies in its support for the proposition that the cultural and social organization of tourism spaces can contribute to community cohesion.

Ejikeme (2024) examined the potential of indigenous Inyi traditional festivals as instruments for cultural tourism promotion and development in Nigeria. The study emphasized the role of indigenous festivals in preserving cultural practices, attracting tourists, promoting national identity and generating socio-economic opportunities. It also identified challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, modernization and weak marketing. The study recommended stronger collaboration among government, the private sector and communities and emphasized sustainable approaches to festival development. The study is relevant to the present research because it

confirms the broader cultural significance of indigenous Nigerian festivals and the need to balance tourism development with cultural preservation. Abbasian (2023) examined festival participation as a mechanism for integration and inclusion, focusing on the Stockholm Fire Festival. Using a mixed-method approach involving participant observation and survey data from 280 participants, the study explored the relationship between festival participation and cultural integration. The study demonstrated that festivals can create opportunities for social interaction and cultural inclusion. Although the study was conducted outside Nigeria, its findings are relevant because they provide evidence that festivals can serve as social spaces through which people from different backgrounds interact and develop greater cultural understanding.

The empirical literature generally demonstrates that cultural festivals can contribute to social interaction, cultural preservation, community identity, social cohesion and community resilience. At the same time, the literature consistently warns that festivals and tourism can generate negative outcomes, including cultural conflict, social disturbances, resource pressure and other challenges. Recent Nigerian studies are particularly important because they demonstrate that the balance between positive and negative impacts depends on the nature of the festival, host-community conditions, participation and management (Agbabiaka, 2026; Ejikeme, 2025). However, the reviewed studies have largely focused on festivals and tourism destinations outside Igala Kingdom. Although recent research has begun to examine Nigerian indigenous festivals and festival tourism, there remains limited empirical evidence concerning the sociocultural consequences of *Egwu*, *Egbe*, *Eka* and *Ogani* festivals specifically. The present study addresses this gap by combining quantitative and qualitative evidence from host communities across Dekina, Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu and Ibaji Local Government Areas.

Methodology

Study Area

The Igala people occupy the area of land to the south of the lower reaches of the Benue and east of the Niger rivers at about the confluence of these two rivers (Miachi, 2012). The area is approximately between latitude 6°30 and 8°40 north and longitude 6°30 and 7°40 east and covers an area of about 8,000 square kilometres (Miachi, 2012). The two natural rivers form natural boundaries to Igala land on the west and north respectively. To the east is Idoma land and south northern Igbo of Nsukka. The strategic location of Igala land makes it a gateway into and out of the interior of the country and made possible contact with many other Nigerian peoples and, later, from about the first half of the 19th century (Miachi, 2012), with European adventurers, missionaries, trading and government agents. The northern edge of Igala land is occupied by Bassa-Komo, Bassa-Nge and Ebira-Koto, who are Igala non-speaking groups (Miachi, 2012).

Research design

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the perceived sociocultural effects of *Egwu*, *Egbe*, *Eka* and *Ogani* cultural festivals on host communities in Igala Kingdom. The quantitative component involved a structured questionnaire administered to residents of selected host communities, while the qualitative component comprised semi-structured interviews with key informants and three focus group discussions (FGDs). The use of the two approaches enabled the study to examine general patterns in residents' perceptions quantitatively while obtaining more detailed explanations of participants' experiences and interpretations of the festivals qualitatively (Diminyi & Ibuo, 2026).

Sampling procedure and sample size determination

The study employed a multistage sampling procedure involving purposive selection, proportionate allocation, location-based respondent selection and snowball sampling. The combination of these techniques was considered appropriate because the study required residents who had direct exposure to the selected cultural festivals as well as knowledgeable community stakeholders capable of providing detailed information about the history, organization and sociocultural significance of the festivals. At the first stage, Dekina, Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu and Ibaji Local Government Areas (LGAs) were purposively selected from Igala Kingdom because they contain communities associated with the cultural festivals investigated in the study and therefore provided suitable settings for examining residents' perceptions and experiences of festival activities. Selecting three LGAs also enabled the study to obtain evidence from different geographical and community settings within Igala Kingdom rather than relying on a single festival location.

At the second stage, Egwu, Egbe, Eka and Oganì festivals were purposively selected because they are established indigenous cultural festivals celebrated within the study area and involve cultural activities relevant to the objectives of the research. The inclusion of four festivals provided a broader basis for examining the sociocultural experiences associated with indigenous festival celebrations rather than drawing conclusions from a single cultural event. At the third stage, nine festival host communities were purposively selected, with three communities drawn from each LGA. Iyale, Egume and Dekina communities were selected from Dekina LGA; Odolu, Akpaya and Ofurachi were selected from Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu LGA; while Ejule, Ibaji and Onyedega were selected from Ibaji LGA. The communities were selected because of their association with the festivals under investigation and the participation or exposure of residents to festival-related activities.

The population used for determining the quantitative sample comprised 723,000 persons across the three selected LGAs: Dekina (352,300), Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu (198,500) and Ibaji (172,200). The survey sample was determined using Yamane's sample-size formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where n represents the required sample size, N represents the population of the study area and e represents the tolerable sampling error.

Based on the calculation, a sample of approximately 400 respondents was adopted for the questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was subjected to expert validation to establish its relevance, clarity, appropriateness and coverage of the study constructs. Three research experts reviewed the instrument: two from the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and one from the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, University of Calabar. Their observations and recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the instrument before field administration. The 400 questionnaires were allocated proportionately among the three LGAs according to their respective population sizes. Dekina LGA received 195 questionnaires (48.75%), Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu received 110 (27.50%), while Ibaji received 95 (23.75%). The LGA allocations were further distributed among the nine selected host communities. In Dekina LGA, 65 questionnaires were administered in Iyale, 60 in Egume and 70 in Dekina. In Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu LGA, 35 questionnaires were administered in Odolu, 35 in Akpaya and 40 in Ofurachi. In Ibaji LGA, 30 questionnaires were administered in Ejule, 30 in

Ibaji and 35 in Onyedega. Within each selected community, residents were approached at different locations to broaden coverage and reduce concentration on a single section of the community. Potential respondents encountered at the selected locations were randomly approached and invited to participate, subject to their willingness and familiarity with festival activities in the area. This location-based approach was used because a comprehensive sampling frame containing all eligible residents of the nine host communities was not available. Of the 400 questionnaires administered, 370 were validly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 92.5%.

For the qualitative component, participants were selected separately from the questionnaire respondents. Forty-eight key informants were identified through snowball sampling based on their knowledge of Igala traditions, festival organization and community affairs. They comprised three officials from the Kogi State Ministry responsible for culture and tourism, nine traditional rulers/community heads, nine chairpersons of festival organizing committees, nine community elders comprising men and women, nine youth leaders and nine women leaders. In addition, three focus group discussions (FGDs) involving 30 participants were conducted. FGD 1 comprised 10 participants, FGD 2 comprised 8 participants and FGD 3 comprised 12 participants. The FGD participants were purposively selected based on their knowledge of the festivals and their activities and included males and females, youths, elderly men and women, village heads/community chiefs, youth and women leaders, civil servants, traders/business owners, farmers, students and traditionalists. The diversity of participants enabled the study to capture perspectives from different social, occupational, age and community groups concerning the perceived sociocultural effects of the festivals. The qualitative data collected for the study included participants' accounts of their experiences of the selected cultural festivals, with particular reference to the 2025 festival celebrations where participants discussed recent festival experiences and associated sociocultural outcomes.

The interviews and FGDs were conducted using semi-structured questions focusing on participants' experiences and perceptions of the selected festivals, particularly in relation to social interaction, family and community cohesion, cultural identity, cultural revitalization, transmission of cultural knowledge and perceived negative consequences. The semi-structured format ensured consistency in the principal issues discussed while allowing the researchers to probe participants' responses and obtain further explanations where necessary (Diminyi & Lago, 2025). With the consent of the participants, the interview and FGD sessions were audio-recorded. Written field notes were also taken during the sessions to capture relevant observations and contextual information that could complement the audio recordings.

Table 1. Distribution of questionnaire sample across the selected host communities

LGA	Selected community	Questionnaires distributed
Dekina	Iyale	65
	Egume	60
	Dekina	70
	Subtotal	195
Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu	Odolu	35
	Akpaya	35
	Ofurachi	40
	Subtotal	110
Ibaji	Ejule	30

LGA	Selected community	Questionnaires distributed
	Ibaji	30
	Onyedega	35
	Subtotal	95
Total	9 communities	400

source: Authors' computation (2026)

Data analysis

Data were analyzed to reflect the research objectives and questions. In doing this, Codes were generated to identify respondents, their place of interview and what they said. Qualitative data were coded and transcribed into transcripts in their original form and analyzed consequentially in the form of narration, while descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages and mean scores, were used to summarize respondents' perceptions of the sociocultural effects of the festivals. A chi-square test of independence was used to examine the association between respondents' Local Government Areas and their perceptions of the sociocultural effects of the festivals at the 0.05 level of significance. Cramer's V was subsequently computed to determine the strength of the observed association.

More specifically, the study followed a convergent mixed-methods approach in which quantitative and qualitative evidence was used as complementary sources of data for addressing the research problem. The quantitative and qualitative datasets were analysed separately using methods appropriate to each form of data and subsequently integrated during the interpretation and discussion of the findings. Quantitative results obtained from the questionnaire were compared with themes emerging from the interviews and focus group discussions to identify areas of convergence, complementarity and divergence. While qualitative evidence was used to provide contextual explanations for some undesirable consequences identified in the quantitative findings. Questionnaire data were first analysed quantitatively using frequencies, percentages, mean scores and inferential statistics, while evidence from the interviews and focus group discussions was analysed qualitatively. The audio recordings were transcribed into textual form and considered alongside the corresponding field notes. The transcripts were read repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the data and identify recurrent ideas and patterns in participants' accounts. Relevant statements were assigned codes, after which related codes were grouped into broader categories. The categories were subsequently examined and organized into themes that represented recurring patterns across the qualitative data. The principal themes included social and cultural integration, family and community cohesion, cultural revitalization and community pride, language and cultural accessibility, and emerging social challenges associated with festival activities. Relevant participant accounts were used to illustrate and provide contextual support for the themes identified.

The credibility of the qualitative findings was strengthened through triangulation. Accounts obtained from different categories of participants were compared, while evidence from the key-informant interviews and FGDs was examined for areas of convergence and divergence. The qualitative findings were also considered alongside the questionnaire results during the interpretation of the findings. The use of audio recordings together with written field notes further enhanced the completeness of the qualitative records and provided complementary sources for interpreting participants' accounts (Diminyi & Ogoina, 2024). These procedures contributed to the credibility and comprehensiveness of the qualitative findings. The findings from both components

were subsequently brought together to determine whether the qualitative evidence confirmed, expanded upon or provided contextual explanation for the quantitative patterns.

Result

The study explored the sociocultural and environmental impacts of *Egwu*, *Egbe*, *Eka*, and *Ogani* festivals on the Igala people and host communities. Participants were asked to describe the changes they had experienced over time as a result of the organization and celebration of these festivals. The analysis of the interview and focus group discussion data revealed both positive and negative impacts, which were grouped into four major themes: social and cultural integration, family and community cohesion, cultural revitalization and community pride, and emerging social challenges. One of the most prominent themes emerging from the data was the contribution of festivals to social and cultural integration. Participants explained that the increasing number and diversity of visitors attending the festivals had created opportunities for interaction between Igala indigenes, other Nigerians and international visitors. These interactions exposed members of the host communities to people, lifestyles and practices beyond their immediate cultural environment. A participant from Egume community explained:

Due to the difference in audience and inflow of visitors to our land for these festivals, there has been lots of social and cultural integration because the attendees, both Kogi indigenes and non-Kogites, come together, and foreigners too. This has helped to open up the people to accept some things they are probably not used to.” (Respondents 7–10, Egume community).

The response suggests that festivals serve as social contact zones where people from different cultural backgrounds interact and exchange experiences. Such interaction can broaden the social outlook of host communities and promote cultural tolerance and openness. The finding further indicates that the impact of festivals extends beyond entertainment, as they provide opportunities for intercultural encounters and social learning.

The focus group discussions further revealed that festivals contribute to family reunification and community cohesion. Participants noted that festivals are structured around family participation, food, cultural performances and activities designed for different age groups. Consequently, they provide opportunities for members of families and communities who may live in different locations to return home and participate in shared cultural experiences. Participants from Dekina, Akpaya and Ibaji communities observed that the presence of traditional Igala foods at festivals also provided an avenue for visitors to experience aspects of Igala culture through cuisine: *“Festivals mainly involve families, food and culture, as well as programmes for different age groups. They impact on the host communities more socially and culturally because they serve as an avenue for reunion.”* (Respondents 6, 21–25 and 41–44, FGD 1, 2 & 3, Dekina, Akpaya and Ibaji communities). The finding demonstrates that festivals perform an important social bonding function. In addition to bringing people together, the inclusion of indigenous foods provides an informal mechanism through which cultural knowledge is transmitted to visitors. Food therefore becomes not merely a component of festival entertainment but also a medium through which elements of Igala identity and cultural heritage are communicated to non-Igala participants.

Another important theme identified from the data was cultural revitalization and community pride. Participants perceived festivals as platforms for preserving, displaying and transmitting cultural traditions to younger generations and visitors. The festivals provide opportunities for cultural expressions such as masquerade displays, traditional sports, folklore, music, dance and indigenous cuisine to be performed publicly. One participant from Onyedega community stated:

Considering the different age groups that make up the audience during our festival, I believe that the positive impacts on the community socioculturally have been quite good, especially in the area of shared experience, validation of community groups and revitalization of traditions. The general belief of the people is that festivals impact positively on host communities in a distinctive way. (Respondent 34, Onyedega community).

This account indicates that festivals contribute to intergenerational cultural transmission by bringing different age groups into the same cultural space. They also provide opportunities for community groups to gain recognition and validation. In this regard, festivals can strengthen collective identity and community pride by creating occasions where local traditions are publicly recognized and celebrated. The festival organizers similarly emphasized the role of the festivals in preserving historical assets and improving the aesthetic character of the host communities. According to the organizers of *Egbe*, *Egwu*, *Ogani* and *Eka*, the festivals contribute to the preservation of historical resources and encourage improvements in the physical appearance of the communities (Respondents 5, 15, 26 & 40, Dekina, Igalamela/Odolu and Ibaji).

Although participants generally identified positive sociocultural outcomes, the data also revealed concerns about the possible erosion or modification of Igala cultural values resulting from increased interaction with external visitors. The influx of visitors creates opportunities for cultural exchange, but it may also expose local communities to behaviours, values and lifestyles that differ from traditional Igala practices. Participants expressed concern that the increasing popularity of *Egwu*, *Egbe*, *Eka* and *Ogani* festivals could expose the Igala cultural system to external influences. Thus, the relationship between festivals and culture is not entirely positive or negative. Rather, festivals constitute spaces where cultural preservation and cultural change occur simultaneously. This finding is particularly significant because it demonstrates a potential tension between cultural openness and cultural authenticity. While interaction with visitors can encourage tolerance and cultural exchange, excessive external influence may gradually alter some traditional practices. Effective festival management therefore requires a balance between promoting cultural interaction and protecting the cultural values that constitute the identity of the festivals.

Qualitative data also revealed some unintended social consequences associated with festival activities. One example was the emergence of alcohol consumption among underage participants during activities organized to increase the participation of younger people. This suggests that efforts to make festivals more inclusive can sometimes produce unintended outcomes if appropriate safeguards are not established. Beyond substance use, the broader literature on festivals suggests that large gatherings can potentially create challenges relating to crowd behaviour, noise, congestion and other forms of social disturbance. In the context of the present study, however, such negative effects appeared to be limited and relatively localized, rather than widespread across the communities studied. Another challenge identified by participants was the language barrier. Respondents from Dekina and Ejule communities noted that some programmes at the 2025 *Egwu* festival were conducted exclusively in the Igala language. Although this reinforces the cultural identity of the festival, it may limit the participation and understanding of non-Igala visitors. One respondent explained:

There were little challenges in this year's (2025) celebration because I got feedback from some visitors who attended the *Egwu* festival that most of the programmes were only in Igala language, especially the seminar aspect. However, he suggested taking the festival to a higher level where it will serve as a medium for non-Igalas and foreigners alike to visit Igala land by having

all the programmes in English. (Respondents 12 & 38, Dekina and Ejule communities)

This finding presents an interesting cultural tourism dilemma. The use of the Igala language strengthens cultural authenticity and reinforces local identity, but exclusive use of the language may restrict the accessibility of festival programmes to visitors who do not understand Igala. A bilingual approach, in which important programmes are presented in both Igala and English, could therefore preserve cultural authenticity while improving inclusiveness and international accessibility.

Quantitative data presentation and interpretation

Table 2 presents respondents' perceptions of the sociocultural impacts of *Egwu*, *Egbe*, *Eka* and *Ogani* festivals in Igala Kingdom. The responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale comprising Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). A mean score of 2.50 and above indicates agreement, while a mean score below 2.50 indicates disagreement. The results reveal that the festivals have several notable positive sociocultural effects on the host communities. Respondents agreed that festivals provide opportunities for community residents to experience new activities ($M = 3.7$) and provide platforms for showcasing the unique traditional aspects of their communities ($M = 3.7$). These were the highest-rated positive sociocultural effects identified by the respondents. Respondents also agreed that festivals provide opportunities for community members to discover and develop cultural skills and talents ($M = 3.6$).

Similarly, respondents agreed that participation in the festivals exposes residents to diverse cultural experiences ($M = 3.5$), enhances community identity ($M = 3.5$), and brings people, families and groups together ($M = 3.5$). These findings indicate that the festivals function not only as entertainment events but also as platforms for cultural learning, social interaction, community identity formation and cultural expression. The findings further show that respondents agreed that the festivals provide opportunities to learn new things ($M = 3.4$), showcase new ideas ($M = 3.4$), strengthen friendships ($M = 3.4$) and contribute to the well-being of community members ($M = 3.4$). Community groups were also perceived to work together to achieve common goals through festival activities ($M = 3.2$), while the festivals were perceived to enhance the image of the host communities ($M = 3.2$).

In addition to the core sociocultural indicators, the questionnaire captured selected ancillary consequences associated with festival activities. Respondents agreed that festivals could encourage child labour ($M = 2.6$) and marginally agreed with the item relating to drug addiction ($M = 2.5$), both of which represent social concerns. Respondents also agreed that festivals could lead to waste of resources ($M = 3.5$). Resource wastage is not treated in this study as a direct sociocultural indicator; rather, it represents an ancillary resource-related consequence that may influence residents' perceptions of festival organization and sustainability. Similarly, the item concerning the spread of diseases ($M = 2.1$) reflects a public-health concern rather than a strictly sociocultural outcome and is therefore interpreted separately from the core social and cultural dimensions. Respondents generally disagreed that disease transmission constituted a notable consequence of the festivals. These findings suggest that although the overall sociocultural consequences of festivals are perceived positively, there are also potential undesirable consequences that require appropriate festival planning and management.

In contrast, respondents disagreed that festivals bring about disrespect ($M = 1.9$), encourage the spread of diseases ($M = 2.1$), encourage immorality ($M = 2.2$) or bring about prostitution ($M = 1.9$). The low mean scores indicate that these negative consequences were generally not

perceived as significant features of the festivals. Overall, the grand mean of 3.0 indicates a general tendency towards agreement with the positive sociocultural effects of the festivals. The result therefore suggests that *Egwu*, *Egbe*, *Eka* and *Ogani* festivals contribute positively to the sociocultural life of Igala communities by promoting cultural exposure, social interaction, community identity, cultural skills development, unity and the public display of indigenous traditions. Nevertheless, the findings also point to the need for effective management of potential negative consequences such as resource wastage, child labour and substance-related problems.

Table 2: Perceived Socioculturals effects of *Egwu*, *Egbe*, *Eka*, and *Ogani* festivals in Igala Kingdom

SN	item	SA	A	D	SD	N	X	Remark
1	The festival provides opportunities for community residents to experience new activities	1172 293	168 56	22 11	10 10	1372 370	3.7	Agree
2	Local residents who participate in the festival have the opportunity to learn new things	868 217	300 100	66 33	20 20	1254 370	3.4	Agree
3	The festival acts as a showcase for new ideas	800 200	432 144	36 18	08 08	1276 370	3.4	Agree
4	The festival bring about disrespect	176 44	210 70	130 65	191 191	707 370	1.9	Disagree
5	The festival provides my community with an opportunity to discover and develop cultural skills and talents	956 239	330 110	30 15	06 06	1322 370	3.6	Agree
6	I am exposed to a variety of cultural experiences through the community festival	840 210	423 141	20 10	09 09	1292 370	3.5	Agree
7	Friendships are strengthened through participation in the festival	764 191	423 141	40 20	18 18	1245 370	3.4	Agree
8	The festival leaves an ongoing positive cultural impact in my community	524 131	333 111	100 50	78 78	1035 370	2.8	Aagree
9	The festival encourages child labour	408 102	300 100	196 98	70 70	974 370	2.6	Agree
10	Community groups work together to achieve common goals through the festival	804 201	271 91	76 38	40 40	1191 370	3.2	Agree
11	The festival encourages the spread of diseases	184 46	105 35	382 191	98 98	769 370	2.1	Disagree
12	Community identity is enhanced through the festival	936 234	306 102	42 21	13 13	1297 370	3.5	Agree
13	The festival enhances the image of the community	548 137	594 198	36 18	17 17	1195 370	3.2	Agree
14	The festival bring about drug addiction	432 108	270 90	110 55	117 117	929 370	2.5	Agree
15	The festival helps to show others the unique traditional aspects of my community	1080 270	240 80	40 20	00 00	1360 370	3.7	Agree
16	The festival bring my community together, unite people, families and groups	788 197	519 173	00 00	00 00	1307 370	3.5	Agree
18	The festival encourages immorality	400 100	126 42	132 66	162 162	820 370	2.2	Disagree
19	The festival contributes to the well-being of community members	864 216	333 111	24 12	31 31	1252 370	3.4	Agree
20	The festival leads to waste of resources	888 222	402 134	22 11	3 3	1304 370	3.5	Agree
21	The festival bring about prostitution	00 00	6 2	688 344	24 24	712 370	1.9	Disagree
Overall Mean							3.0	Aagree

Source: Authors' computation (2026)

Table 3: Classifying variables into three categories (summary of table 2)

Dimension	Examples in the study	Treatment
Social	friendship, family/community unity, well-being, child labour, substance use, prostitution, social interaction	Core scope
Cultural	cultural experiences, cultural skills, community identity, traditional practices, cultural revitalization	Core scope
Environmental/resource-related	waste/resource wastage, disease/public-health concerns, congestion, noise	Ancillary/contextual issues, not core socio-cultural indicators

Source: Diminyi, 20206

Table 4 provides further evidence on respondents' overall assessment of the sociocultural impact of Igala cultural festivals across Dekina, Igalamela/Odolu and Ibaji Local Government Areas. Across the three study areas, 126 respondents (34.1%) strongly agreed and 110 respondents (29.7%) agreed that Igala cultural festivals have a positive impact on the sociocultural lives of host communities. Combined, these responses account for 236 respondents (63.8%), indicating that nearly two-thirds of the respondents expressed a positive perception of the sociocultural contribution of the festivals. In contrast, 79 respondents (21.4%) strongly disagreed, while 55 respondents (14.9%) disagreed, representing a combined 134 respondents (36.3%) who did not perceive the festivals as having a positive sociocultural impact. The responses also varied across the three Local Government Areas. In Dekina, 81 respondents strongly agreed and 77 agreed that the festivals have perceived sociocultural effects, while 18 strongly disagreed and 9 disagreed. This indicates a predominantly positive perception among respondents in Dekina.

In Igalamela/Odolu, 25 respondents strongly agreed and 22 agreed, while 23 strongly disagreed and 30 disagreed. The responses therefore show a relatively more divided perception of the sociocultural effects of the festivals in this area. In Ibaji, 20 respondents strongly agreed and 11 agreed, whereas 38 strongly disagreed and 16 disagreed. Thus, unlike Dekina, respondents in Ibaji demonstrated a more negative assessment of the overall sociocultural impact. The variation across the three locations suggests that perceptions of festival impacts may be influenced by local circumstances, the nature and scale of festival activities, community participation, exposure to visitors, and the benefits or challenges experienced by residents. The result is important because it shows that the sociocultural impact of festivals should not necessarily be assumed to be uniform across all host communities.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents' perceptions of the sociocultural effects of Igala cultural festivals by Local Government Area

Responses	Local Government Areas			
	Dekina	Igalamela/Odolu	Ibaji	Total
SA	81 (43.7%)	25 (25%)	20 (23.5%)	126 (34.1%)
A	77 (41.6%)	22 (22%)	11 (12.9%)	110 (29.7%)
SD	18 (9.7%)	23 (23%)	38 (44.7%)	79 (21.4%)
D	9 (5.0%)	30 (30%)	16 (18.8%)	55 (14.9%)
Total	185	100	85	370

Source: Authors' computation (2026)

Test of hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant association between respondents' Local Government Areas and their perceptions of the sociocultural effects of Igala cultural festivals.

The chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the association between respondents' Local Government Areas and their perceptions of the sociocultural effects of Igala cultural festivals. The result revealed a statistically significant association, $\chi^2(6, N = 370) = 91.48$, $p < .001$. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. Cramer's V was .352, indicating a meaningful association between respondents' locations and their perceptions of the sociocultural effects of the festivals. The result indicates that perceptions of the festivals differed significantly across Dekina, Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu and Ibaji Local Government Areas. However, the significant association should not be interpreted as evidence that the festivals caused the reported sociocultural outcomes.

To complement the chi-square test and determine the strength of the observed association, Cramer's V was calculated. The analysis produced a Cramer's V value of .352, indicating a meaningful association between Local Government Area and respondents' perceptions of the sociocultural effects of the festivals. This finding suggests that perceptions of the festivals differed across the three study locations, as also reflected in the descriptive results: respondents in Dekina expressed predominantly positive perceptions, those in Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu showed more divided perceptions, while respondents in Ibaji expressed comparatively less positive perceptions. The significant chi-square result indicates an association between respondents' locations and their reported perceptions of the sociocultural effects of the festivals. The quantitative evidence, when considered alongside the qualitative findings, suggests that residents generally perceived the festivals as contributing to social integration, family reunion, cultural exchange, community identity and cultural revitalization, although some negative consequences were also reported.

Table 5: Contingency table of respondents' perceptions by Local Government Area

Response	LGAs			Total
	Dekina O (E)	Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu O (E)	Ibaji O (E)	
SA	81 (63.00)	25 (34.05)	20 (28.95)	126
A	77 (55.00)	22 (29.73)	11 (25.27)	110
SD	18 (39.50)	23 (21.35)	38 (18.15)	79
D	9 (27.50)	30 (14.86)	16 (12.64)	55
Total	185	100	85	370

Note: O = observed frequency; E = expected frequency.

Table 6: Chi-square test of association between Local Government Area and perceived sociocultural effects of Igala cultural festivals

Statistic	Value	df	p-value	Effect size
Pearson Chi-square	91.479	6	< .001	Cramer's V = .352

N = 370.

Decision: The null hypothesis is rejected. There is a statistically significant association between respondents' Local Government Areas and their perceptions of the sociocultural effects of Igala cultural festivals.

Discussion

The study examined the sociocultural impacts of *Egwu*, *Egbe*, *Eka* and *Ogani* festivals on host communities in Igala Kingdom. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data indicate that the festivals have predominantly positive sociocultural implications, although some undesirable consequences were also identified. Festivals provide residents opportunities for new activities, highlighting their role in social interaction. These events unite individuals who may lack chances to connect. Qualitative findings show that the increasing diversity of visitors encouraged interactions among Igala indigenes, other Nigerians, and international guests, exposing residents to new people and lifestyles. This fosters broader social perspectives and cultural acceptance, aligning with Abbasian's (2023) view that festivals promote integration and inclusion. Traditional music, dance, folklore, masquerades, indigenous cuisine, and various forms of cultural expression serve as tangible representations of Igala identity. Qualitative evidence indicated that these festivals offer opportunities for such practices to be publicly showcased and passed down to younger generations, as participants noted that cultural revitalization, community pride, and the safeguarding of historical resources are key outcomes of the festivals thus, corroborating the report of Ejikeme (2024), who recognized indigenous festivals as valuable tools for preserving cultural practices and enhancing cultural identity.

The findings indicate that the festivals provide opportunities for residents to develop and demonstrate cultural skills and talents. This suggests that festivals can function as informal learning environments in which cultural knowledge is acquired through participation, observation and interaction. This finding aligns with Lago and Diminyi (2025) and Olojede (2025), who highlighted the role of cultural festivals in strengthening community cohesion and facilitating the transmission of cultural values across generations. Such opportunities are particularly important for younger generations because indigenous cultural knowledge is often transmitted through participation in communal activities rather than through formal educational institutions. The finding that festivals enhance community identity is also significant. Cultural identity is reinforced when communities publicly celebrate their history, traditions and values. The qualitative evidence indicated that festivals provide validation and recognition for community groups and strengthen community pride. Participants described the festivals as platforms through which traditions are publicly recognized and celebrated. This finding is consistent with recent research linking cultural expressions with social cohesion in cultural tourism destinations (Luo et al., 2024). Festivals encourage social bonding by strengthening family relationships and community networks. This is evident in the findings of this study that festivals bring people, families and groups together. Participants explained that festival activities involving families, food and cultural programmes provide opportunities for people who live in different locations to return home and participate in shared cultural experiences. Indigenous foods were also identified as a medium through which cultural knowledge is communicated to visitors. This finding corroborates the views of Diminyi et al. (2022).

The study also revealed that participants associated the festivals with friendship, community cooperation and well-being. Festival organization involves different forms of collective participation and may therefore provide opportunities for interaction and cooperation among community members. These findings are consistent with Ayanlowo and Bui (2025), who examined the relationship between cultural festivals and community resilience. The present

findings similarly suggest that cultural festivals can strengthen community capacity by creating opportunities for interaction, cooperation, cultural expression and collective participation. The study also revealed child labour, resource wastage and substance-related concerns among younger participants as undesirable consequences associated with festival activities. Participants additionally expressed concern about possible external influences on traditional cultural values. These findings demonstrate that festival development can produce unintended consequences if participation and activities are not properly regulated.

The relatively high mean score for waste of resources is particularly noteworthy. Large-scale festivals require the mobilization of financial, material and human resources, and poor planning may result in inefficient utilization. Although the study primarily focused on sociocultural impacts, resource wastage can indirectly affect community perceptions of festivals and the sustainability of festival organization. Agbabiaka's (2026) study similarly found that Nigerian festivals generate both positive and negative impacts, leading to the recommendation of a tourism impact mitigation plan. Another important finding concerns language. Participants reported that some programmes during the 2025 *Egwu* festival were conducted exclusively in Igala, which created difficulties for visitors who did not understand the language. The use of Igala strengthens cultural authenticity and identity, but exclusive use of the language can restrict wider participation. A bilingual approach that combines Igala and English in appropriate programmes could therefore improve accessibility without undermining the cultural identity of the festivals.

The study further revealed that perceptions of the sociocultural effects of the festivals were not uniform across the three Local Government Areas. In Dekina, 158 of the 185 respondents (85.4%) selected either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree," indicating predominantly positive perceptions of the sociocultural effects of the festivals. The pattern was different in Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu, where 47.0% expressed positive responses compared with 53.0% who expressed negative responses. Ibaji recorded the least positive pattern, with 36.5% expressing positive responses and 63.5% expressing negative responses. These variations indicate that the overall positive response pattern should not be interpreted as representing an identical festival experience across the three study locations. The significant chi-square result, $\chi^2(6, N = 370) = 91.48, p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .352$, further indicates an association between respondents' Local Government Areas and their perceptions of the sociocultural effects of the festivals. However, because the study employed a cross-sectional design and relied substantially on respondents' reported perceptions and experiences, the result does not demonstrate that the festivals caused the observed sociocultural outcomes. Rather, it suggests that perceptions of festival-related sociocultural outcomes vary meaningfully across the three Local Government Areas. Such variations may reflect differences in local festival contexts, community experiences and patterns of participation.

This finding reinforces the need for location-specific festival planning rather than assuming that a single management approach will be appropriate for all host communities thus supporting the findings of Diminyi et al. (2022), who reported poor management and organization of Igala festivals as a major challenge of developing cultural tourism in the area. Generally, the findings of this study have demonstrated that sociocultural benefits of *Egwu*, *Egbe*, *Eka* and *Ogani* festivals outweigh the perceived negative consequences. The festivals strengthen community identity, cultural expression, social interaction, family reunion, friendship, cultural learning and community pride. The negative consequences identified indicate that positive outcomes are not automatic. They depend on effective planning, community participation, cultural sensitivity and appropriate management of social and environmental challenges.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study examined residents' perceptions of the sociocultural effects associated with selected cultural festivals—Egwu, Egbe, Eka and Ogani—in Igala Kingdom, Nigeria. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents perceived the festivals as having important sociocultural relevance, particularly in relation to social interaction, family and community cohesion, cultural experiences, community identity, cultural revitalization and the transmission of indigenous cultural knowledge. The qualitative findings similarly showed that participants associated the festivals with opportunities for family reunion, social integration, cultural participation and expressions of community pride.

However, these perceptions were not uniform across the three Local Government Areas. Respondents in Dekina expressed predominantly positive perceptions, with 85.4% selecting either “Strongly Agree” or “Agree.” In Igalamela/Odolu/Odolu, responses were more divided, with 47.0% expressing positive perceptions and 53.0% expressing negative perceptions. Ibaji recorded the least positive response pattern, with 36.5% expressing positive perceptions compared with 63.5% expressing negative perceptions. The chi-square analysis confirmed a statistically significant association between respondents' Local Government Areas and their perceptions of the sociocultural effects of the festivals, $\chi^2(6, N = 370) = 91.48, p < .001$, with Cramer's $V = .352$.

The study also identified perceived challenges associated with festival activities, including child labour, substance-related concerns among younger participants, resource wastage, language barriers and possible external influences on traditional cultural values. These findings indicate that residents' experiences of cultural festivals involve both perceived benefits and concerns and that such experiences vary across locations.

Given the cross-sectional design of the study and its reliance largely on respondents' perceptions and reported experiences, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of perceived sociocultural effects and statistical associations rather than causal effects of the festivals. Nevertheless, the convergence between the quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrates the continuing importance that residents attach to cultural festivals as spaces for social interaction, cultural expression and the maintenance of community identity. Festival organizers and relevant cultural institutions should therefore strengthen inclusive community participation, cultural accessibility and safeguards against identified social concerns while remaining sensitive to differences in festival experiences across host communities.

The study also identified some undesirable consequences and challenges associated with festival activities, including child labour, substance-related concerns among younger participants, resource wastage, language barriers and possible external influences on traditional cultural values. While child labour and substance-related concerns fall within the social dimension of festival impacts, resource wastage is treated as an ancillary resource-related issue rather than a direct sociocultural indicator. These findings demonstrate that the consequences of cultural festivals may extend beyond strictly sociocultural dimensions and therefore require integrated and context-sensitive festival management.

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