

## SOCIOCULTURAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MOREMI HERITAGE SITE IN ILE-IFE, OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

Oyeleye, O.<sup>1,2</sup>, Bigon, L.<sup>1</sup>; Ogundare, O.M.<sup>2</sup>; Raheem, O. <sup>2</sup>; Adeniyi, E <sup>2</sup>, Oyeleye, G.T.<sup>3</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Tourism is a source of cultural development and diffusion. Moremi statue, a special heritage site located in Ile-Ife, a traditional urban area of the Southwest Nigeria. The city is known for its critical roles in the Yoruba customs and historical cultural developments. The interplay between the culture of the host community and that of the tourists cannot be overstressed. This study examined how Moremi tourist attraction has contributed to the sociocultural and economic life of the host community; and the participation level of tourists at Moremi festival. A systematic sampling was used to sample 377 households, while the first house along the street of the heritage site was selected at random, and subsequent houses were selected at every 3<sup>rd</sup> interval. The respondents were household heads or residents of at least 40 years of age. Findings revealed that larger proportion of the respondents with mean scores of 1.57 and 1.44 strongly agreed that Moremi Statue of Liberty enhances Yoruba cosmological belief and tradition, and tourists' participation in the annual festival of Moremi, respectively. The study concluded that investing in tourism infrastructure at the heritage site would enhance inter-cultural exchange between the host community and the tourists, and results into tourism development.

**Keywords:** Moremi Statute, Tourism, Culture, Ile-Ife, Development

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, tourism is very pivotal to the growth and development of heritage sites globally by promoting tangible cultural elements, such as museums and heritage sites; as well as intangible cultural elements, such as cultural events, festivals, languages, and ways of life *inter alia*. Tourism has been a source of cultural diffusion all over the world, where the culture of both the host community of the heritage site and that of the tourists influence each other, and sometimes wholly adopted. Over the years, culture is defined often alongside tourism, to the point where their distinction has become meddled (Seyed *et al.*, 2016). However, there are significant changes in the concepts of tourism and culture in recent time, and this further necessitates the concept of cultural tourism.

Tourism as a concept is becoming more difficult to define as many scholars from different academic backgrounds such as economies, urban planning, agriculture, geography,

archeology, history, business administration, and hospitality management among others are picking interest in tourism in the recent time. However, this study aligns with Page (2003), who sees tourism as the activities of a person or group of people traveling outside their usual environment for more than one day, but not more than one consecutive year for recreation, leisure, education, business, and other purposes. Tourism is an interplay of connectivity of economic, environmental and socio-cultural phenomena (Aydin *et al.*, 2024). Tourism is a deliberate business of travel that transcends the mobility nature of man. Culture is viewed as a complex whole, which delivers a unifying concept for the extensively varied way of life (Seyed *et al.*, 2016). Also, culture is defined by Spencer-Oatey (2008), as a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientation to life, beliefs, policies, procedures, and behavioral conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behavioral and his/her interpretations of the meaning of other people's behavior. Hofstede (1994) avers that culture is the collective programming of the mind and ways of life of a group of people which separates them from other people. Ayandele (1981) opines that culture is what man interposes between himself and his environment to ensure his safety and survival. Duro (2001) sees culture as an embodiment of

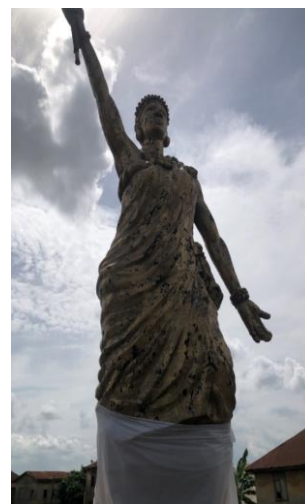
1. School of Architecture, Ariel University, Israel;
2. Department of Tourism Studies, Faculty of Culture, Osun State University, Nigeria;
3. Department of Educational Technology, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin,

people's attitudes to their traditional values which are essential for factors of development and progress. Culture is all that people have adopted, learnt, and preserved from past collective experiences and transmitted into the future (Babawale, 2007).

Cultural tourism on the other hand is often used to mean the consumption by tourists of varying cultural manifestations including art, dance, heritage, and folklore among others (Richards, 2003). Cultural tourism can also be seen as a sociocultural relationship among individuals that are influenced, monitored, and mediated by different societal players, such as planners, legislators, researchers, marketing experts, travel companies, and so on (Seyed *et al.*, 2016). The Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs recorded that Nigeria is exceptionally well-endowed with varying natural and cultural resources, the majority of which remained virtually untapped. The list of natural and cultural resources in Nigeria is endless and mostly, either untapped or less tapped. Hendrick (2006) defines a monument as a memorial of the past that is incorporated into the way of life of the community at present. Biornstad (1989) opines that monument are sites, relics, and things that bear witness to human existence through epochs and civilization for which excavation and field survey are the principal sources of scientific information. This view sees monuments from archaeological perspective. Using this perspective as a guide, monuments can be thought of as the standing and still-existing remnants of the past and as significant historical and cultural artifacts.

Southwest Nigeria is one of the regions in the country with rich heritage sites and cultural values. Moremi Statue of Liberty (MSL) in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria (*see Figure 1*) is one of the heritage sites that has promoted the cultural identity and integrity of the Yoruba people. The monument is rich in culture as it is tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, beliefs, and art which is of outstanding value. In the same vein, the monument bears an exceptional testimony to an annual festival called "Edi Festival" which is celebrated in October, and it has become a symbol of centripetal cultural force which attracts population within and outside Nigeria. However, many of these monuments and cultural festivals, including MSL are yet to receive due recognition in Nigeria, even though some of them have cultural and historical

significance that could contribute immensely to the state's economy, if adequately tapped. Against this backdrop, this study examines the impact of MSL on the sociocultural development of the host community in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. This is with a view of assessing the socio-cultural and economic impacts of MSL on the host community.



Source: Authors' Survey, 2023

**Figure 1: MSL) in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria**

## **2 Literature Discourse**

### **2.1 Cultural Implications of MSL**

The cultural implications of MSL in Ile-Ife, Osun State, have been a subject of intense scholarly discussion and debate. Macdonald (2013) opined that Moremi Statue influences identity, heritage preservation, and community cohesion. Bendix (2009) avers that public art installations and cultural landmarks have the potential to reinforce cultural identity and foster a sense of pride and belonging. Also, Macdonald (2013) agrees that the Moremi Statue, with its representation of the iconic Yoruba queen and her historical significance, serves as a symbol that strengthens the cultural identity of the host community. By these scholars, the statue acts as a powerful source of inspiration and a reminder of the community's rich heritage, instilling a sense of cultural continuity and resilience.

In contrast, Richards and Wilson (2007) opine that cultural landmarks can create opportunities for cultural exchange and intercultural dialogue. They contend that visitors who engage with the statue and its associated cultural narrative may develop a deeper appreciation for the community's cultural heritage, contributing to the preservation and promotion of local traditions. Also, Urry (2002) concludes that the presence of the Moremi Statue can catalyze

cultural tourism, attracting visitors interested in experiencing and learning about local customs and traditions. Harrison (2010) stresses the importance of striking a balance between cultural preservation and innovation. He argues that while the presence of the Moremi Statue can contribute to heritage preservation, it should not hinder the organic evolution of cultural practices and expressions within the community. According to these scholars, the statue should be viewed as a dynamic symbol that inspires creativity and encourages the exploration and reinterpretation of cultural traditions.

## 2.2 Socioeconomic Implications of MSL

Moremi Statue of Liberty (MSL) does not only hold cultural significance, such as Moremi Festival which is culturally known as Edi Festival in honoring and remembering the great sacrifice of Queen Moremi for her people, but also has socio-economic significance on the host community. Seyed *et al.*, (2016) reveal that public art installations and cultural landmarks can act as catalysts for economic development. Similarly, Smith (2017) agrees that the Moremi Statue has the potential to stimulate local economies through increased tourism and cultural activities, as the tourist site continues to attract cultural enthusiasts from within and outside Nigeria. The presence of the statue can attract visitors and tourists, leading to a rise in tourism-related businesses such as hotels, restaurants, transportation, and souvenir shops among others (Richards & Hall, 2003). This influx of visitors can generate employment opportunities for local residents and enhance income generation within the community (Richards & Hall, 2003; Seyed *et al.*, 2016).

Also, the Moremi Statue can contribute immensely to cultural tourism, attracting visitors from all walks of life, who are interested in experiencing and learning about the local culture (Richards & Wilson, 2007). This will no doubt play significant roles in the exchange of different currencies within the economy of the host community, and invariably, Osun State. Scholars hold the opinion that cultural tourism has the potential to create positive multiplier effects on the economy, whereby the economic benefits extend beyond the tourism sector to other sectors, such as transportation, handicrafts, and entertainment among others (Johnson, 2018). The income generated from cultural tourism can be reinvested in community development projects, infrastructure improvement, and the

preservation of cultural heritage (Richards & Hall, 2003; Smith, 2017). However, it is important to consider the potential challenges associated with the socio-economic implications of the Moremi Statue. Scholars caution that the benefits of tourism and economic development should be balanced with the preservation of the traditions of the locales and community empowerment (Richards & Wilson, 2007). Local communities should be actively involved in decision-making processes and should have a say in how the generated revenue is utilized (Johnson, 2018). The involvement of the community ensures that the economic benefits are distributed equitably and that the cultural integrity of the community is maintained (Hall, 2008). Moreover, the sustainability of the socio-economic effects of a cultural heritage should be a primary concern. Scholars argue that efforts should be made to avoid over-tourism, where the influx of tourists exceeds the carrying capacity of the community and leads to negative social and environmental consequences (Smith, 2017; Gössling *et al.*, 2020). It is crucial to implement responsible tourism practices that prioritize the well-being of the community and the preservation of natural and cultural resources (Gössling *et al.*, 2020; Weaver, 2014). MSL can contribute greatly to the economic development of the host community and boost tourism growth in the State, if the opportunities from the cultural heritage are well harnessed by government at different levels in Nigeria.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection through questionnaire administration and interview, respectively. Copies of questionnaire were given to participants such as host community members, and local businesses, while interviews were conducted to key participants such as community leaders, the Chief Priest in charge of MSL. The study area is in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State, Nigeria. Within the Local Government, two (2) wards named, Okereewe I and Okereewe II are the immediate host community to MSL. Okereewe Ward I has a projected population of about 10,428, from the record of National Population Commission of 2006; while, Okereewe Ward II has a population of 7,500. Therefore, the sampling frame for this study is Seventeen Thousand, Nine Hundred and Twenty-Eight (17,928).

In determining the sample size for this study, a Cochran (1977) method was adopted to arrive at a sample size of 377. The number of housing in

the two wards was about 750 (Ife East Local Government, 2023). A systematic sampling was employed where the first house along the street leading to the heritage site was selected at random, and subsequent houses were selected at every 3<sup>rd</sup> interval. A copy of questionnaire was given to each household head or any adult member of the family, in the absence of household head, across the two (2) wards. Out of 377 copies of questionnaire distributed, only 348 were retrieved. Descriptive method with the use of frequency distribution, mean scores and standard deviations was used to present the findings of this study. Likert scale was used to do rating of responses to the variables determining the socio-cultural impact of the heritage site on the host community, and participation level of tourists to the annual Moremi Festival, using the scales of 1 to 5 as follows: Strongly Agree: 1; Agree: 2; Strongly Disagree: 3; Disagree: 4 and Undecided: 5 (see Table 1). This is in consensus with Bertram (2006), who averred that Likert rating scale is the best way to determine the level of agreement and disagreement about a particular observation under investigation. R-software was used to determine the mean scores and standard deviations across the categories of variables determining the socio-cultural impact of Moremi heritage site on the host community, and the level of patronage of tourists to the annual Moremi festival at the tourist site.

**Table 1: Interpretation of Class Intervals**

Interval	Mid points	Interpretations
1 – 1.80	1.4	Strongly agree (SA)
1.81 – 2.61	2.21	Agree (A)
2.62 – 3.42	3.02	Strongly disagree (SD)
3.43 – 4.23	3.83	Disagree (D)
4.24 – 5.00	4.62	Undecided (U)

Source: Modified after Alkharusi (2022)

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 2 indicates that 61.21% of the respondents have been living in the community for more than 30 years, while 38.79% of the respondents have stayed in the community within the last 30 years. A larger proportion of respondents to this study was female (56.9%), while male respondents accounted for 43.1%. All the respondents were adults, as 35.6% accounted for the highest proportion between the age of 51 and 60 years, while as 14.4% belonged to age group of 40 to 50 years of age, and those above 60 years of age accounted for 50.0% of the

respondents. These age cohorts would be able to authoritatively relate with the sociocultural development of the heritage site vis-à-vis its impact on their community. The educational structure of the respondents revealed that 43.1% were educated up to primary or elementary school, 28.7% had secondary education, 5.8% had tertiary education and 22.4% claimed not to have any formal education. The study area is a multi-religious community which spans through Christianity, Islam and Traditional religions, as 34.5%, 48.9% and 16.7% of the respondents practiced the aforementioned religions, respectively. Largest proportion of the respondents (51.7%) were artisans, while 11.6% were both civil and public servants; those working for individual or corporate organizations (private sector) were 22.9% and those working as a clergy (religious leaders) across the three religions in the study area accounted for 13.8%. Most of the respondents were married with a proportion of 54.6%; while the singles were 28.7% and the divorcees were 16.7%. The number of years that respondents have been living in the community where the heritage site is located is very primary to the level of knowledge, they have in relation to their perceived impacts of MSL to their socio-cultural life in the community.

**Table 2. Respondents' socio-demography**

Variables	Items	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	150 (43.1)
	Female	198 (56.9)
Age	40-50	50 (14.4)
	51-60	124 (35.6)
	61-70	110 (31.6)
	71-90	64 (18.4)
Educational Qualifications	Primary School	150 (43.1)
	Secondary Sch.	100 (28.7)
	Tertiary	20 (5.8)
	None	78 (22.4)
Religion	Christianity	120 (34.5)
	Islam	170 (48.9)
	Traditional	58 (16.7)
Occupation	Artisan	180 (51.7)
	Civil Servant	20 (5.8)
	Public Servant	20 (5.8)
	Private Sector	80 (22.9)
	Clergy	48 (13.8)
Marital Status	Married	190 (54.6)
	Single	100 (28.7)
	Divorcee	58 (16.7)
Years Living in the Community	Less than 10	15 (4.3)
	10-30	120 (34.5)
	31-50	90 (25.9)
	51-70	88 (25.3)
	Above 70	35 (10.1)

Source: Field Survey, 2023. (Sch.: School)

#### 4.2 Socio-cultural Impact of Moremi Statue of Liberty on the Host Community

The results from Table 3 showed that the larger percentage of respondents (94.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that the MSL enhances socio-cultural development of the host community. However, it is important to note that 3.7% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the statute has sociocultural impact on their community and 1.4% of the respondents remained neutral on this claim. Also, the results revealed that a significant majority of the respondents (91.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that MSL facilitates intercultural exchange between residents and visitors. However, it is worth noting that 2.8% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 5.2% remained neutral on this claim. In Table 3, the larger percentage of respondents (91.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that the MSL is effective for the cultural development of the host community. However, 1.4% of the respondents disagreed, while 5.2% remained neutral on this claim. Based on the data analysis, it was evident that a majority of respondents (94.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that the MSL bears a unique and exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition.

The results also indicated that a substantial proportion of respondents (87.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that the MSL reflects traditional human settlements and land use. However, it is important to acknowledge that 9.5% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 2.9% remained neutral on this claim. The analysis revealed that a considerable percentage of respondents (81.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that the MSL enhances Yoruba cosmological belief and tradition. However, it is worth noting that 15.2% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 2.9% remained neutral on this claim. It is evident that a majority of respondents (44.5%) agreed that MSL facilitated the development of cultural heritages in the entire Ile-Ife Township. However, it is important to acknowledge that next majority (31.9%) of respondents disagreed on this claim. Generally, Table 3 indicates a significant proportion of the respondents strongly agreed with the positive socio-cultural impacts of the MSL on the host community, as six out of seven variables determining the perceptions reflect this. In particular, the strongest agreement opined by the respondents showed that MSL is effective for the cultural development of the host community ( $1.28 \pm 0.68$ ). However, the only variable that showed

disagreement ( $2.86 \pm 1.21$ ) was the one that determined if MSL has facilitated the development of cultural heritage in entire city of Ile-Ife. This may be connected to the fact that there are several other competing and well-known heritage sites in the city, such as Ife National Museum; Oduduwa's Shrine and Grove and Ooni's Palace among others.

#### 4.3 Perception on participation of tourists in Moremi cultural festival

Table 4 below presents various aspects of tourist's involvement and its impact on the cultural significance of the site, and presents the findings of the data analysis and provides interpretations of the results. The data analysis indicates that 89.1% of the respondents had opinion that tourists are allowed to visit the MSL site, while 5.7% of the respondents totally disagreed that tourists are not given access to the heritage site. This finding suggests that tourists are given access to the site, ensuring an open environment for cultural engagement. The results also show that 89.9% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that tourists are allowed to participate in cultural activities related to the MSL site, 2.9% strongly disagreed, 3.7% disagreed, while 3.4% were neutral on this claim. This indicates that the festival provides opportunities for tourists to actively engage with the local culture, enhancing their overall experience. Larger proportion of the respondents (83.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that tourists contribute to intercultural exchange and cultural integration, 6.9% strongly disagreed, 6.7% disagreed, while 3.4% were neutral on this claim. This finding suggests that the Moremi festival fosters positive interactions between tourists and residents, leading to mutual understanding and cultural exchange.

Table 4 also shows that 89.4% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that tourists pose a major threat to the cultural identity and significance of the site. This finding indicates that the majority of respondents do not perceive tourists as a significant threat to the cultural heritage of the MSL. The data analysis indicates that 94.3% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that there is always a case of theft during tourists' visits. This finding suggests that theft incidents are not commonly associated with tourists visiting the MSL site. Results from Table 4 reveal that 94.8% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that diverse cultures represented by different types of tourists have an impact on the identity of the

MSL site. This suggests that the site's identity is influenced and enriched by the diversity of tourists visiting the festival. The data analysis revealed that only 86.8% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that the community is not ready to welcome or relate with international tourists. This finding indicates that the majority of respondents shows enthusiasm in welcoming and relating with international tourists.

Meanwhile, in determining the opinions of the residents of the host community of the important heritage site in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria, Moremi Statue of Liberty, on their level of agreement in rating the participation level of tourists in the annual cultural festival, known as Edi festival, by October 31 every year; the Table 4 indicates that the host community has a strong agreement for four out of seven variables used to determine the level of tourists' participation in the annual cultural festival of the heritage site as follows: tourists are allowed to visit the

heritage site (Mean: 1.36 & S.D: 1.01); tourists are allowed to participate in the cultural activities at the heritage site (Mean: 1.65 & S.D: 0.96); tourists contribute to the inter-cultural exchange and cultural integration between the tourists and the host community (Mean: 1.52 & S.D: 1.09); and how diverse culture of tourists affects the identification with the heritage site (Mean: 3.29 & S.D: 0.73). The host community had strong disagreement for two variables: tourists pose a major threat to the cultural identity and significance of the heritage site (Mean: 3.62 & S.D: 0.68); the host community is not ready to welcome or relate with tourists (Mean: 1.70 & S.D: 0.74). Also, the respondents disagreed that there is always a case of theft during tourists' visit to the heritage site (Mean: 3.18 & S.D: 0.80).

## 5. DISCUSSION

The roles of socio-demographic characteristics of respondents to study can never be overstressed. Uduma-olugu & Onukwube

**Table 3: Sociocultural Impact of Moremi Statue of Liberty (MSL) on the Host Community**

Variables	SA	A	SD	D	U	Mean	S.D
MSL enhances socio-cultural development of host community.	180 (51.7%)	150 (43.1%)	8 (2.3%)	5 (1.4%)	5 (1.4%)	1.58	0.74
MSL facilitates inter-cultural exchange between the residents and the visitors	315 (90.5%)	5 (1.4%)	5 (1.4%)	5 (1.4%)	18 (5.2%)	1.30	0.97
MSL is effective for the cultural development of host community	280 (80.5%)	50 (14.4%)	10 (2.9%)	4 (1.2%)	4 (1.2%)	1.28	0.68
MSL bears a unique and exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition	230 (66.1%)	100 (28.7%)	5 (1.4%)	8 (2.3%)	5 (1.4%)	1.44	0.77
MSL reflects the history of traditional human settlements	235 (67.5%)	70 (20.1%)	18 (5.2%)	15 (4.3%)	10 (2.9%)	1.55	0.98
MSL enhances the Yoruba cosmological belief & traditions	160 (46.0%)	125 (35.9%)	33 (9.5%)	20 (5.7%)	10 (2.9%)	1.84	1.01
MSL has facilitated the development of cultural heritage in Ile-Ife.	33 (9.5%)	155 (44.5%)	19 (5.5%)	111 (31.9%)	30 (8.6%)	2.86	1.21

Source: Field Survey, 2023 (Note: MSL: Moremi Statute of Liberty; S.D: Standard Deviation)

**Table 4: Tourists Participation in Cultural Activities of Annual Moremi Statue of Liberty Festival**

Variables	SA	A	SD	D	U	Mean	S.D
Tourists are allowed to visit the MSL.	300 (86.2%)	10 (2.9%)	15 (4.3%)	5 (1.4%)	18 (5.2%)	1.36	1.01
Tourists are allowed to participate in the cultural activities relating to MSL.	195 (56.0%)	118 (33.9%)	10 (2.9%)	13 (3.7%)	12 (3.4%)	1.65	0.96
Tourists contribute to the inter-cultural exchange and cultural integration.	274 (78.7%)	15 (4.3%)	24 (6.9%)	23 (6.7%)	12 (3.4%)	1.52	1.09
Tourists pose a major threat to the cultural identity and significance of MSL.	10 (2.9%)	18 (5.2%)	190 (54.6%)	121 (34.8%)	9 (2.6%)	3.29	0.73
There is always a case of theft during tourists visit to MSL.	10 (2.9%)	5 (1.4%)	98 (28.2%)	230 (66.1%)	5 (1.4%)	3.62	0.68
Diverse culture of tourists affects the identity of MSL.	140 (40.2%)	190 (54.6%)	5 (1.4%)	8 (2.3%)	5 (1.4%)	1.70	0.74
Host community is not ready to relate with the tourists.	20 (5.7%)	17 (4.9%)	200 (57.5%)	102 (29.3%)	9 (2.6%)	3.18	0.80

Source: Field Survey, 2023. (Note: SD: Strongly disagreed; S.D: Standard deviation)

(2012) also opine that socio-demographic features of respondents are very important to the research results. Among the socio-demographic factors used for this study include, the age, educational qualifications, religion, occupation and marital status of the host community to Moremi Statue of Liberty (MSL), in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. Undoubtedly, there is gender differences in the way and manner an issue is perceived (Metilelu, 2021); the respondents in this study spread across the two genders, male and female, with female more dominant (56.9%). The educational qualifications made the study sought opinions from respondents with varying educational backgrounds, from the major formal education (primary, secondary and tertiary) to informal education. The respondents for this study were from the popular three religions in Nigeria (Islam, Christianity and Traditional), and this is not in contradistinction from the opinion of Akinseye (2001), that the Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria mainly practice Islam, Christianity and Traditional religions in harmony, and they believe that all religions lead to the same God. Similarly, respondents for this study engaged in different economic activities as artisans, government workers, private sectors, personal businesses and clergy. Also, marital status was a factor that differentiated the respondents for the study, as married, single and divorcees. All the socio-demographic factors defining the respondents spread readily in order to enhance the divergence of opinions of respondents for this study.

All the seven variables (socio-cultural development of host community by the heritage site; inter-cultural exchange between the residents and the tourists; effectiveness of the cultural development of host community through tourism activities at the heritage site; the heritage site bears a unique and exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition of the host community; the heritage site reflects the history of traditional human settlements & human interaction with the host community; and how the heritage site has facilitated the development of cultural heritage of the host community, and the entire city of Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. This is affirmed from the findings of this study which showed that larger proportion of the respondents with the mean scores in the range of strong agreement (1.0 – 1.8) held opinion that the heritage site (MSL) had a strong impact on the socio-cultural life of the host community. In a similar study of another heritage case in Osun State, Enemuwa & Oduntan (2012) concluded that

Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove has continued to be a major factor in the sociocultural development and economic growth of the host community. Also, a study by Aydin, *et al.*, (2024) revealed that tourism has strong positive impact on the sociocultural life of people living in Sultanahmet area of Istanbul. The interconnectivity between tourist attractions and socio-cultural development of host communities can be very essential in ensuring the sustainability of the sociocultural, economic and environment of the host communities.

At the last Monday of October annually, a cultural festival is held to celebrate a special Yoruba heroine, Moremi, at the heritage site in Ile-Ife, where her statue which is the tallest in Nigeria and the second tallest in Africa continent is located. This festival draws tourists from all walks of life to the heritage site. The findings of this study showed that tourists participate effectively in the annual cultural festival. Seven variables were used to draw inferences on the level of tourists' participation at the annual festival of Moremi Statue of Liberty; four of the variables (tourists are allowed to visit the heritage site during the festival; tourists are allowed to participate in the cultural activities relating to the Moremi festival; tourists contribute to the inter-cultural exchange and cultural integration between tourists and residents; and diverse culture of the tourists affect their identification with the heritage site) revealed that larger proportion of the respondents had strong agreement with the means' scores between 1.0 and 1.8. However, two of the variables (tourists pose a major threat to the cultural identity and significance of the heritage site; and the host community is not ready to welcome or relate with the tourists) indicated that larger proportion of the respondents had strong disagreement with the variables with means scores between 3.29 and 3.18. While, the larger proportion of the respondents only disagreed that there is always a case of theft when tourists visit the heritage site, with a mean score of 3.62. These findings show that tourists to the heritage site of this study, and indeed, other heritage sites, usually participate in activities relating to the tourist attractions. This is justified in another study by Metilelu (2021), which averred that tourist participated effectively in activities at the heritage site in the coastal areas of Lagos State, Nigeria; and noted further that the impact of tourists' participation in tourism activities and the promotion of culture and image of host communities cannot be over emphasized.



## 6. CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, Moremi Statue of Liberty is one of the cultural heritage sites in Osun State that are not gaining adequate attention for development from the necessary stakeholders. The site attracts tourists from different cultural backgrounds across the world. The heritage site is pivotal to the emancipation of Yoruba tribe and tourists who wish to know more about Yoruba tribe never cease to visit the site. The tallest statue in Nigeria has not only commemorated the bravery of a Yoruba heroine, but has also provided a symbol of pride and identity for the people of Ile-Ife. The statue has increased tourism in the area and has brought attention to the cultural heritage of the Yoruba people. Moremi Statue of Liberty continues to play a significant role in promoting cultural development of the host community. The city where the statue is located, Ile-Ife, is believed to be the cradle of Yoruba people's civilization and it has several tourists' attractions and also with the largest number of annual cultural festivals in Nigeria. This study calls on necessary stakeholders from government at all levels to corporate organizations to invest in infrastructures such as good roads, accommodation facilities, potable water, internet connections and stable electricity, among others, in the city in order to facilitate tourism development in the city and make the ancient city a tourism hub for Nigeria.

## REFERENCES

- Ayandele, E. A. (1981). Using Nigerian Culture for National Building. In *Perspectives in Nigerian Cultural Diplomacy*, Abuja National Institute for Cultural Orientation, Abuja
- Aydin, C., Aydin, C., & Kozak, N. (2024). Perceptions of residents living in sultanahmet towards tourism. *Journal of Tourismology*, 10(1), 66-79.
- Akinseye, F.A. (2000). The Teaching of Popular Religions in Nigeria on Culture, Value and Morality In *Zaxred: Ondo Journal of Religion* 1. No. 1 p. 92.
- Alkharusi, H. (2022). A descriptive analysis and interpretation of data from Likert scales in educational & psychological research. *Indian Journal of Psychology & Education*, 12(2), 13-16.
- Babawale, T. (2007). Culture, Politics and Sustainable Development: Lessons for Nigeria. *CBAAC Occasional Monograph Series No. 4*, Concept Publications Ltd., Lagos.
- Bendix, R. (2009). Heritage between Economy and Politics: An Assessment from the Perspective of Cultural Anthropology. In L. Smith, & N. Akagawa (Eds.), *Intangible Heritage* (pp. 253-269). Londra: Routledge Falmer
- Bertram, D. (2006). Likert Scales: CPSC 681 - Topic Report. Poincare, 1-11. Retrieved on May 10, 2024 from <https://cspages.ucalgary.ca/~saul/wiki/uploads/CPSC681/topic-dane-likert.pdf>
- Biornstad, E. (1989). Monuments and historic sites: the preservation of meaning. In *National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington D.C., ed., 'Historic Preservation Today'*, 13-25
- Cochran, W. G. (1977). Sampling techniques. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Duro, O. (2001). Culture and Development. *Journal of Black and African Arts and Civilization* 1(3). 32
- Enemuo, O. B & Oduntan, O. C (2012). Social Impact of Tourism Development on Host Communities of Osun Oshogbo Sacred Grove. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 2(6):30-35.
- Gössling, S., Scott, D., and Hall, C. M. (2020). Tourism and water: Interactions and impacts. *Channel View Publications*.
- Hofstede, G. (1994). The business of international business is culture. *International Business Review*, 3(1), 1-14
- Hall, C. M. (2008). Tourism and regional development: *New pathways*. Routledge.
- Harrison, R. (2010). Heritage: Critical approaches. *Routledge*.
- Hendrick, C. (2006). The politics of heritage: the legacies of race. *Routledge*.
- Macdonald, S. (2013). Memory lands: Heritage and Identity, *Routledge*.
- Metilelu, O. O (2021). An Assessment of Socio-cultural Heritage Complementing Sustainable Ecotourism in Selected Coastal Communities of Lagos State. *European Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 9(3), 27 - 49. <https://doi.org/10.37745/ejht.2013>



- Page, S. J. (2003). *Tourism Management: Managing for Change*. Oxford: Elsevier. Butterworth Heinemann
- Richards, G. (2003). *Cultural tourism: Global and local perspectives*. Haworth Press.
- Richards, G. and Hall, D. R. (2003): *Tourism and Sustainable Community Development*. Routledge, GBR.
- Richards, G., & Wilson, J. (2007). *Tourism, creativity and development*. London: Routledge.
- Seyed, M. M., Lohrasbi, A., and Khoshnoudi, M. (2016). The relationship between tourism and culture. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 4(2), 22-33.
- Seyed, S., Naciye, D., Seyed, N., and Fereshte, M. (2016). An investigation into cultural tourism and its relationship with the development of rural tourism. *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences: Proceedings*, 5(2), pp. 108-117
- Smith, L. (2017). *Uses of heritage*. Routledge.
- Spencer-OateyH. (2008). *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures*. Continuum
- Uduma-olugu, N. & Onukwube, H. N (2012). Exploring the Coastal Tourism Potentials of Lagos. *Journal of Sustainable Development* (5)7, 156-165
- Urry, J, (2002). The Tourist Gaze and the Environment, *Theory Culture & Society* 9(3), pp. 1-26.
- Weaver D. B. (2014). Asymmetrical Dialectics of Sustainable Tourism: Toward Enlightened Mass Tourism. *Journal of Travel Research* 53(2), 131-40.

\*\*\*