

## Sustainable Tourism and Socio-Cultural Life of Host Communities in Delta State

<sup>1</sup>Ohwobevughe, F.U, <sup>2</sup>Aniemeke C.N, <sup>3</sup>Ohai P.N

### Abstract

The study examined sustainable tourism and socio-cultural life of host communities in Delta State. The study purposes was to ascertain the relationship between ecosystem conservation, societal development, biodiversity protection, population control, human resources preservation and socio-cultural life of selected host communities in Delta State, Nigeria. Judgmental sampling technique was used to select and survey the opinions of 400 respondents across nine tourism sites in the State. Primary data were generated using structured questionnaire designed in likert-scale format. The data were analyzed using simple percentages and descriptive statistics, while empirical results (regression/correlation results) were generated using SPSS, version 23. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient used to conduct the reliability test of the research instrument produced reliability value of 90.8%. Results showed that each of the sustainable tourism principles (ecosystem conservation, societal development, biodiversity protection, population control, and human resources preservation) exerts significant impact on the socio-cultural life of members of host communities. The study concluded that effective application of sustainable tourism principles will largely enhance the social and cultural standards of living of host communities of tourism sites in Delta State. The study therefore recommends, among others, that: government should continually review and provide guidelines aimed at fostering environmental integrity and overall protection of the ecosystem; indices of societal development, including social welfare, should be given priority attention by Delta State government so as to engender positive influence on the socio-cultural life of the host communities; the maintenance of moderate population size is necessary for better socio-cultural life in sites in Delta State communities. The study made use of theory of modernization and collective action Theory

**Keywords:** Socio-cultural life, Feasible development of society, Preservation of human resources, Protection of biodiversity, Protection of ecosystem, Population control, Tourism sites

### Introduction

Sustainable development and sustainable tourism are related ideas. Sustainable development has to do with meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend (Cerin, 2006). Tourism site sustainable development, therefore, implies using environmental resources in a manner which does not eliminate or degrade them, or otherwise diminish their usefulness for future generations. It involves a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investment, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potentials to meet human needs and aspirations (Abubakar, 2011). At the moment, the concept of sustainable development has become inclusive and given focus to 'poverty eradication, changing consumption and production patterns, and managing the natural base for economic and social development rather than purely ecological matters (Uba, 2016). Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. In fact, since sustainable tourism development is expected to engender high level of tourist satisfaction, especially in local communities and emerging tourism sites, it is imperative to understand the relationship between sustainable tourism development principles and its effect on host communities; this study therefore focuses on unraveling this relationship.

Concerning the social features of responsible tourism, local involvement in tourism planning, development, and decision-making processes is very important to develop confidence in the tourism industry. Cultural activities play a major role in the socioeconomic growth of developed and developing countries and provide avenues for enhancing socioeconomic values and the livelihoods of local communities (Amalu, 2017).

Cultural tourism can bring direct or indirect interaction between visitors and local residents. This has become one of the elements of the fastest growing sustainable tourism initiative worldwide. The socio-cultural value of tourism can include a great sense of community identity, a higher sense of connecting with the local environment, and an increase in social capital after an increase in tourists (Amalu, 2017).

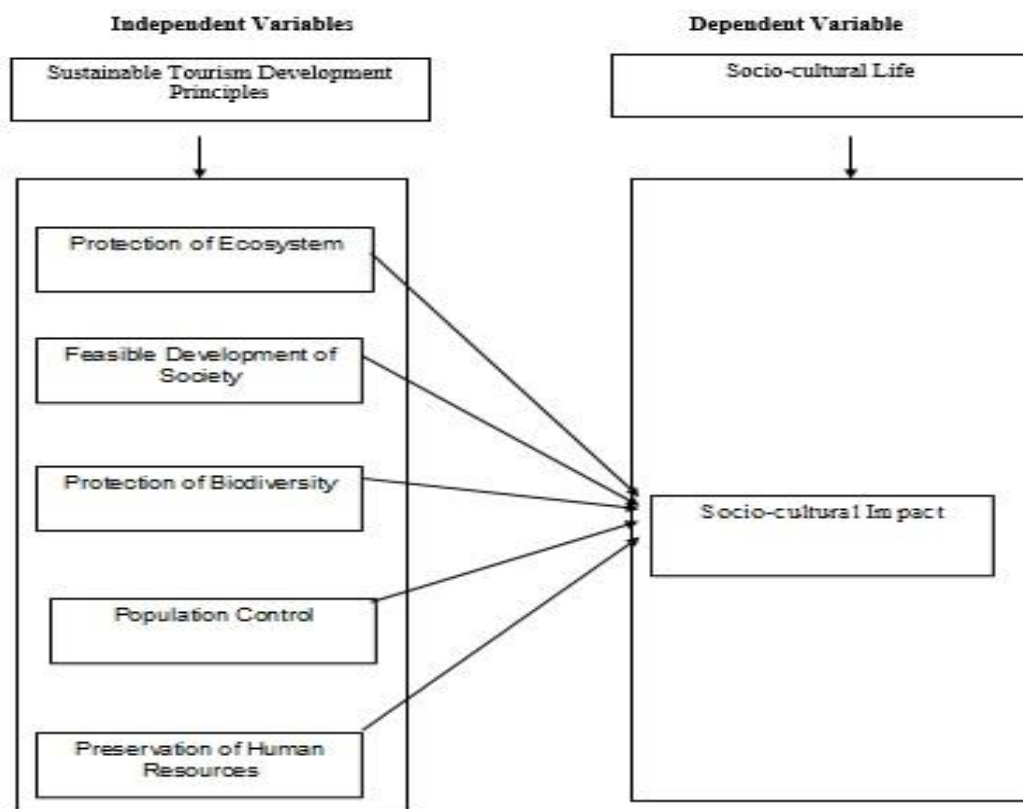
Today, the relevance of tourism site sustainable development continues to deepen on daily basis because the population keeps increasing while the natural resources available to humankind do not. Hence, global concerns have continued to emerge in relation to how best to judiciously use the available natural resources. These concerns resulted in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Irrespective of the relative effectiveness of the MDGs, seventeen (17) SDGs were introduced to continue the pursuit of

development agenda across the globe. As part of this new development roadmap, the UN approved the 2030 Agenda (SDGs), which are a call to action to protect the planet, end poverty and guarantee the well-being of people (Taylor, 2016). This study revolves around these principles, especially in terms of how they affect the socio-cultural life of host communities of tourism sites in selected tourism sites in Delta State, Nigeria.

The concept of sustainable development principles has expanded to cover all forms of development, including people's socio-cultural life. In Nigeria, and Delta State in particular, there are many natural tourist attractions; this has helped to enhance the economic and socio-cultural wellbeing of the local communities. Regrettably, in Nigeria, strict adherence to the tenets of sustainability development in the tourism industry is a mirage. Despite the attractiveness of tourism sites in Delta State of Nigeria, it seems the potentials have not been adequately harnessed. Hence, to enhance the socio-cultural life of host communities of tourism sites, the need to adhere to the tenets (principles) of sustainable development cannot be overemphasized.

The few studies on sustainable development and tourism failed to extensively capture principles of sustainable development (Awaritefe & Ejemeyovwi, 2019; Nyong & Inyang, 2018). Also, most prior studies failed to adopt methodological choices that clearly show the relationship between sustainable tourism principles and socio-cultural life; this is basically because the said studies employed more of literature review approach than quantitative analysis (Okonkwo and Odey, 2017; Nnabuogor, 2017). These studies did not address the social impact of sustainability tourism principles in a comprehensive manner. As such, as far as the knowledge of the researcher is concerned, there is a lacuna of knowledge regarding the relationship between sustainability tourism principles and socio-cultural life of host communities in Delta State. This study addresses this gap by examining sustainable tourism development principles and its effect on the socio-cultural life of host communities, with particular reference to Delta State of Nigeria.

Fig. 1.1 below shows how each of the sustainable tourism development principles affects socio-cultural life of the host communities under study.



**Fig. 1.1:** Operational Framework: Sustainable Tourism Principles and Socio-cultural Life of Host Communities

**Source:** Conceptualized by the Researcher

### Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to investigate how sustainable tourism principles affect socio-cultural life of host communities in Delta State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the link between ecosystem protection and socio-cultural life at tourism sites.
- ii. Evaluate the relationship between societal development and socio-cultural life at tourism sites.
- iii. Investigate the effect of biodiversity protection on socio-cultural life at tourism sites.
- iv. Assess the link between population control and socio-cultural life at tourism sites.

### Research Questions

The following research questions are derived from the objectives above.

- i. To what extent does ecosystem conservation affect socio-cultural life at tourism sites?
- ii. Is there no significant relationship between societal development and socio-cultural life at tourism sites?
- iii. To what extent does biodiversity protection affect socio-cultural life at tourism sites?
- iv. What is the impact of population control on socio-cultural life at tourism sites?

### Hypotheses

This study was guided by the following hypotheses;

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Ecosystem conservation has no significant effect on socio-cultural life at tourism sites.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Societal development does not significantly affect socio-cultural life at tourism sites.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Biodiversity protection has no significant relationship with socio-cultural life at tourism sites.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** Population control has no significant relationship with socio-cultural life at tourism sites.

### Scope of the Study

This study covered Selected tourism sites in Delta State of Nigeria. The locations (tourism sites) that formed the centre of this study are as listed in Appendic 1. This study centers on sustainable tourism development principles and the socio-cultural life of host communities in Delta State. Specifically, the principles of sustainable development under investigation include: protection of ecosystem, feasible development of society, protection of biodiversity, population control, and preservation of human resources. The key stakeholders or units of analysis involved in the study are members of host communities.

### Significance of the Study

This study is of immense benefit, in a number of ways, to individuals, host communities, institutions/organizations, and the general public.

### Conceptual Framework

#### Meaning and Pillars of Sustainable Development

Sustainability means a capacity to maintain some entity, outcome or process over time (Basiago, 1999). Sustainable development is a concept found in many environment and development literature and, thus, has become increasingly popular in the contemporary world (Abubakar, 2011). Despite the fact that the concept of sustainable development is fast becoming a trending issue, there remains a lack of consensus over the actual meaning of the concept. In other words, it means different things to different people and can be applied to many contexts, including tourism. The most widely used of the very many definitions of sustainable development is from the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), that it is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Most of the definitions of sustainable development emphasize that sustainability requires making decisions that recognize the connections between actions and their effects on the environment, economy, and society. Little wonder Harris (2000) states that there are three aspects of sustainable development, while Mensah (2019) notes that the concept of sustainable development rests fundamentally on three conceptual pillars. These pillars are economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability as discussed below.

- **Economic sustainability:**

Economic sustainability implies a system of production that satisfies present consumption levels without compromising future needs (Lobo, Pietriga, & Appert, 2015). An economically sustainable system must be able to produce goods and services on a continuing basis, to maintain manageable levels of government and external debt, and to avoid extreme sectoral imbalances which damage agricultural or industrial production. The economic variables in question include, but not limited to, creation of employment opportunities, stimulation of overall business activities, enhancement and protection of natural resources, revenue generation and financial capacity building, and other macroeconomic indices.

- **Environmental sustainability:**

The concept of environmental sustainability is about the natural environment and how it remains productive and resilient to support human life (Mensah, 2019). An environmentally sustainable system must maintain a stable resource base, avoiding over-exploitation of renewable resource systems or environmental sink functions, and depleting non-renewable resources only to the extent that investment is made in adequate substitutes.

**Social sustainability:**

Social sustainability encompasses notions of equity, empowerment, accessibility, participation, cultural identity and institutional stability (Daly, 1992). A socially sustainable system must achieve distributional equity, adequate provision of social services including health and education, gender equity, and political accountability and participation.

**Meaning and Nature of Sustainable Tourism**

Sustainable tourism is defined as all forms of activities, management and development of tourism that preserve natural, economic and social integrity and guarantee maintenance of natural and cultural resources (Iwona, 2022). The World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2014) defines sustainable tourism to mean tourism that takes its present and future social, economic and environmental impacts, taking into cognizance the tourists' needs, the needs of the industry, the government and entire communities concerned. Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments.

**Sustainable Tourism Principles**

The statements that came to be known as the major principles of sustainable development of tourism sites were made at the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Declaration on the Environment and Development. Some of the salient principles of sustainable development as mentioned in Brundtland Report and other international documents such as Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 are hereunder discussed.

**i. Protection of Ecosystem**

Protection or conservation of the ecosystem is one of the key principles of sustainable tourism site development. The principle emphasizes that there is the need to conserve the ecosystem because the limited means and resources on the earth cannot be enough for the unlimited needs of the people.

**ii. Contribution of Tourism to Sustainable Socio-cultural Development**

Tourism has the potential to promote social development through employment creation, income redistribution and poverty alleviation. Other potential positive impacts of tourism are discussed by Melker (2006) as follows:

**iii. Cultural understanding**

Traveling brings people into contact with each other and, as tourism has an educational element, it can foster understanding between peoples and cultures and provide cultural exchange between hosts and guests.

**iv. Jobs**

The jobs created by tourism can act as a vital incentive to reduce emigration from rural areas. Local people can also increase their influence on tourism development, as well as improve their job and earnings prospects, through tourism-related professional training and development of business and organizational skills.

**v. Facilities developed for tourism can benefit residents**

As tourism supports the creation of community facilities and services that otherwise might not have been developed, it can bring higher living standards to a destination.

**Theoretical Review**

This study is anchored on two theories - theory of modernization and collective action theory.

**Theory of Modernization**

The Modernization Theory of development distinguishes between two main categories of society in the world, namely the traditional and modern societies. The theory, according to Mensah (2019), argues that the traditional societies are entangled by norms, beliefs and values, which are hampering their development. Therefore, in order to progress, the traditional societies must emulate the culture of modern societies, which is characterized by accumulation of capital and industrialization which are compatible with development. In essence, this theory seeks to improve the standard of living of traditional societies through economic growth by introducing modern technology (Huntington, 1976).

Modernization theorists have tended to view societies as passing through series of development stages similar to those experienced by many western countries. The most widely (though not universally) accepted concept was Rostow's *five stages theory of economic growth*, which claimed that economic growth in world history, occurred in five stages (Traditional Society, Transitional, Take-off, Maturity and the High Mass Consumption stage).

**Collective Action Theory**

According to Olson (1965), the founder of collective action theory, the theory entails three kinds of groups, which are: *Privileged groups* (members of this group would gain more from a public good than it would cost them to

provide it unilaterally); *Latent groups* (any member of this group could withhold his contribution to the public good without causing a noticeable reduction in its supply); and *Intermediate groups* (if any member of this group withholds his contribution, it will cause a noticeable decrease in supply of the good, or a noticeable rise in cost to other contributors). Tourism normally develops in a confined territorial area where diverse organizations shall have to congregate efforts in order to enhance its potentiality (Mitekaro & Poche, 2017).

This theory is relevant to the study because it appears that the local communities are neither in the privileged or latent groups but in the intermediate group. If this group chose to withhold their natural resources as well as labour, the tourism sector would come to a standstill.

### Empirical Review

Anisa, Edlyn, Kartika, and Yusri (2023) assessed the local residents' attitude towards the sustainable tourism development in Alas Purwo national park's biosphere reserve area using a sustainable tourism attitude scale. The survey was completed by a total of 142 local residents in the surrounding area of this biosphere reserve. Through exploratory factor analysis, the dimension of sustainable tourism was determined. It also demonstrates that locals have an optimistic outlook on the growth of sustainable tourism, even in places like Indonesia where it is still growing.

Asa, Tjizumaue, Campbell, and Nautwima (2022) studied the impact of tourism development on the local communities in Namibia. The study took a literature review methodology. It was found that the money spent by tourists in the Namibian economy is significant towards local comm.-unities' development. Also, the study established an appalling concern for many developing countries to over-depend on tourism to pursue economic growth and development.

Amalare, Sogunro, and Ekum (2020)'s study focused on the impact of tourism development on employment in South West Nigeria. Using binary logistic regression model, 200 structured questionnaires were administered by closely supervised trained research assistants in Oyo State, Nigeria. Results of the survey showed that tourism should be private sector driven; and the personal interview showed that most of these tourist attractions have been abandoned, but if revamped would definitely improve the standard of living of the host communities.

Nyong and Inyang (2018) examined tourism sites and infrastructural development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study focused on the relationship between tourism sites and good road network of southern senatorial district of cross river state, Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted, with the use of a structured questionnaire. Data obtained was analyzed using simple percentages and chi-square. Two theories were used to offer further explanation to literature review this includes, stages of economy growth theory and technological determinism. The population of the study comprised forty (40) field staff of Tourism Department serving at Biase Local Government Area, Akamkpa Local Government Area. And Calabar Municipality. It was revealed that significant relationship exists between good roads and tourism site development in the study area. The study concludes that good road network is the panacea for tourism sites development. Hence, every road leading to tourist sites should be well attended to, as this will guaranty that the tourist investment is not a wasted effort on the part of the government and the private investors.

### Research Design

This study adopted survey research design. Survey research is the investigation of the behavior, opinion or other manifestations of a group of people by questioning them. The reason for the choice of survey research design is because the study relied on empirical data, with the view to solving the researcher's information-needs.

### Population and Sampling

The population size of the host communities under study is unknown and cannot be easily determined, hence the population size of the local government areas (LGAs) where the tourism sites under study are located was adopted. Table 3.1 below reveals that the study's population size is 1,612,733.

**Table 1: Population Size of LGAs of the Tourism Sites**

S/N	Tourism Site	Host Community	LGA	LGA's Population Size
1.	Araya Bible Site	Araya	Isoko South	235,147
2.	<b>Chief Nana's Palace Living History Museum, Koko</b>	Koko	Warri North	136,149
3.	<b>Bomadi Beach Party Resort</b>	Bomadi	Bomadi	86,016
4.	<b>Olona Ranch &amp; Holiday Resort, Onicha-Olona</b>	Onicha-Oloni Town	Aniocha North	104,062

5.	<b>Lander Brothers' Anchorage, Asaba</b>	Asaba	Oshimili South	150,032
6.	Park Vega Waterpark	Agbor	Ika South	167,060
7.	Ganagana Island Okwagbe	Okwagbe Town	Ughelli South	212,638
8.	Abraka River Resort and Beach	Abraka	Ethiope East	200,942
9.	The Ibru Centre, Agbarha-otor.	Agbarho Town	Ughelli North	320,687
	<b>Total</b>			<b>1,612,733</b>

Source: Wikipaedia (2024)

Since it is impracticable to cover large population of this study, hence only part of the population was studied using sampling technique. Sample size is the small fraction of the population which is considered a vital element to reduce the sampling error. A number of formulae exist for working out sample size. A sample size needs to be large enough to reasonably represent the population. Given that the population of this study is large and finite (known), the Taro Yamene method is used in determining the sample size for the study. According to Anyiwe, Idahosa and Ibeh (2013), Taro Yamene formular is given as;

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

Where: n = Sample Size  
 N = Population Size = 1,612,733 (see Table 3.1 above)  
 e = Tolerable error level =5%

Substituting,

$$n = \frac{1,612,733}{1 + 1,612,733(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 400 \text{ (approximately)}$$

Consequently, non-probability sampling methods (purposive/judgmental and quota sampling methods) were employed in distributing 400 copies of questionnaire to respondents in the nine (9) tourism sites (using the ratio of population size per LGA to total population size) as follows;

**Table 2: Proposed Questionnaire Distribution in selected Tourism Sites**

S/N	Tourism Site	Sample Size
1.	Araya Bible Site	58
2.	<b>Chief Nana's Palace Living History Museum, Koko</b>	34
3.	<b>Bomadi Beach Party Resort</b>	21
4.	<b>Olona Ranch &amp; Holiday Resort, Onicha-Olona</b>	26
5.	<b>Lander Brothers' Anchorage, Asaba</b>	37
6.	Park Vega Waterpark	41
7.	Ganagana Island Okwagbe	53
8.	Abraka River Resort and Beach	50
9.	The Ibru Centre, Agbarha-otor.	80
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>

Source: Researcher's compilation

### Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The validity of the instrument (questionnaire) used in this study was confirmed using content validity approach. In other words, the instrument (questionnaire) was confirmed by ensuring that: all the relevant dimensions and concepts of the topic were explored to a large extent; the entire questions posed in the questionnaire were fully exhausted all that are implied in the research questions and hypotheses, and that draft copies of the questionnaire were submitted to the supervisors who objectively paid attention to the relevance of the questions, in line with the research objectives, and give corrections where necessary.

On the other hand, the reliability of a research instrument has to do with the degree to which a particular technique will yield the same result always if repeatedly applied to the same object.

### Data Analysis Techniques

Multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the effect of sustainable tourism development principles on socio-cultural life of host communities using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 23). Correlation analysis is basically concerned with the study of the dependence of one variable (dependent variable) on one or more other variables (independent variable/s) with the view to estimating the mean value of the former

in terms of known or repeated values of the latter. The primary data collated for the study were presented in tables and analyzed using percentages. Descriptive statistics (mean scores) formed the basis for decision-making, while the study's hypotheses were tested using correlation technique (for individual test of significance).

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Table 4: Questionnaire Distribution and Return Rate**

Tourism Sites (Location of Respondents)	No. Distrib- uted	%	No. Retu- rned (Valid)	%	No. Retu- rned (Invali d)	%	No. not Retu- rned	%
Araya Bible Site	58	14.5	54	13.5	1	0.3	3	0.8
Chief Nana's Palace Living History Museum, Koko	34	8.5	32	8.0	0	0.0	2	0.5
Bomadi Beach Party Resort	21	5.3	19	4.8	1	0.3	1	0.3
Olona Ranch & Holiday Resort, Onicha-Olona	26	6.5	24	6.0	1	0.3	1	0.3
Lander Brothers' Anchorage, Asaba	37	9.3	32	8.0	2	0.5	3	0.8
Park Vega Waterpark	41	10.3	36	9.0	1	0.3	4	1.0
Ganagana Island Okwagbe	53	13.3	46	11.5	5	1.3	2	0.5
Abraka River Resort and Beach	50	12.5	44	11.0	2	0.5	4	1.0
The Ibru Centre, Agbarha-otor.	80	20.0	67	16.8	7	1.8	6	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>88.5</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>6.5</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2024

As can be seen in Table 4.1 above, a total of 400 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents at the nine (9) tourism sites selected for the study. Expectedly, this figure tallied with the earlier computed sample size. Out of the 400 copies of questionnaire, 354 (representing 88.5%) were properly filled, returned, and considered valid, while 20 copies (representing 5.0%) were also retrieved from respondents but considered invalid as they were not properly completed. The remaining 26 copies (representing 6.5%) were not returned at all as efforts to reach the respondents could not yield positive results. Hence, further analysis was based on the returned and valid 354 questionnaires (representing 88.5% return rate).

**Discussion of Findings**

This study empirically examined the relationship between sustainable tourism principles and socio-cultural life of host communities of tourism sites in Delta State, Nigeria. The study's empirical results imply that effective application of sustainable tourism principles will, to a very large extent, enhance the socio-cultural life of host communities of tourism sites. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the study's descriptive statistics (see appendix 1) show that the means of all the variables under investigation are positive. Also, none of the variables showed wide variation around the mean, suggesting absence of volatility/variation of the study's dependent variable (socio-cultural life) and sustainable tourism principles under study. Interestingly, the coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) showed that 97.3% of changes in the socio-cultural life of the host communities are caused by the study's explanatory (independent) variables.

**Summary of Findings**

This study examined sustainable tourism principles and socio-cultural life of host communities in selected tourism sites in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study established empirical relationship between dependent variable (socio-cultural life) and independent variables (ecosystem conservation, societal development, biodiversity protection, population control, and human resources preservation). The key findings of the study are stated as follows;

- i. Ecosystem conservation significantly and positively affects socio-cultural life of tourism sites in Delta State. In other words, conservation of ecosystem enhances the socio-cultural life of members of host communities in Delta State.
- ii. Societal development is significantly and positively related to socio-cultural life of host communities. This implies that the higher the indices of development in the society, the higher the socio-cultural life of the people.

iii. Biodiversity protection has a significant relationship with socio-cultural life where tourism sites are situated. *Put differently, the more diverse living organisms are protected, the higher the tendency that members of host communities will enjoy quality standard of living* (good cultural practices).

iv. The study further found that population control has a significant positive relationship with socio-cultural life. This simply implies that maintaining a moderate population size is a catalyst for better socio-cultural life in sites in Delta State communities.

### Conclusion

This study examined the effect of sustainable tourism principles (STP) on the socio-cultural life of host communities of selected tourism sites in Delta State. From the empirical results, it can be concluded that sustainable tourism principles exert significant impact on the socio-cultural life of members of host communities. This implies that effective application of sustainable tourism principles will, to a very large extent, enhance the social and cultural life of host communities of tourism sites. Interestingly, prior studies emphasized the necessity of sustainable development in tourism due to ever depleting standard of living, limited resources and concern about environment that are to be used by future generations (Iwona, 2022). The tourism sector, just like other critical sectors and industries in Nigeria, recognizes the concept of sustainable development and the principles. It can therefore be concluded that, for tourists and members of host communities to experience higher standard of living (social and culturally), the application of sustainable tourism principles ought to be given strong consideration in the development and sale of tourism services.

### Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned findings, the following recommendations are proffered;

i. Government should continually review and provide guidelines aimed at fostering environmental integrity and overall protection of the ecosystem.

ii. Indices of societal development, including social welfare, should be given priority attention by Delta State government so as to engender positive influence on the socio-cultural life of the host communities.

iii. Stakeholders responsible for the development of tourism sector *should protect the all species of living organisms so as to ensure that members of host communities enjoy quality standard of living*, especially in terms of socio-cultural life.

iv. The maintenance of moderate population size is necessary for better socio-cultural life in sites in Delta State communities.

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