

**Exhibitor Benefits at Urban Food Festivals in Lagos, Nigeria; a Case study of the Eat**

**Drink Festival 2017**

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Abstract

A study of food festivals and how they have become an important part of the tourism landscape of several countries, using the case study method to highlight urban food festivals in Lagos, Nigeria and an analysis of Exhibitors' benefits and motivation for participation. The study adopts a qualitative approach based on phone interviews with exhibitors at the event. The findings show that exhibitors participate majorly to bring an awareness to their brand and to profit from the large gathering of consumers at these events.

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### **Foreword**

The purpose for this thesis is to analyze the benefits and motivations of exhibitors at food festivals in Lagos, Nigeria using a single case study of the Eat Drink Festival, Lagos 2017. I would first like to thank my advisor, Oystein Jensen for helping me to clarify my work in those early days of decision making on what aspect to focus on. It is with gratitude and happiness I fondly remember the rest of the faculty at University of Stavanger whom I had the opportunity of interacting with, as well as all my other Professors during my entire Masters journey from Institut Paul Bocuse, Lyon and Haaga Helia University, Helsinki. Lastly, I say congratulations to my fellow Masters classmates for making it to the end of the program.

## **Introduction**

In many communities around the world, food is a deliberate signification of narratives, historical, cultural, social, and these in turn became commemorated through festivals. Food and drink festivals are attracting growing interests in both local and international communities. In the case of Lagos, a state in south-western part of Nigeria, with a rich medley of cultures and people, food festivals have been on the rise in the last decade, after past years limited or virtual absence of these events in its social and geographical landscape. At the present time, there are several food festivals, both small and large scale, blossoming across the city, the most prominent of which is Eat Drink Lagos.

Academic studies have examined festivals from different aspects including their effects on the host communities in terms of branding, exposure, and socio-economic development (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014). Others have analysed the roles of festivals (Getz, Andersson, & Larson, 2007; Lee & Arcodia, 2011) or visitor's motivations for attending festivals (Meretse, Mykletun, & Elnarsen, 2015). Another side of research is concerned with the role of stakeholders, such as the local businesses, volunteers, sponsors in the creation and sustainable of festivals, and how these efforts may lead to favourable tactile net results for the festival and its stakeholders (Anderson & Getz, 2008; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 2010). This study is concerned with the attitudes that can contribute to the sustainability of food festivals by investigating the benefits exhibitors, who constitute primary stakeholders, gain from participating in festivals.

Food and drink festivals are exposition type events, and expositions are a form of promotion, specifically sales promotion. The general idea of sales promotion is to evoke interest and produce excitement about a product so as to induce a purchase. Consequently,

by exhibiting at a culinary festival, the vendors are promoting their brands by associating it with something fun. In essence, they are leveraging on the social and interactive nature of the event to showcase and prompt the visitors to try their food or drinks, thereby securing a sale.

The visitor's enjoyment and expenditure on the festival is highly dependent on its quality which in turn rests upon the tangible support of key stakeholders. Local (stakeholder) attitudes and support can contribute to the long-term sustainability of a festival, especially when members of the community perceive festivals as partly improving their quality of life or lifestyle (McDowall, 2011). The study of benefits accruing to exhibitors from partaking in these events is therefore crucial in addressing problems of planning, event design improvements, organising, executing, and effectively promoting a festival.

This study seeks to examine the perceptions of participant exhibitors in Eat Drink Lagos regarding the festival's advantages and usefulness to them and their respective businesses, through the lens of motivation theory and benefit concepts (Formica & Uysal, 1995; Bowen & Daniels, 2005; Lee, Patrick, & Crompton, 2007; Lang, Illium, & Cole, 2008). However, motivation and benefits are not coterminous, as the former is a driving and directing force while benefits are the outcome of the striving, related more to exhibitor's experiences and satisfaction, i.e. what the exhibitor takes home from an event experience, including the expectations and the actual participation in the event. This theory states that perceived costs and benefits including their value to the individual, associated with a particular behaviour, predict intent to engage, or remain engaged, in that behaviour. In other words, this study will investigate the factors of motivation instigating the vendors

to participate, the points where these factors intersect across board, and mark the deviating or dissenting factors from the modus operandi, if any, to determine how these motivations are fulfilled and perceived by the vendors.

This study concerns itself with this last aspect, in that it investigates exhibitors' satisfaction derived from participation, and its relation to other festival dimensions in influencing festival success and survival. The event, Eat Drink Lagos Festival (EDLF) is a bi-annual food and drink festival established in 2016 in Lagos as a “restaurant week” for food businesses that did not have physical locations such as hobbyist chefs and Instagram vendors. The first edition of the festival saw the attendance of about 1500 guests, a figure which was twice doubled in the second edition, and the third had a staggering volume of over 10,000 guests in attendance. Despite the impressive growth of the festival, it has received almost no attention in academic research so far. To this end, participant exhibitors at the Eat Drink Lagos will be queried about the relevance and impact of the festival, as the following research questions demonstrates:

RQ1: What are the perceived benefits of participating in the festival?

RQ2: What might be some of the impacts resulting from exhibiting at the festival?

RQ3: Of what importance is the role of relationship amongst festival stakeholders in guaranteeing festival development and achievement of set goals?

Tackling these questions could enrich the scope of academic knowledge about event management, food and drink festivals, and the potential advantages that may accrue through the exploitation of stakeholder satisfaction and interaction in planning such events. Furthermore, the responses and remarks gathered in the course of the research could identify strongpoints or areas needing improvement, as well as the complexities event

organisers might face in planning and executing future editions of the festival. These contemplations are considered in the formulation of the fourth RQ:

RQ4: How do exhibitors perceive the future of the festival

### **Theoretical Foundations**

Festivals are not accidental events - they do not just occur - rather they are deliberate productions, constructed for specific audiences, with intended outcomes. Based on extensive literature review, this section will undertake an investigation into the theoretical frameworks which seek to identify exhibitor's benefits and motivations for participating in food festivals. The examination of these theories and review of extant literature on several food festivals will help provide a more nuanced understanding of the complications and knottiness exhibitors face in organising, or partaking in such events.

A festival is an event which constructs a communicative scenery for the manifestation of expressions with the intention to demonstrate and experience a particular identity which could be cultural, religious, political, or solely recreational. It fosters cultural unity, regeneration and articulation of social life, and the strengthening communal identity.

In the classical cultural-anthropological perspective, festivals have been defined as sacred or profane time of celebration, marked by special observances (Falassi 1987). Festivals are characterised by organised public occasions and complex performance events transfused through small and large scale social interactional communication. (Stoeltje 1992) describes festivals as public in nature, participatory in ethos, complex in structure, and multiple in voice, scene, and purpose. Further stating that festivals are collective phenomena and serve purposes rooted in group life. (Janiskee 1980) explained that festivals and events can be understood as formal periods or programs of pleasurable activities, entertainment, or events having a festive character and publicly celebrating some

concept, happening or fact. In a more reflective of the modern approach to christening events festivals, (Getz 2005) defined them as themed, public celebrations. Although there is no uniformly accepted typology of what constitutes a festival, and multitudinous configurations are possible, (Pieper 1965) theorises that only religious rituals and celebrations could be called festivals, thereby relegating all other manifestations to the position of spectacle which is purely an event of entertainment and detachment. In the same vein, (MacAloon 1984) describes festival as a joyous celebration of unity, co-operation, accomplishment and excellence, while a spectacle is a grandiloquent display of imagery evoking a diffuse sense of wonderment and awe (Manning 1992).

Over the last couple of decades, festivals have come to occupy a significant place in event-related literature, attracting increasing scholarship from academic researchers, from varied perspectives. In the beginning, festivals were studied to gain insight into the lives of “primitive” people. According to (Jean Duvignaud 1976), the classic analysis of festivals goes back to Émile Durkheim, who distinguished between the sacred and profane and wrote about “collective effervescence” as the supreme moment of the solidarity of collective consciousness. Duvignaud went on to argue that there is not one “essence of the festival” common to all civilizations save perhaps that all are in a way antagonistic.

An overview of available research in the field of festival studies has identified a multiplicity of perspectives on why festivals are studied and the methods to be utilised in conducting these studies. Much of the research on festivals from an anthropological and sociological standpoint tend to favour qualitative methodology in their empirical disquisition, while management-related perspectives frequently employ quantitative techniques and large scale survey tools. The aim of this module is to pinpoint some of the

dominant research perspectives through which festivals have been analysed in order to understand how and why festivals are studied.

### **Identity Construction**

A dominant view in festival studies is that the enactment of festivals is framed by power differentials that encode the inner structures and workings of a particular community or group. This raises the question of what is important and what is not? Who and who is relevant enough to be included or left out? Whose culture is real or appropriate and to whom is it applicable? Events are socially constructed in specific ways by certain groups to promote particular ideas and beliefs (Boyle 1997) argued, identifying the power dynamics involved in their productions. Many researchers have, at great length, exposed how the production of festivals entails the elevation of selective cultural details / social positions and community voices to symbolic status and the simultaneous downgrading or silencing of others (De Bres and Davis 2001, Quinn 2005b). A good example of this can be seen in the analysis of the Edinburgh Festival which revealed a festival city that was spatially constructed in ways that privilege visiting audiences, containing them within parts of the city considered 'appropriate' for cultural consumption, while leaving the social deprived outskirts of the city relatively free of festival activity (Jamieson 2004). Another example is the forced eviction of squatters at abandoned railway sheds for the purpose of sanitising the area for Nigeria's first biennial art exhibition (Guardian 2017).

### **The Push and Pull of Tradition and Modernity**

Festivals are a staple in the tourism ecosystem, and extensive research on the corrosive effects of this ecosystem on cultural practices have been conducted. The primary issue under evaluation is whether the commoditization of festivals and events through tourism renders these cultural practices and the social relations inherent therein, inauthentic (Matheson 2005). The reproduction of festivals as tourism hotspots can impose change or recalibrate the posture of culture from what was historically imagined into a new order which may invigorate or invalidate it. When the Spanish Ministry of Tourism's involvement in the *Fuenterrabia* transformed the festival from an authentic, locally embedded and meaningful cultural practice into a public spectacle for outsiders, the intervention led to a decline of local interest and a loss of meaning such that 'the ritual has become a performance for money. The meaning is gone' (Greenwood 1972).

### **Economic Impact**

Due to the increasing incorporation of festivals into urban and regional development plans, understanding the impact of festivals on the economy of their contextual environments garnered academic interest. The vigour of the methodologies used to determine economic outcomes and the accuracy of gains attributed to events has been a cause of much debate. A critical review of the problems that beset economic impact studies was undertaken in (Lee and Taylor 2005) citing relevant observations from (Burgan and Mules 1992), (Crompton 1999), (Lee and Kim 1998) and (Tyrrell and Johnston 2001).

### **The Politics of Place**

The reason behind this way of studying festivals is rooted in the idea that meanings produced in festival sites display the influences of forces that transcend local borders into international ones, and these meanings are a medium for expressing the linkage between identity and place. It explores how people connect with their place and with other people through festival practices, how particular configurations of internal and external relationships emerge over time, and the possibility of festivals embedded in specific locales retaining meanings for contextual communities while meeting the needs of visiting audiences. For example, (De Bres and Davis 2001) wrote about the Kansas River festival helping to promote a sense of pride, kinship and community among the river communities involved. Elsewhere, researchers focused on how events contribute to an enhanced sense of place (Derette 2003). When festivals are designed for visitors, with very little to do with the local residents, it may awaken a sense of displacement, “reproducing space in ways that disrupt or at least alter, local ways of living in place” (Misener and Mason 2006).

### **Urban Food Festivals**

Food and drink are essential requirements for survival, but over time, they have come to be encrypted with symbolic relevance communicated through rituals, festivals and celebrations worldwide. The earliest food festivals originated as celebrations of successful harvests, and included bountiful feasts, offering of food to deities by the living or on behalf of the dead, singing and dancing and other cultural displays. As early as 350 B.C, the feast of Mehregan was being enjoyed in Persepolis - with the consumption of lots of autumn fruits, special drinks, and bread made from seven different grains - is still being celebrated

in modern day Iran. The people of ancient Greece held feasts in honour of Dionysus, the God of the grape harvest, winemaking and wine, with loads of entertainment accompanying merry eating and drinking.

Modern food festivals are transient cultural expressions with effects that transcend their physical presence. They straddle the distance between traditional and contemporary cultures; they are both personal and communal, local and universal, flexible and enduring. However temporary a place-based food festival may be, the effects of a deliberately created communal identity promoted through a festival potentially are enduring (Adema 2006). Similarly, (Kierans and Hainey 2010) argue that while the commodification of local identities, practices and goods has been articulated' in a wide range of 'regenerating' cities, 'rather than producing generic or universal effects, these are, instead, social processes, whose logics are differentially played out within cities. In other words, the lingering of associations cultivated through a food festival in the imaginations of local residents and visitors long after the festival, advances the tenacity of food as symbol. The end result of a successful food festival is a mediated foodscape that is at the heart – or stomach – of an ongoing campaign for selling place and identity (Adema 2006).

The popularity of food festivals is boosted by the growing conscience around local food, avenues for identity affirmation and cultural commoditization. There are many examples of food as well as food and wine festivals all over the world today, such as the San Francisco Street Food Festival, Truffle Festival in Italian Alba, Melbourne Food and Wine Festival, Maine Lobster Festival in Rockland, USA, Pizza fest in Naples, Galway Oyster Festival in Ireland and Great British Cheese Festival in Cardiff, Tatebayashi Noodle Grand Prix Festival hosted by the city of Tatebayashi in Gunma prefecture, Stavanger

Food Festival in Norway, Festa dell'Uva in Impruneta, Italy, Timkat - Feast of Epiphany in Ethiopia, Lambert's Bay Crayfish Festival in South Africa.

### **Who is an Exhibitor?**

An exhibitor is a person or company that makes or owns products displayed at an exhibition. Exhibitors are primary event stakeholders, without whose attendance pulling off a successful food festival would prove impossible. Exhibitors present their products to visitors or audiences attending an event through a wide variety of displays usually targeted to attract sales.

### **Social Exchange Theory (SET)**

Social exchange is defined as a general sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange between individuals and groups in an interaction situation (Ap 1992). The goal of this theory was to examine the costs of social relationships and the exchange of benefits. It suggests that the relationship is categorised as either positive or negative depending on how individuals judged the rewards and costs of such an exchange. The theory symbolizes the concepts of dependency and power within social networks and relationships that may affect those involved in exchanges and interactions, or actors, in various ways (Getz 2012). Interaction refers to processes allowing participating actors to provide each other with valued resources, which can be material, or nonmaterial, social or psychological resources (Ap 1992), that can include symbols of prestige or approval (Homans 1958).

In evaluating SET from a different perspective (Emerson 1976) posited that an intelligent and well-informed actor formulates probabilities and estimates expected utilities for alternative actions prior to deciding and acting. Furthermore, he emphasized that these cognitive processes are related to human rationality.

In the context of events, SET is a veritable tool guiding commentators and researchers in understanding the impact of events on host communities. It is also used to postulate stakeholder attitudes and level of involvement in events. It suggests that residents who identify with the theme of an event tend to overlook its debilitating impact on the community as offsetting benefits are derived through being entertained (Fredline & Faulkner 2001). Similarly, it has been noticed that stakeholders, including entrepreneurs and residents, who benefit from event tourism tend to exhibit positive attitudes toward events and their continuance; in contrast, those who perceive no benefits tend to be less supportive and more critical of those events (Getz 2012). Another group of researchers suggested that their findings were consistent with SET in that people who recognize festivals to be a development priority also recognize significant benefits (Anderek, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt 2005).

SET also contributes to the development of a theoretical structure that accommodates explanation of the negative and positive perceptions of exhibitors on food festivals in terms of cost, comparison level, outcome, profit, resource, reinforcement, reward, transaction, or utility. A positive evaluation would reflect favourable attitudes and behaviours, and reinforce the desire for future participation in the exchange relationship. However, where the costs outweighed the benefits, it can bring the relationship to a halt.

**Network Theory.**

Network theory is an interdisciplinary field of academic study spanning social psychology, sociology, statistics, anthropology, political science, communication, and economics. A network consists of a set of actors (“nodes”) and the relations (“ties” or “edges”) between these actors (Wasserman & Faust 1994). The nodes may be individuals, groups, organisations or societies, while relations consist of sets of dyadic ties. They are multi-fold, meaning actors share more than one type of tie in the broad spectrum of ties. These include formal ties (who reports to whom), material ties (who gives money and other resources to whom), communication ties (who talks to whom), cognitive ties (who knows whom), and affective ties (who likes or trusts whom).

Network theory suggests that people’s behaviour is best predicted by examining not their drives, attitudes, or demographic characteristics, but rather the web of relationships in which they are embedded, as it is this web that presents opportunities and imposes constraints on people’s behaviour (Wellman 1988). He further opined that this analysis should be the relationships between units rather than the units themselves or their characteristics, and should be anchored on the assumption of interdependence among units. By the same token, the flow of information and resources between two people depends not simply on their relationship to each other but on their relationships to everybody else (Burt 1992).

One dominant perspective in network theory emerges from a self-interest paradigm, that is, from two-actor interactions, with each actor operating out of self-interest, emerges the basis for a social system (Coleman 1988). In applying this paradigm to events, it shows that while each exhibitor may be trying to maximise their individual interests, they are

constrained by an interdependent relationship with other stakeholders in the festival, which is equilibrated by the increased access to resources each gets via the other. By partaking in food festivals, exhibitors can be said to be investing in social capital; the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992), in order to reap returns on their investments in terms of opportunities from which they can profit (Lin 2001).

Mutual interest and collective action is the base of another perspective of network theory. According to this view, mutual interests and the possibility of benefits from coordinated action often outweigh individual self-interests (Marwell & Oliver 1993). It explains the economics of collective versus private pursuits, without the possibility of exclusion as every member of the collective has a right to benefit from the mutual interest (Samuelson 1954). In essence, exhibitors will partake in food festivals so as to maximise a collective ability to leverage resources which would otherwise be impossible to scale based on self-interest alone.

In another network perspective, the theory of trans active memory is used to examine how group members, each with their own set of skills and expertise, forge ties and develop communication networks that help them identify and leverage the skills and expertise of others in the group (Moreland 1999; Wegner 1987), reducing the need for each member to possess skills or expertise already available in the group. In relation to events, this theory allows exhibitors in a food festival to focus on creating the particular food they are skilled in without having to worry about providing food to cater to a different taste bud

which is already being provided for by another exhibitor in the festival. For example, an exhibitor who sells small chops can utilise their resources showcasing that exclusively, and not worry about needing to raise resources for preparing platters of pasta for visitors who may desire it, knowing that there is another exhibitor whose business is serving delicious pasta. (Hollingshead, Fulk, and Monge 2002) properly articulate the argument for combining the mechanisms of transactive memory and collective action theory to further the interests of members of a group, and consequently, participants in events.

### **Stakeholder Theory.**

Stakeholders are defined as any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement organisation's objectives (Freeman 1984). They are those people with a stake in the event and its outcomes, including all groups participating in the event production, sponsors and grant-givers, community representatives and anyone impacted by the event (Getz 1997). Stakeholders are people and organisations with a legitimate interest in the outcomes of an event (Allen et al 2008). If festival organizers want to produce festivals that achieve strategic objectives, it is important to seek positive stakeholder involvement, understand their various viewpoints, and evaluate if the stated outcomes have been achieved (Sharples et al. 2014). Some studies have divided stakeholders into five groups or categories, namely: local community, investors suppliers, customers, and employees (Garrod et al. 2012), while others have differentiated stakeholders as either primary or secondary (Carroll, 1989; Clarkson 1995; Freeman, 1984; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). Festival stakeholders have diverse interests and different power positions within the festival network; these should therefore be properly identified and differentiated (Karlsen, 2007).

Stakeholder theory began being formulated in 1963 by the Stanford Research Institute. Before then, stockholders were the only groups of people regarded as important within an organisation's structure. Stakeholder theory propounds that by addressing the interest of stakeholders, an organization will be sustainable and perform better (Freeman et al. 2004). The theory concerns morals and values explicitly as a central feature of managing organizations; it involves a greater intention than simply maximizing shareholders' wealth (Phillips et al. 2003). Stakeholder theory helps to explain origins, operation and evolution of events, and provides direction to owners and managers for the management of their internal and external stakeholder relationships (Getz 2007). According to some researchers, stakeholder theory stresses the interactions of power, legitimacy, and urgency in creating overall salience, and that a party in a relationship has power to the extent that it has or can gain access to coercive, utilitarian, or normative means to impose its will in the relationship (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood 1997).

Literature on event and festival management would be incomplete without the influential position of stakeholder theory in such studies (Frisby & Getz 1989; Karlsen & Nordstrom 2009; Niekerk & Coetzee 2011). The influence of festival stakeholders in relation to their roles have been investigated by various researchers (Larson, 2002; Spiropoulos et al. 2006). The concept of primary and secondary stakeholders is also applicable to festivals and is identified as those stakeholders without whose direct support the festival cannot exist (Reid & Arcodia 2002). They identified primary stakeholders as the employees, volunteers, sponsors, suppliers, spectators, attendees, and participants, while secondary stakeholders such as government, the host community, emergency

services, general business, the media, and tourism organization do not have a direct impact on the festival.

In the context of wine and food festivals, stakeholder theory has been used to highlight the importance of festival-participant relationships. Although relationships between the “central organization” represented by the food and wine festival, and the food, hospitality, and wine industries represented by exhibitors are critical to its success and has to be reciprocal (Hede 2008). Some studies suggest that the provision of valued tangible, as well as intangible, elements could generate attendance, repeat visits, more sales, or overall enhanced destination image (Cole & Chancellor 2009; Robinson & Clifford 2012; Tanford, Montgomery & Hertzman 2012), however, this rests on the cooperation between the participating businesses and the central organisation.

### **The Concept of Benefit.**

Benefit is defined as the ultimate value that people place on what they believe they have gained from participation in a certain leisure activity (Shanzel and McIntosh 2000). In expanding on this idea, (Lee, Arcodia & Lee 2012) defined benefits in a festival setting as the ultimate value that people place on what they believe they have gained from observation or participation in activities and interaction with settings provided by festivals. In another study, (Driver, Brown & Peterson 1991) conceived of benefit as a change that is viewed to be an advantageous improvement in a condition or a gain to an individual, group, or to society.

It has been argued in some quarters that benefits differ from motivations, as motivation deals with an internal factor that arouses, directs and integrates a person’s behaviour (Murray 1964), or felt reasons to engage in an activity (Elstad 2003). However,

it has been postulated that the two concepts are mutually related as motivation may direct behaviour that elicits (or not) the valued benefits for the individual, while valued benefits will have potential to alter or reinforce motivations (Meretse et al. 2015). Some of the benefit factors that have been identified for exhibitors' participation in food festivals include economic enrichment, community contribution, positive life experience, skill enrichment, enjoyment of competition, business promotion and network opportunities (Emerson 1976).

## **Methodology**

### **Research design, Sampling, and Data Collection.**

As outlined in the research questions, the focus will be on the main themes under examination such as the perceived benefits for exhibitors at the event, potential impacts of the festival on their businesses afterwards, role of stakeholders' collaborative relationships and their effects, and perceptions about the future of the festival.

In order to examine these themes comprehensively, a qualitative research method was utilised. First, email address of one of the two organisers of the event from the Eat Drink Lagos blog was obtained and initial contact with him for possible introductions to vendors so I could reach out to them. Secondly, to get a more in depth feel of the festival and its participating exhibitors, an assistant went to the event and speak to the vendors on-site, inform them about the study's aims and objectives, invite them to take part in the interview process, and get their contact information if they agreed to partake. In the same vein, initial contact was established by email with the 26 businesses who indicated interest in partaking in the study.

In the following weeks, the interested vendors were contacted via the phone numbers they provided, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the owners and managers of these businesses. Several studies examining theories in motivation and benefits in event participation (Formica & Uysal 1995; Shanzel and McIntosh 2000; Meretse et al. 2015), as well as roles and relationships amongst stakeholders (Reid and Arcodia 2002; Hånkansson and Snehota 2006; Getz et al., 2009) were consulted in designing the interview questions in this study. For example, in line with RQ3, respondents were asked to comment on the state of collaboration between organisers and participants,

and amongst the participants: “How would you describe the working relationship with the organisers and the process of becoming a vendor at the festival?” and “How would you describe the relationship with other vendors?” Aligned with RQ2, one question invited the respondents to comment on the impact of the festival on their businesses: “What are the impacts of the festival on your brand apart from sales at the venue?” Furthermore, another question drawing upon RQ1, sought to learn about the overall experience of the festival and the perceived benefits of participating in it: “How would you describe your experience, specifically in the last EDL festival?” and “What were your reasons for deciding to participate in the festival?” In concert, the formulated questions were adjudged to be reflective of the themes under examination.

A total of 56 vendors were approved and invited to exhibit at the third edition of EDLF. Compared to this number, the number of participating businesses in the study (26) is limited, although some earlier researchers espouse the value of reduced samples of participating businesses. Notwithstanding the acknowledged limitation of this study, the 26 businesses represent a cross section of the exhibitors at the event, and consequently an important informant group. Most of the respondents have participated in at least two editions

**Table 1. Participants of the study.**

Name of Vendor	First time or repeat	Type of Vendor	Motivation for participating	Comment on experience	Label
Baylow Fresh Foods	First	Drinks	To improve culture and engage people	Satisfied	

EXHIBITOR BENEFITS AT URBAN FOOD FESTIVALS IN LAGOS,  
NIGERIA

Mo's Jollof	Fourth	Food	Build brand loyalty from the beginning	Satisfied	
Urban Fuxion	Fourth	Food			R1
KD Prime		Food			R3
Hans and Rene		Ice cream		Satisfied	
Barcode Cocktails	First	Drinks	Sales, networking, and promoting business	Satisfied	R6
Toasties		Food			
Zee3hree	First	Food	Experience	Satisfied	
Majik Juice	Third	Food and drinks	Increase sales	Satisfied	R11
Papas Grill		Food			
Hothobs		Food			R8
The Spice Basket	First	Food and drinks	Advertising	Satisfied	
Crepetaria and Grills					
Cocktails and Chops					R5

Eko Café	Second	Food	Exposure for brand and blog	Satisfied	
Ette Barbecue		Food			R9
Wings and Sides					
Maggi					
Eventi Cocktails	First	Drinks	For advertisement	Satisfied	R7
I Luv Desserts	First		Popular opinion	Partially satisfied	
Limehouse					
The Shake Bar	Second	Drinks	More opportunities	Satisfied	
Smoothie Express	Third	Drinks	Sales	Satisfied	R4
I Luv Candy	First	Snacks	See the outcome in terms of energy and crowd	Satisfied	R2
Lawlah Snow Cones	Second	Drinks	Maximise potential and better opportunities	Satisfied	R10
198 Drinks and Cocktails	Second	Drinks	Avenue to network and access new clients	Satisfied	

of the festival and are very knowledgeable about their experiences, benefits, impacts, or challenges with the festival.

The interviews took place at different times according to the convenience of the respondents, were conducted in English Language by the researcher, recorded in audio files with the respondents' consent, and were approximately 20 minutes long. Data derived from the interview were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Table 1 provides a breakdown of all the participant vendors in the study, the services rendered at the festival, motivations for attending the event, and a summary of their comments on the festival experience.

### **Results and Analysis.**

This aspect of the research is concerned with the identification, examination, and interpretation of patterns and themes in the textual data, which is data derived from conducted interviews, in order to determine how these patterns and themes help shed light on the broader research questions. The data derived from interviews will be examined to see where it ties to research objectives so as to form the basis for informed and verifiable conclusions. A deductive approach will be utilised in combination with discourse analysis, adopting research questions as a guide for grouping and analysing our data.

The focus of this study is to describe the exhibitors' benefits from participating in Eat Drink Lagos Festival, whether tangible or abstract. The study identifies the benefits as perceived by the exhibitors themselves. The highest valued benefits as judged by the responses of the participating businesses were increased sales, growing brand awareness and advertisement, enlarged customer base, the thrill of showcasing their new or fascinate food and drinks to the crowd present at the event, and improved networking and socialising.

Most of the participating vendors in our study were relatively new, with businesses that have existed for less than a decade. They were mostly micro businesses looking to breakout or scale adequately, and the festival provided an opportunity to actualise their motivations. The proportion of repeat vendors at the festival is notably high, and the entire sample stated they fully intended to re-exhibit at future editions of the festival should they be invited. This theme which was concerned with how the exhibitors perceived the future of the festival received favourable comments across sample, indicating that the benefits gained from the festival were highly valued by them.

The content of the interviews demonstrates that the event has broad associations with both the local and international culinary scene. Indeed, it is staying true to the original intention of creating a restaurant week to acknowledge non-mainstream food businesses and chefs, curating a diverse range of offerings that visitors can choose from, without sacrificing quality. This authentic desire contributes to the increased recognition of EDLF as evidenced in the fond commendation showered on the festival organisers by the sample.

Although the bulk of the sample are apparently content with the promises of the festival and the eventual fulfilment of them, there are a few deviations that do not share this satisfaction. When asked to comment on the perceived benefits accruing from the event and the potential impact on their business after the event, they seemingly did not consider the gains to be satisfactory. This carries over into the area of networking and main stakeholder relationships as well. While the bulk of the sample rated the necessity and usefulness of these concepts in the enhancement of their enjoyment and overall experience of the festival, for some they were not valued resources.

### **Perceived Benefits of Participating in the Festival**

Majority of the responses from different vendors with regards to the perceived benefits that spring from exhibiting at the EDLF mentioned economic gain as a paramount benefit derived from the event alongside marketing opportunities like brand awareness, advertisement, and unearthing a new customer base. One of the participants in our study explained that in terms of traffic, there was always throng as per patronage of the brand which had a multiplier effect on sales volume and value. The expectation is that visitors' expenditures would lead to increased sales, thus benefiting the vendors. This is in line with

the material ties of network theory (Wasserman & Faust 1994) and the self-interest paradigm (Coleman 1988). The festival accelerates access to resources and social capital which the exhibitors invest in by participating, increased sales is a positive return on this investment.

Another prominent theme that emerged from the comments is wider brand awareness. Almost all of the sample regarded the festival as a medium of advertisement, as more visitors meant more people who could be introduced to the brand first hand. It is not surprising that the responses on this theme include the following:

R2: “It was really good. There was a lot of people which meant a lot of patronisers of the brand.”

R4: “It was a positive experience. We were able go create more awareness around the brand, and identify new targets and markets for our products.”

R6: “It was fantastic. We did not expect the volume of attendance so we actually gained a lot out of it.”

R10: “It was a way to get brand awareness and be out there. It is a very big event and people show up, so we get to sell a lot of stuff, meet people, interact with customers.”

There is a limit to the amount of brand awareness that the exhibitors can create on their own, with the limited resources that they possess, so it becomes expedient to leverage the collective action of all stakeholder interests in the festival to realise this goal. The fact that almost all interviewees have attended the festival more than once, and acknowledge a

desire to participate in future highlights the position of benefits in the minds of the vendors.

There are a plethora of comments reflecting and recognising the existence of direct benefits. The responses from participating businesses indicate a clear surplus of financial and economic rewards associated with the festival's outcomes. However, not only is there an apparent presence of economic rewards, but also of non-economic , as illustrated by the acknowledgement and emphasis on the festival being entertaining, fun, and a medium for socialising with other food and drinks business owners: sharing ideas, recipes, and food tasting.

These responses further demonstrate that the large majority of exhibitors have participated for several editions in a row, and those who have participated just once are also considering continuing their participation. These findings illustrate links to dependency within social networks involved in interactions (Getz 2012), and consequently SET. The perceived benefits, material or non-material, as well as the willingness to continue participating may be regarded as support for the festival. In line with Getz discourse, over time the exhibitors' frequency of participation, the number of participants, and their level of performance have been affected positively.

A somewhat interesting finding was the acknowledgment by some of the respondents that their motive for partaking in the event was simply to have fun, and the admittance that the festival ensured that this was achieved. The festive atmosphere which contrasted sharply with their regular business ambience was a welcome change, as it was mentally and emotionally stimulating and exhilarating to be a part of the crowd experiencing and enjoying the festival. This can be gleaned from the comment below:

R3: “For me, food festivals are fun activities, you get to meet different people in a less formal environment, and entertain them through food. These are important for me and I was able to do them.”

Furthermore, a theme that emerges from the content of the interviews is the theory of transactive memory (Moreland 1999) which allowed each exhibitor to utilise resources to showcase their particular product while leveraging the mechanisms of collective action (Hollingshead, Fulk, & Monge 2002) to further their self-interests as well as that of others at the event. For instance, R1 states:

“Our expectations were fulfilled. Although we have a lot of burger and grills there, we and Johnny Rockets are the only food trucks that actually partake in the event, and our meal minus are different. Johnny Rockets are focused on ice cream and burgers, but we do more than burgers and do not sell ice cream although we have frozen beverages that can supplement it. We have our own followership who choose to patronize our brand.”

From a marketing perspective, the respondents also admitted that the festival was gaining cultural significance by effectively marketing its gastronomic and entertainment aspects, beyond its geographical borders. As a result, people come from far and wide, home and abroad to attend the event.

The volume of positive views amongst many of the participating vendors aside, there exists a small faction who did not think the rewards gained from the festival were

sufficient enough, and felt that it could be improved with respect to some setbacks, especially in the area of admittance of visitors and venue locations. The general consensus was that participating in the festival was a valuable market opportunity cash flow wise, a great avenue for identifying new customers and attracting them, however some respondents were indifferent to this point of view. For instance, R3 stated:

“The main reason is for exposure, to put my name and brand and style of cooking out there for people to enjoy and notice. There's also the commercial aspect, although the food festival is not a money maker for me as a chef.”

### **Impacts Resulting from Exhibiting at the Festival**

An event is likely to have a social, cultural, and environmental impact on the community as well as the people at the event (Andersson and Lundberg 2013). Larger events tend to have a greater potential for generating larger impacts across board. The Eat Drink Lagos Festival being a participant based event garnering over ten thousand visitors at the last edition can be regarded as a large event, therefore expectations of its impacts are quite high.

In regard to the examined RQs, corollary impacts surfaced as a principal pattern, with all participating businesses stressing the different rewards that had already been gained, including those that were non-material, but notwithstanding benefited all respondent vendors. Networking was mentioned by most of the respondents as an important advantage of participating in the festival, emphasising that the event served as a

meeting ground between fellow vendors alongside old and potential customers. R2 and R3 stated:

“Since we do not have a physical shop right now, every exhibition that we take part in creates exposure, people become more aware of the brand and engage with it directly.”

“I met new chefs and people. I have grown some relationships from that point till now. I believe in enriching yourself with every experience, and that is one positive for me as EDL is an experience I would call enriching.”

It can be gleaned from the responses gathered from other respondents that the festival had positive impacts, especially in manufacturing brand exposure and engagement, bringing other exhibitors together, and propagating financial enrichment in the form of increased sales long after the event. This finding aligns with the push and pull of motivation and benefits concepts, according to empirical theorisation (Driver, Brown & Peterson 1991). In addition, the link between respondents' participation and expectations of achieving goals through a celebration of culinary possibilities and interactions within networks point to a conjunction with the practical extrapolations of stakeholder theory (Wood and Gray, 1991). This aspect of ST suggests that since collaboration focuses on objectives, those engaged in collaboration should make decisions or act, and such acts would have implications for the achievement of goals, a pivotal one being the contribution towards the socio-economic development of the exhibitors at EDLF.

An in negligible effect of the festival was the injection of money into the businesses of the participating vendors which translates to inflow of money into the economy of the host community. The standard effect of visitor expenditures is an increase in business turnover. The significance of the direct impacts flowing from the event into the time following it on the businesses of participating vendors was also acknowledged by the respondents. R5, for instance, recognises:

“From there, we got a lot of customers who took our card and continued to patronize us after, so it increased our customer base.”

This was further corroborated by other comments:

R6: “A few more people got to know about us, and we were able to get call backs and contracts after the event.”

R7: “Since the festival, we have been getting calls from people to come and stage our cocktails at events, and we go there and set up our stalls. It brought us new clients and customers.”

R9: “We have had two or three clients from the event who have given us referrals to people who wanted to do big parties - weddings and a burial. It has increased our follower base on social media too, and lots of people have gotten to know us.”

The opportunity to showcase their products and method of preparation, alongside the potential to generate more business were crucial to their motivations for partaking in

the festival. Given the high degree of fulfilment in the wake of these motivations, as well as the collateral impacts accrued, naturally, the respondents' rated the perceived impacts of the event on their brand positively and indicated interest in continuing participation in bigger, better ways.

### **Importance of Stakeholder Relationships to Festival Development**

When asked to comment on the working relationship between the organisers and the exhibitors before and during the event, the content of the responses was in tandem with the managerial thesis of stakeholder theory (Donaldson and Preston 1995). Underlining this thesis, the interviews revealed an authentic desire to improve the blossoming gastronomic event industry, and contribute to EDLF's growing reputation by recommending structures, attitudes, and practices conducive to stakeholder management. This theme can be glimpsed from the profound changes that have occurred with the festival in the space of two years: multiplying its initial visitor count seven times over, and doubling the assembly of vendors. These changes activated improvements in brand image, resulting in the EDLF ranking at the top of the region's gastronomic map.

Some of the statements given by the respondents suggest that the exhibitors could be dependent on the organisers not only for availability of visitors, but for help, support, and other resources:

R6: "They were really helpful. They provided us with a map to make movement really easy for us. I heard they also had cars to help with some of the guests who were coming, and that was a way we also benefited from them."

R7: “It was good because they gave us stands, supplied generators for electricity, handed out P.O.S’, and they kept coming from time to time to check on what we were doing, and if there was a glitch in operations they apologised profusely for it.”

R8: “It was pretty smooth, no hitches. I didn't have issues with them although a few people did. Whenever I sent emails, they responded immediately. They picked us up, we registered, they helped us while we were trying to pay for the stands at the bank. It was easy and smooth.”

R10: “It was good. They are very good at what they do. If you had any questions or problems, even while we were at the event, they made sure there were different people in charge of areas that would help with anything you need. They provided water and light. They did very well.”

Responses also indicate that the respondents believed the festival organisers were innovative and confident in their control of its operations in most respects including lobbying for needed resources and partnerships, marketing strategies, and hands-on coordination of the event. This is evidenced by the following:

R7: “It was awesome because the organisers did a good job in selecting a venue, and we had tons of people coming to our stand to get our cocktails and mocktails. The crowd really surprised us.”

R4: “The organisers kept coming to check on us to make sure we were okay. Prior to the event, they communicated all the information adequately. We felt very welcome and accommodated.”

R3: “I worked with them on the Jollof festival they did earlier, for the first time, and I saw them as very professional and focused on what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do it. As far as communication goes, they are one of the few organisers that make the effort of giving floor plans to the exhibitors, and that goes a long way in helping you prepare for the event, so that is great.”

In terms of the working relationship between exhibitors at the EDLF, comments from various participants in our study, recognised emergent collaboration amongst participating vendors. They shared resources, communicated ideas, tasted each other's dishes and drinks, and exchanged contact information to maintain the established rapport well into the future. R11 commented “It was like one big family.” Other responses acknowledged:

R5: “Everyone was helpful. There was a time I was looking for water to clean my equipment, and some of the vendors gave me their water they weren't using.”

R8: “Everyone was jolly and relaxed and open, and we patronized each other, or just went around asking questions when we found something interesting.”

R9: “It has been beautiful. It is like a form of network. We interact, share knowledge and ideas. From EDLF, I have met two beautiful vendors whom I have maintained a relationship with. It is a great platform for exposure to the market in Lagos and diaspora. It has been awesome.”

R10: “We made new friends and partners there. Everybody tried new things and tried to communicate with new vendors and those they had met at other events.”

Together, these findings suggest the impact resulting from collaboration and their effect on the overall success of the festival, and furtherance of its goals and objectives in the long run. The findings also underscore the importance of existing positive relationships between the festival's stakeholders, the organisers and the vendors, and the link between that and favourable outcomes (Hede 2007).

### **Perceived Challenges for the Future of the Festival**

An important issue for festival organisers is sustainable development of the event. The crucial factor in achieving this is to make those participating in its activities feel the benefits and meaning of the festival (Testa, A. 2004; Gallagher and Pike 2011).

Regarding the future of the festival, the prevailing notion is that the festival will continue to be celebrated in its present form. A sturdy relationship between the residents of Lagos and the EDLF has come into existence, and both sides seem invested in nurturing and nourishing it. This is emphasized by R11's statement:

“It is becoming a tradition and we are here for that. So we will continue to attend the festival and create more awareness around our brand.”

Similarly, R2 perceived that the future of the festival was, without undue difficulty, certain of becoming a staple because “with the way they handle and organise the events, I cannot see any problems.”

For the astounding majority of the respondents, the festival was a source of entertainment and pride, contributing to the region's culinary landscape through its viable cultural and social value. Their optimism, hope, belief, and interest in playing a significant role in the festival's future are palpable when invited to comment on the question:

R3: "As far as events like that go in Lagos and Nigeria, EDL is one of the premier ones. The organisers know what they are doing, it is very well structured, while there is nothing like perfect I would give them a good 95%, and the trust of improving that in the coming years."

R6: "In a good way. I most definitely look forward to collaborating with them in future."

R7: "It is going to keep growing, and if we are invited to exhibit gain, we would surely attend."

R8: "I know that if I'm invited again, I would definitely be there. That's how much I believe in its future."

In terms of management implications, support for the festival by primary stakeholders, i.e. the participating vendors in this instance, is still dependent on festival experience and benefits. This shows that the perceived benefits of the festival experience go a long way in influencing the support of the festival's activities and willingness to partake in future editions and outcomes.

The respondents' comments demonstrate their intention to keep engaging with the festival in future, so as to replicate all the current benefits of participating. According to

R3, “food festivals are fun activities, you get to meet different people in a less formal environment, and entertain them through food - these are important for me.” Not only is the future of the festival perceived to be commercially viable, its relevance to the social and cultural scene in Lagos is well recognised.

### **Conclusions**

Earlier studies have outlined the potential benefits of culinary events such as providing opportunities for various stakeholders, developing brand awareness about the displayed products, and improving the image of the region where they are organised (Reisinger, & Kang, 2008; McDowall 2011). Despite the increasing discussion of the importance of food and drink festivals in academic literature, there is a dearth of research in some areas. Previous research has analysed festivals through the lens of motivation and benefits as they affect visitors or impact host communities. By focusing the attention on benefits with respect to exhibitors partaking in gastronomic events, this study sought to expand and contribute to the existing literature, and present new empirical results. In doing so, the study conducted in-depth interviews amongst several of the participating vendors at the event, and gathered their perceptions. In presenting the case for exhibitors' benefits for participating in the Eat Drink Lagos Festival, the study adopts the lens of Stakeholder Theory, SET, and network concepts.

The study's findings illustrate the importance of event stakeholders in collaborative relationships. The significance of the lead role and initiative taken by the organisers in developing marketing strategies, engagement with both new and loyal customers and other stakeholders, and event planning, before and during the event were acknowledged in several responses. The organisers, as well as the exhibitors at EDLF appear to have \*developed effective reciprocal relationships that could potentially impact the long term socio-economic sustainability of the festival positively.

The study makes an additional link with SET and network theory. Elements such as transaction, cost, profit, outcome, and reward are enmeshed in our findings, in line with the

postulations of Emerson on SET. The contents of the interviews demonstrate that exhibitors participate in the festival to meet customers and other vendors, promote and market their brand and services, increase sales, network and develop personal and professional relationships.

These elements also converge with the motivations and involvement of the festival's stakeholders; it facilitates understanding about the stakeholders with regards to their perception of the outcomes that result from their exchanges. Our findings show that the primary stakeholder group - the vendors - perceive a broad range of benefits from participating, and from eventual outcomes of the event. The vendors feel represented and fulfilled by the festival, hence their clear and express intention of continuing to take part in it.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

One of the limitations of the study is the small sample size. While the entire number of vendors were identified and contacted, not all were interested in being a part of the study, and some of those who agreed to be interviewed were unavailable when contacted. Additionally, given the challenges of collecting data from all 26 vendors participating in the study, the time limitation made it difficult to reach and gather the perceptions of all the participants. However, the eleven participants who were interviewed are very knowledgeable, experienced, reliable, and very involved in the festival. In the same vein, regarding the participant's experience, an argument could be made that other vendors who participated in the EDLF may be less experienced, including in their involvement at the event, collaborative relationships with the organisers and other

exhibitors. Therefore, their perceptions might veer off the course laid down by the respondents.

The limitations of this study presents opportunities for future investigations, suggesting implications for future research. Future studies could increase the number of participants in future investigations. ST and SET could also be deployed in broader context in food and drink events, to confirm or critique the use of the theories in such contexts, and also further develop them.

Furthermore, this study examines the importance of collaborative efforts in food and drink events. Collaboration can generate significant opportunities which may result in economic spill overs and other benefits for the host community. This could create opportunities for other local businesses and host communities in the form of entertainment, potential employment, increased recognition, improved brand image, and increased revenue by increasing the volume of visitors to the event. The future study of food festivals is essential for strengthening food traditions, preparation, and consumption in order to develop strategies for socio-economic sustainability.

Future studies could also investigate the evolution of the festival, to determine whether or not collaboration continues including collaboration amongst new vendors, whether the festival could move beyond a one-day event so as to draw more visitors and revenue. Findings from this research could be very valuable for other regions that plan on kick starting their own gastronomic tradition, or help navigate the murky waters of change for those that already have a food and drink event in place.

### **Implications**

From a theoretical perspective, the findings have a direct implication on the EDLF and links between stakeholder collaboration and effective management on the attainment of profitability, eventual growth, and potential outcomes. The organisers of the event were found to have successfully planned and communicated the goals of the event and the path to achieving them through attitudes, practices, and structure to the participating vendors, resulting in rewards in form of sales, publicity, and increased patronage. It suggests that even small scale collaboration could sponsor diverse initiatives and outcomes.

Shifting the focus to a practical perspective, the study lends credence to the role of collaboration in sustaining successful culinary events in the long run. This has profound implications for not only the EDLF, but other food and drink events in Lagos and beyond.

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## **Appendix**

### Interview Transcripts

#### **Urban Fusion Food Truck**

What were your reasons for deciding to participate in the festival?

“We wanted to create more publicity for the brand. Publicity is something that cannot be done in one day, there are lots of programmes and events that will proclaim the brand to the people out there. Also, we wanted to maximise profit and give customers their desired satisfaction.”

How would you describe your experience, specifically in the last EDL festival?

“In terms of venue, compared to the previous one, the venue was not as spacious while in terms of traffic, the situation has always been the same, we always have enough traffic as per patronage of the brand. This is one of the reasons why whenever the festival is around the corner we always participate because it has a multiplier effect on our sales volume and value.”

Were the expectations you had for the festival fulfilled?

“Our expectations were fulfilled. Although we have a lot of burger and grills there, we and Johnny Rockets are the only food trucks that actually partake in the event, and our meal minus are different. Johnny Rockets are focused on ice cream and burgers, but we do more than burgers and do not sell ice cream although we have frozen beverages that can supplement it.

We have our own followership who choose to patronize our brand.”

What are the impacts of the festival on your brand apart from sales at the venue?

“We got new customers, which is paramount, and new people to advertise our brand to. Publicity and advertisement are the major impacts we gain from attending the festival.”

How would you describe the working relationship with the organisers and the process of becoming a vendor at the festival?

“One of the organisers is a blogger, and at the time we were launching our brand, prior to the first edition of the event, he was there to sample our products, which led to their awareness about the brand and the decision to give us a trial, so we have always had a full relationship, before, during, and after the festival.”

### **I Luv Candy**

What services did you offer at the festival?

“We sell a selection of candy, varieties of lollipop, and marshmallows.”

What were your reasons for deciding to participate in the festival?

“We attended the previous year and witnessed a really good turn out, and our products were well received so we wanted to replicate that.”

How would you describe your experience, specifically in the last EDL festival?

“It was really good. There was a lot of people which meant a lot of patronisers of the brand.”

What are the impacts of the festival on your brand?

“Since we do not have a physical shop right now, every exhibition that we take part in creates exposure, people become more aware of the brand and engage with it directly.”

How would you describe the working relationship with the organisers and the process of becoming a vendor at the festival?

“It was superb. They were big on communication and assistance, and they walked with us every step of the way.”

What do you think is the future of the festival, are there any foreseeable challenges?

“With the way they handle and organise the events, I cannot see any problems.”

### **KD Prime**

What services did you offer at the festival?

“As a chef, when I attend these festivals I showcase my food and drinks, but the organisers were strict on what each vendor could do so I just did food. I did beer braised meatballs served with French fries and one of my specialties, pork nkwoobi served with agidi.”

What were your reasons for deciding to participate in the festival?

“The main reason is for exposure, to put my name and brand and style of cooking out there for people to enjoy and notice. There's also the commercial aspect, although the food festival is not a money maker for me as a chef.”

Were the expectations you had for the festival fulfilled?

“For me, food festivals are fun activities, you get to meet different people in a less formal environment, and entertain them through food. These are important for me and I was able to do them.”

How would you describe your experience, specifically in the last EDL festival?

“I have been wanting to work with EDL for some time. I initially thought it was going to be at Eko Atlantic, but the space they used was just as good. The festival is known for getting a good customer turnout and that remained true. As a vendor that is used to such events, it was a walk in the park for me, plus I sold all my dishes.”

What are the impacts of the festival on your brand?

“I met new chefs and people. I have grown some relationships from that point till now. I believe in enriching yourself with every experience, and that is one positive for me as EDL is an experience I would call enriching.”

Are there any negative or challenges with the festival?

“As far as events like that go in Lagos and Nigeria, EDL is one of the premier ones. The organisers know what they are doing, it is very well structured, while there is nothing like perfect I would give them a good 95%, and the trust of improving that in the coming years.”

How would you describe the working relationship with the organisers and the process of becoming a vendor at the festival?

“I worked with them on the Jollof festival they did earlier, for the first time, and I saw them as very professional and focused on what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do it. As far as communication goes, they are one

of the few organisers that make the effort of giving floor plans to the exhibitors, and that goes a long way in helping you prepare for the event, so that is great.”

### **Smoothie Express**

What services did you offer at the festival?

“We deal with healthy food and beverages, and our product offerings include smoothie, salads, and iced tea.”

What were your reasons for deciding to participate in the festival?

“Primarily to create awareness for our brand, make more people aware of them. Also, we wanted promote healthy living and lifestyle.”

How would you describe your experience, specifically in the last EDL festival?

“It was really good. The crowd and outcomes were amazing, but I wish they were more organised in terms of sorting the crowd because I knew a lot of people who were complaining about finding it difficult to get in, but that might have been because they did not expect the crowd outcome. In general, it was good for our brand as we were able to sell a lot of products.”

What are the impacts of the festival on your brand?

“It was a positive experience. We were able go create more awareness around the brand, and identify new targets and markets for our products.”

Were the expectations you had for the festival fulfilled?

“Yes, definitely.”

How would you describe the working relationship with the organisers and the process of becoming a vendor at the festival?

“The organisers kept coming to check on us to make sure we were okay.

Prior to the event, they communicated all the information adequately. We felt very welcome and accommodated.”

### **Cocktails and Chops**

What services did you offer at the festival?

“We sold cocktails and small chops.”

What were your reasons for deciding to participate in the festival?

“We wanted to reach out to people who wanted small chops, and get them to go buy from us. It was also a form of advertisement.”

How would you describe your experience, specifically in the last EDL festival?

“I was there for the first edition of the festival, and no one was really sure what the outcome was going to be. With this last one, the turnout was awesome, and it was great.”

What are the impacts of the festival on your brand?

“From there, we got a lot of customers who took our card and continued to patronize us after, so it increased our customer base.”

Were the expectations you had for the festival fulfilled?

“Yes, they were, and I would wish to always partake.”

How would you describe the working relationship with the organisers and the process of becoming a vendor at the festival?

“Funny enough, I trained one of the organisers in how to make small chops and cocktails, so there has always been a solid relationship there.”

How would you describe the relationship with other vendors?

“Everyone was helpful. There was a time I was looking for water to clean my equipment, and some of the vendors gave me their water they weren't using.”

### **Barcode Cocktails**

What services did you offer at the festival?

“We offered alcoholic and non-alcoholic cocktails.”

What were your reasons for deciding to participate in the festival?

“For the sales, and the opportunity of building our followership by putting our name out there.”

How would you describe your experience, specifically in the last EDL festival?

“I honestly cannot complain.”

What are the impacts of the festival on your brand?

“A few more people got to know about us, and we were able to get call-backs and contracts after the event.”

Were the expectations you had for the festival fulfilled?

“They were.”

How would you describe the working relationship with the organisers and the process of becoming a vendor at the festival?

“They were really helpful. They provided us with a map to make movement really easy for us. I heard they also had cars to help with some of the guests who were coming, and that was a way we also benefited from them.”

How do you perceive the future of the festival?

“In a good way. I most definitely look forward to collaborating with them in future.”

### **Eventi Cocktails**

What services did you offer at the festival?

“We sold smoothies and cocktails.”

What were your reasons for deciding to participate in the festival?

“We wanted to advertise our brand and what it offers.”

How would you describe your experience, specifically in the last EDL festival?

“It was awesome because the organisers did a good job in selecting a venue, and we had tons of people coming to our stand to get our cocktails and mocktails. The crowd really surprised us.”

What are the impacts of the festival on your brand?

“Since the festival, we have been getting calls from people to come and stage our cocktails at events, and we go there and set up our stalls. It brought us new clients and customers.”

Were the expectations you had for the festival fulfilled?

“Beyond what we expected. Our minds were blown.”

How would you describe the working relationship with the organisers and the process of becoming a vendor at the festival?

“It was good because they gave us stands, supplied generators for electricity, handed out P.O.S’, and they kept coming from time to time to check on what we were doing, and if there was a glitch in operations they apologised profusely for it.”

How do you perceive the future of the festival?

“It is going to keep growing, and if we are invited to exhibit gain, we would surely attend.”

### **Hothobs**

What services did you offer at the festival?

“I sold food to-go which was pasta, meatballs, and barbecued chicken and wings.”

What were your reasons for deciding to participate in the festival?

“I attended for the sake of awareness. It was an avenue to get more people to see and know what I do, so that when they call me for other events or place orders they already know how the food looks and what it tastes like.”

How would you describe your experience, specifically in the last EDL festival?

“It was encouraging. We had a lot of people come around, to chat and buy food, and I got a lot of calls after saying they liked the food at the festival, so it was worth it.

What are the impacts of the festival on your brand?

“I'd say the added awareness. People come in and talk about how we met at the festival, so I'm out there. More people know me now and they know what I do. It really helped with marketing.”

Were the expectations you had for the festival fulfilled?

“Yes. I expected to sell and my food was sold out by the end of the day.”

How would you describe the working relationship with the organisers and the process of becoming a vendor at the festival?

“It was pretty smooth, no hitches. I didn't have issues with them although a few people did. Whenever I sent emails, they responded immediately. They picked us up, we registered, they helped us while we were trying to pay for the stands. It was easy and smooth.”

How was the working relationship with other brands?

“Everyone was jolly and relaxed and open, and we patronized each other, or just went around asking questions when we found something interesting.”

How do you perceive the future of the festival?

“I know that if I'm invited again, I would definitely be there. That's how much I believe in its future.”

### **Ette Barbecue**

What services did you offer at the festival?

“We sold barbecue, goat kebab, chicken kebab, and fish.”

What were your reasons for deciding to participate in the festival?

“It was a good opportunity to showcase our own special way of grilling food.”

How would you describe your experience, specifically in the last EDL festival?

“This was our second year in attendance and the turnout was incredible. We met a lot of people who wanted to know more about us. Fortunately for us, a lot of them follow us on Instagram, so when they heard we were coming they were surprised and happy to see us at EDLF. It has been fun all the way.”

What are the impacts of the festival on your brand?

“We have had two or three clients from the event who have given us referrals to people who wanted to do big parties - weddings and a burial. It has increased our follower base on social media too, and lots of people have gotten to know us.”

Were the expectations you had for the festival fulfilled?

“Yes, without doubt.”

How would you describe the working relationship with the organisers and the process of becoming a vendor at the festival?

“It was lovely. They were friendly and hospitable.”

How was the working relationship with other brands?

“It has been beautiful. It is like a form of network. We interact, share knowledge and ideas. From EDLF, I have met two beautiful vendors whom I have maintained a relationship with. It is a great platform for exposure to the market in Lagos and diaspora. It has been awesome.”

How do you perceive the future of the festival?

“We are ready to attend their upcoming events. We would do so gladly,  
with all our hearts.”

**Lawlah Snow Cones**

What services did you offer at the festival?

“We sold snow cones.”

What were your reasons for deciding to participate in the festival?

“It was a way to get brand awareness and be out there. It is a very big event  
and people show up, so we get to sell a lot of stuff, meet people, interact  
with customers.”

How would you describe your experience, specifically in the last EDL festival?

“It was really good. It was our second time at the festival. Contacts were  
made, so it was a good event.”

What are the impacts of the festival on your brand?

“We had more customers, and we have been getting more from the event.  
We booked more clients and got more brand awareness after that.”

Were the expectations you had for the festival fulfilled?

“Yes. It was satisfying.”

How would you describe the working relationship with the organisers and the process of  
becoming a vendor at the festival?

“It was good. They are very good at what they do. If you had any questions  
or problems, even while we were at the event, they made sure there were

different people in charge of areas that would help with anything you need.

They provided water and light. They did very well.”

How was the working relationship with other vendors?

“We made new friends and partners there. Everybody tried new things and tried to communicate with new vendors and those they had met at other events.”

How do you perceive the future of the festival?

“I think it would be great. If we get the opportunity to do it again, we would definitely attend.”

### **Majik Juice**

What services did you offer at the festival?

“We sold big flavoured taffy and juice.”

What were your reasons for deciding to participate in the festival?

“It was an opportunity to create awareness, to show people what we do and how good we are, and market our products.”

How would you describe your experience, specifically in the last EDL festival?

“It was okay. We met a lot of people, and our products were beloved on that day and people really appreciated it. The event was fantastic.”

What are the impacts of the festival on your brand?

“Some of the customers that patronized us on that day have been coming to our store to buy some more, and giving us feedback that we are consistent and our products are okay.”

Were the expectations you had for the festival fulfilled?

“We have been attending for three years, and so far it has not disappointed us.”

How would you describe the working relationship with the organisers and the process of becoming a vendor at the festival?

“It was cool, although a bit challenging.”

How was the working relationship with other vendors?

“There was no problem. It was like one big family.”

How do you perceive the future of the festival?

“It is becoming a tradition and we are here for that. So we will continue to attend the festival and create more awareness around our brand.”