



LivingSpring Christian Music Festival: Its History, Beliefs and Impact in Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Odunola Akinloye
Department of Religious Studies
Obafemi Awolowo University
Ile-Ife, Nigeria
akinloyeesther2017@gmail.com

Oluwasegun Peter Aluko*
Department of Religious Studies
Obafemi Awolowo University
Ile-Ife, Nigeria
segmoroc@gmail.com

S. A. Owoeye
Department of Religious Studies
Obafemi Awolowo University
Ile-Ife, Nigeria
olaowoeye@yahoo.com

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.10326>

Abstract

World over, there are different festivals that cut across different climes, be it, religion, culture and economic. These festivals are often celebrated with pomp and large expressions of pageantry. This is also the case within the Christian world, especially when it comes to the area of music festivals. There are many Christian music festivals in the world that seek to, and in many cases, expand God's Kingdom through the use of music. One such festival is the LivingSpring Christian Music Festival. This study is a social-historical analysis on this particular Christian music festival. The authors trace its emergence, its beliefs and practices. The article also discusses the impacts of this festival on the development of Christianity in Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

Keywords: LivingSpring, Christianity, Music, Festival, Ile-Ife.

Introduction

Festival is an important social phenomenon that exists in all human cultures. It provides opportunities for projecting the community into the national scene (Odotei, 2002). It is a merrymaking event that has been celebrated from one generation to another. In fact, it will be difficult for one to see a society where one form of festival or the other is not being celebrated. Some festivals are religiously based and are celebrated within a specific theme, mostly once in a calendar year. However, these religious festivals are organised to celebrate the faithfulness of a specific deity or divine being as a way of showing gratitude to that divine being or deity, and also as a way of receiving blessings from that divine being or deity (Olaniyan, 2014). This is why Olabimtan in Oderinde (1984) were able to note that, the main purpose of religious festivals is to reassure the members of the traditional society of the presence of the gods in their midst and the



concern of the gods for their welfare. Festivals purify members of a religious institution physically, morally, and spiritually, sometimes, it lasted for days (Acquah, 2011). Different activities take place in these festivals such as music, dance, wrestling, horsemanship, canoe racing, and fishing competitions.

Among the different religions that celebrate one religious festival or the other is Christianity. This religion has two important festivals that are being celebrated by its adherents, which are Easter and Christmas day (Black et al, 2018). The way and manner these festivals are being celebrated however differ from one denomination to the other, depending on how they are being perceived. But majorly, these festivals are being celebrated by the Christians to acknowledge the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is believed to be the progenitor of the religion (Adefolaju and Odedokun, 2017; Hillerbrand, 2021).

Apart from these major festivals being celebrated by Christians the world over, the other festivals are denominationally based. This festival ranges from Founder's Day celebration to Repentance Day, Feast of the Cross, musical engagements, and annual celebrations of one important event or the other. In Nigeria, it is apposite to note that festivals are also very common among different Christian denominations and inter-denominations. One out of these festivals is the Christian music festival.

Christian music festivals are festivals that serve as a way of expanding God's kingdom, acknowledging the supremacy of Almighty God for His love towards humankind, by sending His only begotten son (Jesus) through whom salvation is attained through music. The role of music cannot be overemphasised, as it plays a prominent role not only in religious institutions but also in the human culture. Music plays a significant role in religious institutions to the extent of making it a festival that is organised even both in religious and non-religious environments. They are mostly small, easily manageable organisations, they are often able to change their programmes at short notice and rise to "what is new" in their musical domain (Karlsen, 2007). It is an avenue that allows craving desire for entertainment to be met, different artistes are able to perform and as a result of this people from different communities are excited to attend it. Christian music festival provides a call to Christianity that is different from the typical Sunday sermon, and it serves as a rallying force for creating a sense of community and cohesiveness among followers (Ateljevic, Morgan & Pritchard, 2012; Caron et al, 2013). It is a moment of excitement and at the same time, recognition of God's presence.

Many scholarly works have been done on the concept of the festival. Some of these works have focused on the impact of festivals on the transformation of society (Orthner & Mancini, 1991; Crompton & McKay, 1994; Mayfield & Crompton, 1995; Esu, 2014; Selkani, 2018), others have focused on various religious and cultural festivals (Lentz, 2001; Olaniyan, 2014; Omosule & Adeleye, 2019). Also, some studies have been carried out on music festivals (Bowen & Daniels, 2005; Ballantyne, Ballantyne & Packer, 2014), the effect of music festivals on attendees (Dillon, 2006; Warren, 2008; Ballantyne, Ballantyne and Packer, 2014) and Christian music festival (Baker, 1979; Donaldson, 1981; Nelles, 1983; Stafford, 1993; Nentwig, 2002; Adedeji, 2007; Bracalente et al, 2011). However, not much attention has been given to Livingspring Christian Music Festival in Ile-Ife. Thus, paying adequate attention to the history, beliefs and impact of the Livingspring Christian Music Festival would bring to fore the importance of music festival to Christians and the Christian religion in its entirety. This is the space this study has filled. It traces the emergence of Livingspring Christian music festival in Ile-Ife. It examines the beliefs and



practices of LivingSpring Christian music festival. Also, it discusses the impacts of the LivingSpring Christian music festival on the development of Christianity in Ile-Ife.

Literature Review

Festivals are events found in every society. Every society has peculiar norms which do not only characterise it but also determine the life of its members. The word “festival” according to the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* as cited in Ogbenika (2020) means a series of performance of music, plays, films/movies, etc. usually organised in the same place once a year; a series of public events connected with a particular activity or idea. Festivals are events of ancient origin that have been arranged by human beings for the thousands of years, as well as the significant features of the cultural life of late modernity (Karlsen, 2007). Festivals and ceremonies are integral part of the African traditional society. This may be as a result of man as a social being, because, it is very rare not to engage in festive activities in the whole year.

Epson and Clarke (2015) defined festivals as the lifeblood of the society. They are of the opinion that, festivals are inseparable and crucial to enhance and maintain community well-being or quality of life. Selkani (2018) sees festival as a celebration of a specific theme to which the public is invited for a given season. However, he pointed out that, festivals have changed overtime: before, festivals were small and only the citizens of that territory attended them, but today, festivals are organised to celebrate important events: folklore, religion and so on. This assists people from different parts of the world for an exchange of caring experience. This is in relation to Imbeach, Anderson and Amankwa (2016)’s work on local festivals that, they are increasingly being used as instruments for tourism development worldwide.

van Vliet (2019) defined festival as a special category of events, but then with the caveat that there are gradations in this category based on how ‘typical’ a certain festival is as a representative of that category. For van Vliet, the kind of people that will attend a festival determines the meaning of that festival. It can also be described based on its characteristics, but still, with the knowledge that all forms of festivals cannot be described with a single set of necessary and sufficient characteristics. While some festivals do share same characteristics with each other, they are not always having the same characteristics (van Vliet, 2019). van Vliet’s definition is in line with Gertz’s view on festivals that was cited by Mosley (2019) that, festivals are usually associated with and characterised by specific themes that may celebrate a specific region, music genre, food, drink, film or culture. Therefore, the characteristics of each festival depend on the specific theme they are celebrating and the definition given to it. However, one or two characteristics of one festival may be found in another festival.

Festivals are cultural and social events that comprise a multitude of events that make the whole community to engage and celebrate cultural values. A festival is made up of many acts, either from one big stage or from many different smaller stages (Ronstrom, 2001). The events provide a sense of belonging to religious, social, or geographical groups, contributing to group cohesiveness. According to Jepson and Clarke (2015), festivals have the ability to entertain, educate, hold aesthetic value and provide a platform for escapism through the creation of an often-unique event experience. Every activity taking place in these events gives the meaning and value of each festival, they fulfil specific communal purposes either thanksgiving or commemoration.



Christianity as one of the world religions has expanded into many factions; different denominations and sects are found in Christendom. Nonetheless, there are two major important festivals that are being celebrated in Christendom, they are Easter (Resurrection) and Christmas (Nativity). They are also considered as most important Holy days within Christian calendars because there are many days celebrated in Christendom such as feast days, all saint days and many more (Black et al., 2018). The specific dates for Easter and Christmas vary among Christian denominations. For instance, Orthodox dates for Christmas and Easter (as well as the preparatory seasons of advent and Lent) vary from those of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism (because they are rooted in the older Julian Calendar rather than the Gregorian Calendar which is the civic calendar used in much of the world today (Black et al., 2018). Nevertheless, these two festivals are observed by majority of Christians. There are variety of activities that take place in these festivals, such as sermons, music, drama, choreography, prayer, thanksgiving and so on. They are performed to elevate the name of the Lord.

On its own part, music festivals offer unique opportunities for engagement with music that is more active than in other settings. Music has become a major vehicle for providing and dramatizing differences of all kinds. This has made music festivals especially important for investments in attention economy (Ronstrom, 2001). Karlsen (2007) asserted that music festivals have found ground in the society to the extent of creating group that contains the same perception, it can be found featuring almost every style, along with their affinity groups or presenting programmes of diverse styles, encouraging plurality, genre-mixing and crossover, both in the music and the audience. Music festivals are events consisting of a large variety of bands and musical artists performing shows, on numerous stages, over a period of days to a large audience, usually targeting young people (Rudolph, 2016). This kind of festival can be held at multipurpose halls, stadium or outside at a park, field, desert, forest, beach, on a farm. There is no limit to the variety of music and artists that perform at these festivals, ranging from Jazz, Rock, Hip Hop, R&B, Gospel, Fuji, Apala, Cultural Songs, among others.

Mosley (2019) suggested that music festivals provide a time and space where young people can experience personal growth and self-discovery. It has ability to draw attendees, to influence image and return intention. Music festivals can make attendee to see himself as member of affinity groups or musical communities of practice, united by their love for music, either in general or for the particular styles featured at a festival (Karlsen, 2007). As music festivals mostly are small, easily manageable organisations, they are often able to change their programmes at short notice, and rise to 'what is new' in their musical domain.

Christian Music Festivals

Christian music festival has gone beyond singing in the church auditorium alone in order to introduce pastoral message, but also it has gotten its stand to the extent that a whole day or even a week is dedicated to music. This can be annually or less than a year, within the church or outside it. Christian entertainment products, such as music, films, and novels, thus served two purposes simultaneously: through their rhetoric, they provided a call to Christianity that was different from (and for young people, certainly more engaging than) the typical Sunday sermon, and they also served as a rallying force for creating a sense of community and cohesiveness among followers (Caton et al., 2013). Christian music festivals provide a venue for Christian musicians to share their music, as these artistes were increasingly finding themselves shut out of the mainstream music industry. God's people need to understand that they have a special claim on the art of song



and even dance. The power of music lies in the power of the gospel story, which is one where God calls His people.

There are numerous verses that speak to music as important for Christians. Some follow below:

Scripture has many records of song and poetic verse. Adam sang in response to the creation of Eve (Genesis 2:23). He also sang in praise of God's sovereignty (Revelation 5:9). Even Jesus sang with his disciples (Matthew 26:30). The book of Psalms, is a compilation of Hebrew poems, songs, and also prayers. Songs and hymns were intended to transmit God's people in prayer as they wait for the coming of God's Kingdom. "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul" (Psalm 66:16). In Hebrews 2:12 we read "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises." Ephesians 5:19 states "speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord". In Revelation 14:3 we find "And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth".

The Christian music festivals usually have objectives or missions that are different from other world music festivals. This is because their objectives are most of the time in the direction of expanding God's kingdom through music. The organisers believe God speak to human beings in diverse ways, and uses different means to communicate with them. Music is seen as being a part of this means. One of the Christian music festivals in the United States of America (USA) that has been in existence for long is Lifest. Lifest aims to convert young people to Christianity, to help those who already identify as Christians to strengthen their faith and their ties to the church, and to provide a space in which Christian youths can experience elements akin to mainstream popular culture that they will find attractive (e.g., loud music, edgy fashion) but in a protective setting in which the ideological messages of these elements are tightly controlled (Caton et al., 2013). This is why Chase (2013) was able to note that these events and programmes foster an ecumenical Christian experience beyond the walls of the church; students, youth groups, and young adults across denominations gather at these events to fellowship, worship, and live out their Christian faith.

Historical Background to Livingspring Christian Music Festival

Livingspring Christian Music Festival (CMF) in Ile-Ife was founded through the inspiration given to Oladipo Osasona. Prior to the time of its final emergence in 1983, Osasona had had a burden to improve the quality of Christian music in Nigeria, since the mid-1970s. On a visit to Mike Ajayi in Silsoe, Bedfordshire in July 1979, he attended a live music performance in Ajayi's church, which gave him the experience needed for use of the Soundcraft Mixer. Before leaving London, he shared this burden with Funso Akeredolu, who also became interested in seeing it actualised, as long as it was of God. On coming back to Nigeria, Osasona partnered with Akin Akeredolu and Fisayo Aiyesimoju (a ward of his, and a student of Engineering Physics). They joined a group known as "Ambassadors for Christ" (formed by Banjo Edema), in order to have at least one functioning Christian music group. Early in 1981, a retreat for Christian music groups on the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University [OAU]) campus was organised, to positively impact gospel artistes; however, it could not hold, due to poor inter-personal relationships and a general lack of unity of purpose. However, later in November, the retreat was successfully hosted at the Youth Camp, Ajebo (which at the time was run by Miss Dick; it was later sold to the Foursquare Gospel Church, Nigeria).



After this retreat, Osasona stayed back for a personal retreat. During this period, he saw clearly in a vision, a beautifully-lit stage with musical instruments, lowered down from heaven with four “ropes”, which was later moved up back into heaven (reminiscent of Peter’s trance in Acts 10). He did not remember this vision until he saw the first Livingspring stage, lit up for the Festival, in April 1983; this was at the maiden edition, held from Friday, April 29 to Monday, May 2, 1983. However, before then, on April 24, 1982, Osasona in connection with Fisayo Aiyesimoju and Funso Akeredolu, launched Shalom Productions, a service organisation aimed at improving the quality of Christian music in Nigeria. This organisation was interested in organising regular music concerts on the University of Ife campus and working on the improvement of the Public Address Systems (PAS) in Christian conferences and other gatherings.

On July 24, 1982 (during the wedding of some brethren, Tunji and Sinmi Adigun, in Methodist Church, Eleja, Ebute-Metta, Lagos), Osasona had the opportunity of discussing the vision of Livingspring with Sam Adeleke, an Electronic Engineer, who was there for the video coverage of the wedding. Adeleke offered to support the Festival with video coverage. He further suggested the inclusion of Dr. Dayo Orisaseyi (now Oluwaseyi) of Renbo Services, Ibadan, who could give audio support; Dr. Orisaseyi thus joined the team. Also, Miss ‘Tokunbo Odubanjo (now Professor Cordelia Osasona), a student on the M.Sc. Architecture programme, introduced Arc. Bunmi Adedeji (a one-time President of the Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship International [FGBMFI]) to the group. He agreed to support the vision by printing the brochure for the Festival through his Salem Media printing outfit – to be paid for after it had held. Miss Odubanjo went on to design the first performance stage for the Festival. With respect to publicity, Leke Alder (then, a Law student of the University, now a renowned Branding Consultant) designed the stickers and posters.

A Planning Committee was put in place for the festival, chaired by Dr. Bayo Ajulo (now a retired Anglican Bishop of Okene), and held in the office of Dr. Funso Sonaiya (now a retired Professor of Animal Sciences), in the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ife. Apart from Dr Bayo Ajulo (the oldest among the committee), Wole Martins, William Mbansi, Kunle Awi (who was in charge of photography), Dr. Orisaseyi and Sam Adeleke, all the other members of the Planning Committee were members of the Ambassadors for Christ music group. As previously stated, this was based on an existing relationship with the group. Also, the Committee leveraged on the past experience of Funso Akeredolu, who had once attended a similar festival in England (Greenbelt Festival).

The name “Livingspring” (identifying this Annual National Festival of Christian Music), and based on John 7:38, was suggested by Fisayo Aiyesimoju, who went further to compose the festival Song. “Rivers of living water” in the passage was interpreted as “a living spring - *Livingspring*”. The festival song has a line that refers to the default venue of the annual celebration as “the land of the Living Spring”. This name had been in existence (and used for the festival) for more than ten years before Osun State was created – and adopted the slogan “State of the Living Spring” (now “Land of Virtue”). Two other Festival songs (that is, *Welcome Back* and *Farewell*), were composed by Femi Alabi, a Pharmacy student of the University, then.

Later on, “CMF” was added to the festival title because a Church in Ibadan founded by Femi Emmanuel was registered by the same name. It should be noted that Femi Emmanuel had once participated at Livingspring – as an exhibitor/ seller of Christian literature and gift items, under the trade name Fenman Books. His Church, Livingspring Chapel, therefore represented a clash, necessitating the adoption of “LivingspringCMF” (that is, “Livingspring Christian Music Festival”) for the annual celebration, to distinguish it from the Church.



The idea of LivingspringCMF is to bring Christians together, train them in how to organise things together (especially in the area of music), and then go further to encourage them to do whatever God had called each of them to do. In essence, the organisers are seed-growers; they are growing seeds from the grassroots, and when they have grown, they, in turn, can go places and make impact. Livingspring is a forum for Christian believers; it was set up for all Christians to “lift up holy hands” to worship God, celebrating the Lordship of Jesus Christ. As such, it is envisaged as a gathering of people who are pre-disposed to obedience, cooperation, and general godly behaviour; not a forum for flouting ground-rules, uncultured mob-action or otherwise unruly behaviour. It is a fellowship of God’s people where talents are spotted and nurtured. To this end, every born-again artiste is welcome. Already-established (possibly professional) artistes are also welcome – in order for “iron to sharpen iron”. Originality is the watchword, and is strongly encouraged. Equal treatment is accorded both established and up-and-coming ministers, as it is believed that God is no respecter of persons.

Those who go on stage are invited to do so primarily as ministers. Although, their medium of ministrations could differ. For instance, it could be in form of drama, dance, song, poetry, etc. However, anybody who mounts the podium to minister is expected to comport themselves in their ministration. Livingspring is not an occasion for competition, showmanship or other manifestation of “the flesh”.

From the inception of the Festival, it has been an annual, several-days’ event, held towards the end of April. The reason behind this is to make use of May 1st (Workers’ Day and a Public holiday in Nigeria). However, due to the pandemic that took place from 2020 till 2021, the Festival did not hold in 2020, while that of 2021 held on July 9, 2021, but virtually. Prior to the inception of the Festival, only secular bands were professional. Christian musicians were characteristically apologetic in the presentation of their (usually poor and unprofessional) performances. For example, a phrase like, “Please, listen to the lyrics and not to the melody of the song” was very common. Also, their spiritual content was relatively constrained.

Beliefs and Practices

Ultimately, the vision of “Livingspring” is to build an army of believers harnessing music (among other talents) in perfecting their walk and ministry, “till we all come in the unity of the faith.... unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness Christ” (Ephesians 44:13). The festival believes in the Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Livingspring believes God uses various methods or means to speak to His children for His glorification. It aims to showcase the talents that God has given to His children and to use them for Him. The organisers believe God has deposited one or two talents in man’s capacity, but due to circumstances that surround humankind, they may not be able to make adequate use of these talents. Thus, through this festival, many have been helped. This has been done by bringing different people from different walks of life for the upliftment of people in various dimensions, most especially through Christian music. It is believed that people can be healed of various illnesses while Christian songs are being ministered on stage.

As previously stated, an orientation of the festival that is strictly upheld is zero tolerance for showmanship. Livingspring was not established for vain display, competition, or to showcase any particular artiste. The Festival is a fellowship of Christians (not any Church establishment), as it has no branch or Church affiliation. The only award given to attendees is through the discovery of talents at the “Discovery Time”. This is a session where up-and-coming artistes and



professional artistes (acting as judges) come together to examine the content of up-and-coming artistes' ministrations (sometimes in terms of performance assignments they have been grouped together for, during previous training sessions). The best group invariably gets an award.

Another thing that triggered the vision of Livingspring was the proliferation of Christian associations (or fellowships) – such as Pastors' fellowship, Evangelism fellowship, Deacons' fellowship and so on. The question was: "Why is there no Christian music fellowship in the country?" Thus, the festival believes in bringing together various Christian artistes, under one umbrella, to the glory of God. Always held at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria, the festival exposes up-and-coming artistes (and those already established) to the spiritual, professional and social aspects of Christian music. Considering musicians to be often unduly melodramatic on stage, the festival encourages maturity in deportment and frowns at unedifying behaviour from invited ministers. LivingspringCMF makes use of voluntary workers, because it holds on the OAU campus, where there are many Christian fellowship groups. Letters are invariably sent to all such groups, and students from the various denominations are recruited into the volunteer workforce, to foster unity among brethren, and to give them on-hand experience in organising Christian programmes.

Livingspring organisers invite Christian music groups (or solo artistes) to minister at the festival. Prior to this, any intending artiste collects an application form from Shalom Productions, at Shalom House, Ile-Ife (or fills and submits an online form at the official website of the organisation: <https://www.livingspringcmf.com>). As much as can be verified, only artistes whose lives testify to a genuine relationship with God, believe in "holiness to the Lord", and in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, are allowed to minister at the festival. As previously stated, the organisers never seek to promote the programme by using the name of any popular music minister who might be billed to feature at a particular edition. They believe that as long as Jesus Christ is in attendance, there is no need to resort to name-dropping. Despite this, the festival invariably has new participants every year – both in terms of music ministers and members of the audience. It has regular activities like choreography, drama, seminars (on the rudiments of bass guitar-playing, drum techniques, improvement on Church Public Address Systems, song-writing, voice-training, keyboard techniques, and production of digital music); also dance drama (frequently featuring Christ's Chosen Vessels, Aafa Sule and others who are popular artistes in this genre).

Some of the ministers that have featured at Livingspring include Panam Percy Paul from Jos, Engr. Olumide Akinsanmi (Malaysia), Sola Allyson (Ibadan), Victor Oladokun (Christian Broadcasting Network, Virginia Beach, USA), Evangelist (Dr) Bola Are, (Ibadan), G-Force (Ile-Ife), The Amazing Grace Baptist Students Choir (Lagos), The Blessed Voice (OAU, Ile-Ife), Joju A. LAUTECH, (Ogbomoso), The Royal Dancers (Ile-Ife), Pastor Enoch A. Adeboye (RCCG), High Praise 1 (RCCG), among others. Some of the themes of the festival since its birth are listed as follows: "Let there be light" (86) "Anointing" ('90), "God's faithfulness" ('92), "Behold I make all things new" ('93), "First Love" ('95), "The Lion of the Tribe of Judah" ('99) "Forgiveness" (2005), "Walking with Jesus" (2000), "The Everlasting Arms" (2003), "God is more than Enough" (2002), "Jehovah Shalom" (2001) "A Mighty Fortress" (2013), "Total Obedience" (2015) "Grace" (2020), and "Choose Life," (2021). Some of the Christian seminars that have been held during the various festivals include: "What is Christian Music?" "Purpose of Christian Music," "Making melody in our hearts to the Lord," "Who will bring the king back," "The prayer needs of the Christian Music ministry in Nigeria," "The power evidences Christian Music," "Stage description," "Stage



Gimmicks,” “How to prepare for the show,” “Position on stage and Appearances,” “Fund raising for the Christian Music Ministry,” “International relationship within a group,” and many more.

Administrative

Livingspring does not have a permanent administrative set-up. The temporary administrative structure comprises mostly OAU students and some other members of the University community who are regular attendees. This structure includes worship teams, protocol/ accommodation teams, gate keeping, stage management, registration, ushering, welfare, media/ publicity, transport, and decoration teams. It also covers a workers’ coordinator, logistics/ special duties teams, sound engineers, video coverage, and prayer teams, as well as counsellors, Discovery Time assessors, and the Festival Director. These various groups are under the purview of the Festival Director, in particular, and the Planning Committee, in general.

With the experience during the maiden edition of the Festival in 1983, held at the Sports Centre of the University (in which rainstorms had disturbed proceedings), the Planning Committee decided to, subsequently, use an enclosed place for the Festival. They resorted to the use of Oduduwa Hall in the same institution, which has, till date, been the regular venue. Oduduwa Hall has many facilities and is convenient for the Festival. (Generally, Ile-Ife has no comparable facilities to those found on the OAU campus). The Hall and its ancillary facilities used are fully paid for. Also, over the years, the University environment has been found appropriate and conducive because most of the ministers and other participants come from various institutions of higher learning, all over the country.

To flag off each year’s edition of Livingspring, the Festival Song is rendered on the opening night. As stated earlier, it was composed by Fisayo Aiyesimoju (with the music transcription done by Tunji Aina and Kola Akinwande). The lyrics of the song are as follow:

We have come together
Where the Hosts of Heaven are gathered
To our LORD and KING,
In the land of the Living Spring;
So let us come with vessels not a few, ...
And let us open our hearts all anew
And give Him the glory
For His is the glory
And He alone is holy.
Let us do the best we can
To keep the Living Spring ‘flowing on
And let the whole world know
The power of our LORD and KING!

Again, as previously stated, there is the farewell song which was composed by Femi Alabi. He also composed the Welcome Song which welcomes all participants to the festival. Initially, to sing these songs, there was a Festival Choir called “AMBRESO” (an acronym derived from AM-Ambassadors, RE-Redemption Singers, and SO-Soul Reconcilers – three Christian students’ music groups based on the University of Ife campus). Expectedly, membership of Ambreso was not permanent, as members left both the group and the University, once their studentship was over. Over the years, however, another generation of Festival Choristers came up, and became known as the Livingspring Worship Team. This group consisted essentially of lecturers at OAU



and other workers within the University (and larger Ife) community. With the advent of this group, another dimension was added to Livingspring music ministrations: this was in the form of original songs composed to echo the Festival theme, pre-recorded at Shalom Studios, then later rendered and taught during live sessions at the festival.

Impacts of the Festival

There is no way that a festival of this magnitude would not have one significant impact or the other. These range from religious to economic and social impacts. Some of the impacts of the Livingspring Christian Music Festival are discussed in the following section.

Religious Impact

Being a religious festival, Livingspring has impacted the spiritual lives of participants. This is seen in the way many of them usually attend all the days of the festival, in order to praise their God with music and dance – and repeatedly come back to attend other instalments. Also, through the programme, many of the participants (and members of the workforce) have become ministers of God, with some even becoming General Overseers and Pastors of Christian Ministries, both locally and internationally. This is in line with Bleeker (1967) who notes that festivals usually serve to indicate when the gods made their true selves and their will known to the people. Some of the people who, as it were, discovered their calling through the Livingspring Christian Music Festival include Leke Alder, Lanre Adeboye (who works with Gbile Akanni, an evangelist in Gboko), and Joe Takon (a minister in Atlanta, USA).

There is no gainsaying that many people around the world are religious, and when generally considering people who are affected by religious festivals, almost everybody in the world is, to some extent (Akay, Karabulut & Martinsson, 2013). Many of the participants have been impacted spiritually, being ministered to either during song ministrations, the word of exhortation or the different seminars that are usually held during the festival. During a typical Livingspring Festival period, there is an influx of people on the University campus – people who are interested in singing, dancing, clapping and doing all sorts of things to make them receive the blessings of their God. Many Christians have used this festival to publicly display their commitment to Christianity, that is, to show the greatness of God, through the gift of Jesus Christ. Also, just like the Cornerstone Festival, Livingspring has a belief in Jesus Christ as the path to salvation, a view of the Bible as the word of God (which serves as another guide for a Christian life), and a firm belief in the responsibility to live one's life as a testament to Christ (Caton et al, 2013). With this, the Christian faith is being propagated and has continued to accept new converts, from the inception of the Festival till date.

Economic Impact

There is no gainsaying that the economic benefits of festivals are often obvious. This is because such festivals attract visitors, which stimulates the growth of tourism and other businesses in a town or region. Also, the place and the event, may simply be constructed elements of an economic strategy (Fjell, 2007).

Though Livingspring Christian Music Festival is said not to have been established for economic purposes, it nevertheless has economic impact in Ile-Ife; this is because many people usually come from different places to attend the programme. Some people board vehicles or motorcycles to get to this festival and this usually enhances the transportation income of the transporters. Also,



people buy Christian movies and music CDs during the Festival (on sale at the Oduduwa Hall, the venue of the event). The sellers usually make good sales during this period. Moreover, there are people who sell various snacks, proper meals, and other confectionery. Some of them come from faraway places to sell their products and make a profit. There are people who sell Christian literature, other motivational reading materials and gift items; usually, people peruse these and buy late into the evening. Some of them make great profits at the Festival and, in fact, more than in some other places or on other occasions. Every trader feels the impact of the programme in a positive manner. It also gives the opportunity for interaction between wholesalers and retailers. Livingspring is like an open ground for economic advantage, as artistes get subsequently invited to perform at wedding ceremonies, Church events, house-warming, and other ceremonies. Generally, the atmosphere is like a Christian carnival. Specifically, Christian books are seen as essential gifts and a veritable means of knowing God better – which underscores a major purpose of the whole Festival. Some people come, specifically intending to buy books, cassettes, CDs video, etc. after the day's ministrations, engaging in this even till past midnight. It is a Festival that many traders look forward to every year, because of the significant impact on the local economy. The renting of the venue for the event during the days of the Festival is a major component of the annual income of Oduduwa Hall management in the institution.

Social Impact

Increase in Socialisation

Many people invariably socialize at the Livingspring Christian Music Festival. Artistes become popular and participants meet new people. It gives people a greater understanding of how music can be performed in various ways. People get connected and they maintain such contacts with each other, subsequently. Through such contacts made at the Festival, many artistes get invited to minister in some churches and some social events – as previously stated.

Discovery of Talents and Ministry Calls

The festival has helped many participants discover their God-given talents, and those who had already discovered theirs, improved them through their exposure to other people's ministrations. Also, Christian musicians have come to know what Christian music entails – both in its rudimentary form and in deeper ways. Livingspring is an avenue that allows Christians to have additional communication with God and ask for His purpose. For example, Leke Alder, a lawyer, is a top brand-design man. He designed the first Livingspring sticker in 1983; today, he is branding many other products. He branded the logo of GT Bank, First Bank, Wema Bank and some others. It could be said that he had made use of the Festival as a launch-pad to greater heights. Another classical example is Evangelist Mike Bamiloye, who during Livingspring '84 prayed God for a ministry gift. His prayer was answered and he was able to start Mount Zion Faith Ministry.

Catalyst for Various Developments

Songs are composed, rearranged and produced through this festival (for example, *Arugbo Ojo* and *Daddy Daa-daa* by Prof. L. O. Kehinde, and *Today O, I Lift Up My Hands* by Wale Adenuga). Also, the popular OAU Anthem (*Great Ife*) was recorded in Shalom Studios (by Shalom Productions, the umbrella body behind the festival) free of charge. The production of Christian music and messages is also done quite easily through Shalom Productions. Previous participants at Livingspring are incentivised by lower production costs of their works at Shalom Studios. The song *Agbara T'o Ju Agbara Lo* (Greater Power) by the Mount Zion Films Production outfit was



recorded in Shalom Studios. Also, Ayan Jesu, a Christian music group, recorded its first music album in this studio. Other Christian hit songs like *Arugbo Ojo* were also recorded there.

Another area of spurring up latent talent was introduced in recent years. This was with respect to assessment of selected Main Stage ministrations. It entailed requesting a series of music ministers (who had previously been screened during the Discovery Time) to feature before the whole house. Members of the audience were then requested to vote the best ministration, by phone, to a designated number. Many persons invariably participate in the voting exercise to bring about the emergence of a winner. One of the interviewed respondents noted that he participated in the voting process – and ended up voting for the eventual winner. The exercise showed that many of the people who voted were able to spot talent (that distinguished the eventual winner).

Increase in the Level of Inspiration

Through the festival, some people who ordinarily would not have been interested in music (but who came to the venue merely to relax or buy things on display) ended up getting interested in attending the programme; several of them eventually became “converts” to musical performances. On the other hand, some who thought they did not have any talent at all, later discovered they had, while seeing what others were doing on stage. They were spurred to recognise what they have, and seek to develop their skills. In one way or the other, improvement is also being made on talents, as those who are professionals are usually being made to help the younger ones who are just coming up. Significantly, the festival unifies the Body of Christ, and also fosters corporate worship (as new and uncommon worship choruses are constantly taught by the Worship Team).

Exposure

Artistes gain exposure at Livingspring – and this makes them confident. Thus, they are better composed on stage and know the rudiments of stage performance. The seminars and discussions that are organised during the festival are often centred on contemporary issues affecting the music industry, and even beyond. They deal most especially with issues involving copyright laws, care of equipment and other engineering aspects. Some of the sound engineers affiliated with Livingspring were actually trained at the festival. It is also a place to launch new albums and works of music. Additionally, it is a good avenue for producers who are interested in finding new musical talents, especially in the Christian genre of music.

Conclusion

Music is a vital tool that has a great impact on human society and it is a tool that communicates with human emotion. Incorporating music into festivals that are usually for merriment and celebration of special themes, has been found to act as a special ingredient in making sure things go on well. In this regard, Christian music festivals like Livingspring, have provided a means whereby people from all walks of life can experience personal growth, self-discovery and increase in income, in the available time and space. This festival has hitherto helped many persons to become what they really want to become, as it has given them the platform they needed for people to get to know them. Also, since it has the ability to draw participants, it has used this advantage to influence many people. As one of many Christian music festivals in Nigeria, it is known outside the country, and has made a lot of impact in Christendom.



References

- Acquah, F. (2011). The impact of African traditional religious beliefs and cultural values on Christian-Muslim relations in Ghana from 1920 through the present: A case study of Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan area of the Central Region. Ph.D. Thesis, Exeter: University of Exeter.
- Adedeji, F. (2007). Christian music in contemporary Africa: A re-examination of its essentials. *Koers Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*. 72(1): 85-100.
- Adefolaju, T., & Odedokun, A. (2017). "Reflections on public holidays and productivity in Nigeria. *East Asian Journal of Business Economics*. 5(2): 48-54.
- Akay, A., Karabulut, G., & Martinsson, P. (2013). The effect of religiosity and religious festivals on positional concerns – an experimental investigation of Ramadan. *Applied Economics*. 45(27): 3914–3921.
- Ateljevic, I., Morgan, N., & Annette Pritchard, A. (eds.) (2012). *The Critical Turn in Tourism Studies: Creating an Academy of Hope*. London: Routledge.
- Baker, P. (1979). *Why should the Devil have all the good music?: Jesus music--where it began, where it is, and where it is going*. Cleveland, New York City: Word Books
- Ballantyne, J., Ballantyne, R., & Packer, J. (2014). Designing and managing music festival experience to enhance attendees' psychological and social benefit. *Musical Scientist*. 18(1): 65–83.
- Black, K., Kyrillos, B., Friedmann, J. L., Frankiel, T., Mavani, H., & Turk, J. (2018). *Rhythms of religious ritual: The yearly cycles of Jews, Christians, and Muslims*. Claremont, California: Claremont Press.
- Bleeker, C. J. (1967). The significance of religious festivals. In *Studies in Egyptian Religion, Dedicated to Professor Jan Zandee*, edited by C. J. Bleeker, pp. 23–26. Numen Book Series, Vol. 43. Brill.
- Bowen, H. E., & Daniels, M. J. (2005). Does the music matter? Motivations for attending a music festival. *Event Management*. 9(3): 155-164.
- Bracalente, B., Chirieleison, C., Cossignani, M., Ferrucci, L., Gigliotti, M., & Ranalli, M. G. (2011). The economic impact of cultural events: The Umbria jazz music festival. *Tourism Economics*. 17(6): 1235-1255.
- Caton, K., Pastoor, C., Belhassen, Y., Collins, B., & Wallin, M. (2013). Christian music festival tourism and positive peace. *The Journal of Tourism and Peace Research*. 3(2): 21-42.
- Chase, B. E. (2013). "Contemporary Christian music: Transforming Christian experience and identity. Master of Music Thesis, Florida: University of Florida.
- Crompton, J. L., & McKay, S. L. (1994). Motives of visitors attending festival events. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 24(2): 425-439.
- Dillon, S. (2006). Assessing the positive influence of music activities in community development programs. *Research in Music Education*. 8(2): 267-280.



- Donaldson, D. (1981, October). How Illinois' first rock fest got into a jam. *CCM Magazine*. 4(4): 52-53.
- Elizabeth, O. M. (2014). An appraisal of Osun Osogbo as a festival theatre. *European Scientific Journal*. 10(11): 326-336.
- Esu, B. (2014). Analysis of event quality, satisfaction and behavioural intentions of attendees of Calabar festival, Nigeria." *International Journal of Management and Social Science Research Review*. 1(1): 1-13.
- Fjell, L. (2007). Contemporary festival: Polyphony of voices and some new agents. *Studia Ethnologica Croatica*. 19: 129-149.
- Getz, D. (1997). *Event management and event tourism*. New York: Cognizant Communications Corporation.
- Hillerbrand, H. J. (2021, March 31). Easter. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Easter-holiday>
- Imbeach, N., Hodibert, V. A., & Amankwa, R. (2016). Residents' perception of host-guest, interaction about Kwahu Eater Festival (KEF) as a festival tourism. *Africa Development and Resources Research Institute (ADRR) Journal*. 25(9): 1-16.
- Jepson, A., & Clarke, A. (2015). An introduction to planning and managing communities' festivals and events. In Allan Jepson and Alan Clarke (eds.), *Managing and developing communities, festivals and events*, 3-15. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Karlsen, S. (2007). The music festival as an arena for learning. Doctoral Thesis, Piteå: Lulea University of Technology.
- Lentz, C. (2001). Local culture in the national arena: The politics of cultural festivals in Ghana. *African Studies Review*. 44(3): 47-72.
- Mayfield, T. L., & Crompton, J. L. (1995). Development of an instrument for identifying community reasons for staging a festival. *Journal of Travel Research*. 33: 37-44.
- Mosley, M. C. (2019). The influence of music festival experience on destination image. A Dissertation, Indiana: School of Hospitality and Tourism Management West Lafayette.
- Nelles, Wendy Elaine (1983, November). Greenbelt breaks record. *CCM Magazine*. 6(5): 54-57.
- Nentwig, W. L. (2002, June). GODapalooza. *CCM Magazine*. 24(12): 42-46.
- Oderinde, O. A. (1984). The lore of religious festivals among the Yoruba and its social relevance. *LUMINA*. 22(2): 1-12.
- Odotei, I. (2002). Festivals in Ghana: Continuity, transformation, and politicisation of tradition. *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New series. (6): 17-34.
- Ogbenika, G. E. (2020). Festivals in Africa and social mobilization. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*. 4(3): 291-295.
- Olaniyan, M. E. (2014). An appraisal of Osun Osogbo as a festival theatre. *European Scientific Journal*. 10(11): 326-336.



Omosule, S., & Adeleye, O. (2019). Greek and indigenous African festivals: A comparative study. *KIU Journal of Social Sciences*. 5(3): 327–333.

Orthner, D. K., & Mancini, J. A. (1991). Benefits of leisure for family bonding. In B. L. Driver, P. J. Brown and G. L. Peterson (eds.), *Benefits of Leisure*, 289-301. State College, PA: Venture Press.

Ronstrom, O. (2001). "Concerts and festivals: Public performances of folk music in Sweden. *The World of Music*. 43(2/3): 49-64.

Rudolph, K. F. (2016). The importance of music festivals: An unanticipated and underappreciated path to identity formation." *Georgia Southern University Digital Commons University Honours Program Theses*.

Selkani, I. (2018). Festival attractiveness literature review. *International Journal of World Policy and Development Studies*. 4(9): 89-97.

Stafford, T. (1993, November). Has Christian rock lost its soul? *Christianity Today*. 37(14): 14-19.

van Vliet, H. (2019, January). What is festival? *Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences*. Technical Report.

Warren, J. (2008). How does the brain process music? *Clinical Medicine*. 8(1): 32-36.

Interviews

Interview conducted with Professor Oladipupo Osasona, at his Shalom Productions House located beside The Polytechnic, Ile-Ife, Parakin, on 15/07/2021.

Interview conducted with Prof. Funso Akeredolu, Festival Secretary, at his office in Chemical Engineering Department, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife on 3rd September, 2021.

Interview conducted with Professor 'Femi Adedeji in his office located at the Department of Music, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria on 25/08/2021.

Interview conducted with Mrs Olusola Ogungbile, a usual bookseller at the festival. She was interviewed on 13/08/2021 at her shop located at OAU Central Market.

Interview conducted with Prof. Funso Akeredolu, festival secretary, at his office in Chemical Engineering Department, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife on 3rd September, 2021.

Interview conducted with David O. Ogungbile, one of the festival attendees. Interview was conducted in his office located at the Department of Religious Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife on 13/08/2021.

Interview conducted with Ifeoluwa Aluko, one of the festival attendees, at her residence located at Road 7, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria on 12/09/2021