



<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15429199>

## Evaluation of Markets as a Melting Pot of Culture and Socio-Economic Development in South East Nigeria, 1999 to 2019

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### ABSTRACT

*The presence of markets in south-east Nigeria is as old as the existence of the first settlers in the region. This stemmed from the fact that agriculture which was termed the primary economic mainstay of the people in the early times generated surpluses. The need to dispose of the surpluses gave rise to the emergence of trade, and then market centres. The presence of markets hitherto resulted in people of diverse cultures settling in the markets cities, in the bid to eke out a living for themselves. This study assesses the place of Markets as a melting pot of culture and socio-economic development in south-east Nigeria, with a view to capturing its contributions to the socio-economic development of the region; and to find out other ways through which the presence of markets can be gainfully employed to further foster the development of the south-east region. Descriptive survey design methodology was used in the study. Structured and validated questionnaire titled “how has the presence of markets contributed to cultural affinity and socio-economic development of south-east Nigeria” was administered to randomly selected traders, small and medium scale business owners, civil and public servants within the study area. The findings of the paper indicate that markets have contributed in the socio-economic development of the south-east region. The paper recommends among other things that the coming together of people of diverse cultures into the region as a result of the presence of markets could be used as an instrument to fostering national integration.*

**Keywords:** Culture, Markets, South-east geo-political zone, Economic Development, Social Development.

### INTRODUCTION

Economic activities are the main spring and life blood of any society. As such; an elaborate and organised exchange of various goods had been in existence many years before the beginning of money economy (Boluwaji, 1971). The exchange of these goods, as it were, has given rise to trade between states. Also, the advancement in the production of these goods is known to have brought about an increase in trade; and increase in trade brought increased markets and more trading centres (Boluwaji, 1971).

The origin of markets in south east Nigeria is known to be as ancient as the towns themselves. This was well illustrated in a northern Igbo legend in which *chukwu* was said to have created the market days, each named after a heavenly fishmonger (Njoku and Iwuagwu, 2008). Hence, the existence of markets in south east Nigeria was intimately bound with the gathering of the first people that lived there. As a result of the need to dispose of the surpluses generated by the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, and the variations in the natural and human resource

base, trade came into existence. The surpluses generated in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors were said to have given rise to economic inter-dependence which, on the other hand, gave rise to the need for the existence of markets. As a result, farmers, tool makers and other professionals were known to have entered into a symbiotic relationship amongst themselves unknowingly (Chukwu *et al.*, 2016). It was thus the need to satisfy some basic wants and needs, which may have given rise to exchange of goods and services, albeit through the barter system in the old civilization that led to the creation of open spaces where the exchange took place. These were the first stages of market development (Dike, 2013).

With the emergence of markets, trading of all varieties of goods began. The centre of local trade was thus the market and every town or village had a market. With the passage of time, the markets in the south east continued to grow, attracting people from within and outside the south east region to find settlements in cities where these markets are domiciled, either as prospective traders or as apprentice brought by his relatives and handed over to a wealthy trader whom, they trust would guide and coach the apprentice into becoming a successful trader in the nearest future. It is on this premise that this paper seeks to evaluate markets in south-east Nigeria as a melting pot of culture and socio-economic development.

### **Statement of Problem**

Markets in south east Nigeria, as have already been established, is known to be as ancient as the towns themselves. It has also been noted that with the passage of time, the markets in the south east has continued to grow, attracting people from within and outside the south east region to find settlements in cities where these markets are domiciled, either as prospective traders or as apprentice brought by his relatives and handed over to a wealthy trader whom, they trust would guide and coach the apprentice into becoming a successful trader in the nearest future. There is also the group of people who have settled in major or neighbouring cities where these markets are domiciled, not as traders but as craftsmen and service providers who see the markets as an avenue to sell their respective products. The above reasons is responsible for the settling down of many people from diverse tribal, cultural, traditional and ideological leanings, within the states in South-east to eke out a living for themselves.

However, the activities of the markets and their contributions as a melting pot of culture and socio-economic development in South-east Nigeria have over the years, been overlooked. This has created a yawning gap which has undoubtedly left a lot of people uninformed about the importance of these markets as a major source of internally generated revenue; and their contributions to the socio-economic growth and development of the society. This development has, in turn, left the policymakers and the uninformed individuals in the dark on how to use the presence of the markets in South-east Nigeria to promote cultural affinity and national integration. Hence, the need to address the challenge posed by poor historical documentation of the activities of the markets as a melting pot of culture and the oversight on the part of the government to fully showcase the contributions of the markets towards cultural affinity and socio-economic development of the society is among the motivating factors of this research.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The broad objective of the research is to evaluate markets in south-east Nigeria as a melting pot of culture and socio-economic development. The end goal of this study is to establish how these markets have contributed to the social relationships amongst people of diverse cultures who have found themselves in south east, in search of greener pasture. In specific term, the study would:

1. Determine the cultural affinity that has taken place as a result of interactions through the existence of markets in South-east Nigeria.

2. Show the extent markets in south east Nigeria have affected the socio-economic development of the region, and how these markets have contributed to the economic growth and development of states in the geo-political zone;.
3. Examine the extent the markets in south-east Nigeria have contributed in the growth of other sectors in the geo-political zone;

### **Project Impact**

The achievement of this research would be impactful in many ways. In the first instance, when the work is completed, it would be of immeasurable benefit to the readers, policymakers, lecturers, students, researchers, scholars, and institutions of higher learning, educational stakeholders, Ministry of Commerce, and indeed the entire populace. It would close the gap created by the lack of information on this area of study. Thus, it will become an additional resource material for researchers and educators.

Again, it will increase public awareness on how the coming together of people from diverse cultures to settle in the cities where these markets are situated to eke out a living for themselves has helped in fostering cultural affinity amongst the people.

Furthermore, the work will be impactful in raising awareness about how these markets have over the years, brought about economic growth and development in the states. Similarly, the findings of the paper will enlighten the general public on how the presence of these markets has contributed in the growth of small and medium scale businesses.

### **Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent has cultural affinity taken place in South-east Nigeria as a result of the presence of markets in the geo-political zone?
2. To what extent have markets in south east Nigeria contributed to the socio-economic development of the geo-political zone?
3. How has the presence of markets in South-east Nigeria contributed to the growth of other sectors in the geo-political zone?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Related literature to the subject under study as well as to the key concepts of the topic and those that would be derived from them were reviewed for the purpose of conceptual explanation and clarifications. This has helped form some opinions as well as a better understanding of this study.

### **Culture**

Culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, traditions, social norms, and behaviours of a group of people who share the same living environment in a specific region of the world. Culture as a concept encompasses key aspects of a society, which includes languages, education, religion, government, and the identity and personality of the people who are part of that culture (Kashima, 2019). Culture can also be defined as all the ways of life including arts, beliefs and institutions of a population that is passed down from generation to generation. Culture has been called "the way of life for an entire society." As such, it includes codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, and art. Aguayo *et al* (2021), on their part define culture as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of the society or a social group, that encompasses not only art and literature but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs. This definition of culture emphasised that culture is reflected in both physical elements of a

group or society, such as cuisines, fashion, music, dance, literature, or architecture, and also in the non-physical elements such as customs, traditions, beliefs, and values. Culture changes and evolves overtime. New beliefs, values, customs, traditions, and practices constantly replace older ones. Culture often originates from or is attributed to a specific region or location and is passed down from one generation to another through socialisation. Humans acquire culture through the learning processes of enculturation and socialiasation, which is shown by the diversity of cultures across societies.

A cultural norm codifies acceptable conduct in society; it serves as a guideline for behavior, dress, language, and demeanor in a situation, which serves as a template for expectations in a social group. Accepting only a monoculture in a social group can bear risks, just as a single species can wither in the face of environmental change, for lack of functional responses to the change (Jackson, 2015). Thus in military culture, valor is counted a typical behavior for an individual and duty, honor, and loyalty to the social group are counted as virtues or functional responses in the continuum of conflict. In the practice of religion, analogous attributes can be identified in a social group. Cultural change, or repositioning, is the reconstruction of a cultural concept of a society (Chigbu, 2014). Cultures are internally affected by both forces encouraging change and forces resisting change. Cultures are externally affected via contact between societies.

## **Market**

West African market places are defined as sites where people meet frequently in order to acquire, and to dispose of locally made and imported goods, to exchange item with relatives, friends and foreigners, and to engage in recreational activities (Ajayi and Crowder, 1975). According to this definition, a market is understood to be a physical centre for exchange of and services. Hanson, on his part, sees market as the business of buying and selling of goods and services of some kind, in an economy using money as a medium of exchange (Hanson, 1972).

Market may be perfect or imperfect. For a market to be termed perfect, it must meet the following conditions

- i. possess homogeneous commodity – that is, the commodity dealt in must be such that any one unit of it is exactly like any other;
- ii. have a large number of buyers and sellers;
- iii. buyers and sellers must be in close touch with one another;
- iv. does not possess any preferential treatment; and
- v. possess portability and transferability of commodity (Hanson, 1972).

On the other hand, a market is considered imperfect when the aforementioned conditions are not fully met.

The term market also takes other forms. For instance, it may refer to the place where securities are traded. Alternatively, the term may also be used to describe a collection of people who wish to buy a specific product or service (investopedia.com, 2020). Technically speaking, a market is any form or medium where two or more parties can meet to engage in an economic transaction – even those that do not involve legal tender. A market transaction may involve goods, services, information, currency or any contribution of those that pass from one party to another. Markets may be represented by physical locations where transactions are made. These include retail stores and other similar businesses that sell individual items to wholesale markets selling goods to other distributors or they may be virtual – that is internet-based stores and auction sites (investopedia.com, 2020).

Markets vary widely for a number of reasons, including the kinds of products sold, location, duration, size and constituency of the customer base, size, legality and many other factors. Apart from two most common markets – physical and virtual markets – there are other kinds of markets

where parties can gather to execute their transactions, namely black market, the auction market and financial market. A black market refers to an illegal market where transactions occur without the knowledge of the government or other regulatory agencies. Auction market brings many people together for the sale and purchase of specific lots of goods. The buyers or bidders try to top one another for the purchase price. There is also the financial market which refers to any place where securities are traded between two or more parties. These markets are the basis of capitalist societies, and they provide capital formation and liquidity for business (Dictionary.com, 2024).

Having discussed the different levels and categories of market, Flint's explanation of market will however, suffice for this study and the physical markets will be the main focus. Thus, the study concerns itself with the physical market places located in key cities in south east Nigeria.

### **Economic Development:**

Karl Seidman (2005) sees economic development as "a process of creating and utilizing physical human, financial and social assets to generate improved and broadly shared economic well-being and quality of life for a community or region. Daphne Greenwood and Richard Holt (2010), on their part, see economic development as "a broadly based and sustainable increase in the overall standard of living for individuals within a community".

Economic development has also been defined as the process of improving the quality of the lives of the citizens through a combination of factors. These factors may include, but not limited to the following: (i) raising the people's living standards through incomes and consumption levels of the food, medical services, education, etc, through economic growth of the people's self-esteem through economic growth processes; (ii) creation of conditions favourable to the growth of the people's self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions that engender human dignity and respect; and (iii) increasing the people's freedom by enlarging the range of their choice variables through an increase in varieties of consumer goods and services (Okowa, 1999). Economic development does not only involve physical and financial progress but also improvements in the political and social aspects of society (Ibezim, 1999).

Arising from a combination of definitions and explanations rendered above, it is possible to establish that markets centres in south east Nigeria have over the years provided a fulcrum for the economic activities which have increased the overall standard of living for individuals and the society. Apart from meeting the economic requirements of supply and demand of goods and services, the markets are known to provide a platform for social interaction for the participants from all walks of life.

### **Social Development**

Social development is all about improving the well-being of every individual in society so they can reach their full potential. The success of society is linked to the well-being of each and every citizen. Social development therefore, entails investing in people. It requires the removal of barriers so that all citizens can journey toward their dreams with confidence and dignity. It is about refusing to accept that people who live in poverty will always be poor. It is about helping people so they can move forward on their path to self-sufficiency. Every citizen in a society must have the opportunity to grow, develop their own skills and contribute to their families and communities in a meaningful way. If they are healthy, well-educated and trained to enter the workforce and are able to make a decent wage they are better equipped to meet their basic needs and be successful. Their families will also do well and the whole of society will benefit (<https://www2.gnb.ca.>,2024).

Social development occurs throughout life and explains how people recognise, interpret and respond to social situations. Healthy social development is a known protective factor for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing in the society. Daily contact and interactions with family members, educators and friends teach the people about the social world

and the rules, practices and values that support it (<https://beyou.edu.au>,2024). Social development is also influenced by wider networks including extended family, as well as participation in the community and culture around them. Through their relationships and connections with others, the people within a social environment build a sense of who they are and where they fit in the social world. By actively participating in these relationships, people also affect the ways they relate with themselves.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study evaluated markets in south-east Nigeria as a melting pot of culture and socio-economic development. A Descriptive Survey design was adopted to collect data systematically, allowing for the analysis of trends and relationships. According to Osuala (2005), a descriptive survey design is appropriate for studies dealing with people’s opinions, beliefs, attitude, motivation and behaviour. The study focused on Anambra, Abia and Enugu states, chosen for their robust viable and accessible markets within the south-east region. The population of the study included traders, business owners, public servants and residents, ensuring diverse perspectives.

A structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool. It included both closed-ended questions, primarily using a Likert scale and open-ended questions for qualitative insights. The instruments validity was confirmed through expert reviews and alignment with the study’s objective, while reliability was tested through a pilot study, achieving a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient above 0.70. Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, summarized demographic and key variables. These methods ensured a rigorous and comprehensive understanding of the traders, and residents in south-east Nigeria.

#### **Population of the study**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Name of Town where markets are located</b>	<b>Number of male traders</b>	<b>Number of female traders</b>
1	Ariaria market, (Abia state)	230	70
2	Eziukwu marke, Abia state)	230	70
3	New market (Abia state)	230	70
4	Onitsha main market (Anambra state)	230	70
5	Nkwo Nnewi market (Anambra state)	230	70
6	Eke Awka market (Anambra state)	230	70
7	Ogbete main Market (Enugu state)	230	70
8	Abakpa Market (Enugu state)	230	70
9	Gariki market (Enugu state)	230	70
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,070</b>	<b>630</b>

The population for the study is 2700 which is too large; hence Taro Yanne (1964) was used to obtain the sample size. Yanne’s statistical formula for finite sample size determination is as follows:

**Female traders**

$$n = \frac{630}{1 + (630) \times (0.05)^2} = \frac{630}{1 + 630 \times 0.0025} = \frac{630}{1 + 2.25} = \frac{630}{3.25} = 194$$

**Male traders**

$$n = \frac{2070}{1 + (2070) \times (0.05)^2} = \frac{2070}{1 + 2070 \times 0.0025} = \frac{2070}{1 + 5} = \frac{2070}{6} = 345$$

A sample of 194 female traders and 345 male traders totaling 539 was sampled from the nine markets, three each in Abia, Anambra and Enugu states respectively. A developed questionnaire was used for the study. The items on the questionnaire were structured on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree, (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Copies of the questionnaire titled “how has the presence of markets contributed to cultural affinity and socio-economic development of south-east Nigeria?” were validated by 3 experts in Measurement and Evaluation and the questionnaires were distributed to the respondent with the help of 3 research assistants. The entire 617 questionnaires were timely completed and used for the study. Cronbach Alpha method was used to obtain and consider the internal consistency of the items, with an overall co-efficient of **0.81**. The research questions were answered using mean, while T-test was used for hypothesis with the use of a Statistical Model of Impact Measuring, a combination of multivariate regression methods and statistical inference was used in analysing data generated from the study. Data analysis was carried out on SPSS 17. Only items with mean ratings of 2.50 and above were accepted as markets being a melting pot of culture and socio-economic development in south-east Nigeria.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION****Research Question 1: To what extent has cultural affinity taken place in South-east Nigeria as a result of the presence of markets in the geo-political zone?**

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	N	X	S.D	Decision
1	Local languages and dialects are frequently shared and learned in market settings.	300	700	700	100	1800	2.7	0.7	Accepted
2	Markets promote cooperation and collaboration between people of diverse cultural backgrounds.	600	450	635	115	1800	2.8	1.10	Accepted
3	Traditional attire and fashion are exchanged and promoted through market interactions.	392	751	327	330	1800	2.67	1.01	Accepted
4	The presence of markets has increased awareness and appreciation of different cultural practices.	573	628	309	290	1800	2.82	1.06	Accepted
5	Traditional music and dance are often showcased and exchanged within market environments.	800	700	250	50	1800	3.25	0.57	Accepted

6	The sale and trade of cultural artifacts and crafts in markets have enhanced cultural awareness.	379	823	541	27	1800	2.83	0.83	Accepted
7	Interactions in markets have fostered the establishment of inter-ethnic friendships and alliances.	310	1066	330	94	1800	2.88	0.75	Accepted
8	The presence of markets has reduced cultural prejudices and stereotypes among traders and buyers.	900	600	600	0	1800	3.0	0.81	Accepted
9	Cultural norms and values are respected and upheld during market transactions.	450	750	300	300	1800	2.75	1.01	Accepted
10	Markets have created opportunities for cross-cultural marriages and relationships in the region.	500	615	305	380	1800	2.67	1.13	Accepted

**Key: X Mean Standard (Standard Deviation)**

From the above analysis in table 1, it was revealed that all item from 1- 10 were accepted with the mean score of 2.7, 2.8, 2.67, 2.82, 3.25, 2.83, 2.88, 3.0, 2.75 and 2.67 respectively. This implies that the respondents are in agreement that local languages and dialects are frequently shared and learned in market settings, markets promote cooperation and collaboration between people of diverse cultural backgrounds, traditional attire and fashion are exchanged and promoted through market interactions, the presence of markets has increased awareness and appreciation of different cultural practices, traditional music and dance are often showcased and exchanged within market environments, the sale and trade of cultural artifacts and crafts in markets have enhanced cultural awareness, interactions in markets have fostered the establishment of inter-ethnic friendships and alliances, it has reduced cultural prejudices and stereotypes among traders and buyers, cultural norms and values are respected and upheld during market transactions and markets have created opportunities for cross-cultural marriages and relationships in the region as the extent cultural affinity taken place in South-east Nigeria has as a result of the presence of markets in the geo-political zone.

**Research Question 2: To what extent have markets in south east Nigeria contributed to the socio-economic development of the geo-political zone?**

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	N	X	S.D	Decision
11	Markets in South-East Nigeria have contributed to job creation for residents in the geo-political zone.	836	372	461	131	1800	3.06	1.01	Accepted
12	The establishment of markets has improved the standard of living for the local population.	500	700	300	300	1800	2.78	1.22	Accepted
13	The presence of markets has enhanced trade and economic exchanges within South-East Nigeria	700	500	300	300	1800	2.88	1.12	Accepted
14	Markets have provided opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to thrive.	300	700	500	300	1800	2.56	0.94	Accepted
15	Markets have encouraged the establishment of financial	437	591	349	423	1800	2.58	1.09	Accepted



	institutions and services in the region.								
16	The presence of markets has led to the growth of transportation networks and infrastructure.	1310	90	400	0	1800	3.50	0.78	Accepted
17	Market activities have promoted agricultural productivity through demand for local produce.	1400	300	100	0	1800	3.67	0.83	Accepted
18	The existence of markets has created opportunities for cross-border trade and exports.	900	800	0	100	1800	3.28	1.14	Accepted
19	The socio-economic activities in markets have reduced unemployment in the region.	1000	800	0	0	1800	3.56	0.46	Accepted
20	The presence of markets has improved access to goods and services for the rural population.	1100	300	200	200	1800	3.28	1.04	Accepted

**Key: X Mean Standard (Standard Deviation)**

**From table 2:** it was discovered that all the items from 11 - 20 were accepted with the mean scores of 3.06, 2.78, 2.88, 2.56, 2.58, 3.50, 3.67, 3.28, 3.56 and 3.28 respectively. This implies that the respondents agreed that markets in South-East Nigeria have contributed to job creation for residents in the geo-political zone, the establishment of markets has improved the standard of living for the local population, the presence of markets has enhanced trade and economic exchanges within South-East Nigeria, it have provided opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to thrive, it have encouraged the establishment of financial institutions and services in the region., it has led to the growth of transportation networks and infrastructure, the activities have promoted agricultural productivity through demand for local produce, it has created opportunities for cross-border trade and exports, the socio-economic activities in markets have reduced unemployment in the region and the presence of markets has improved access to goods and services for the rural population. As the extent markets in south east Nigeria contributed to the socio-economic development of the geo-political zone.

**Research Question 3: How has the presence of markets in South-east Nigeria contributed to the growth of other sectors in the geo-political zone?**

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	N	X	S.D	Decision
21	Markets have facilitated the growth of the transportation sector by increasing the demand for logistics and movement of goods.	900	900	0	0	1800	3.5	0.5	Accepted
22	The presence of markets has stimulated the growth of hospitality businesses such as hotels and restaurants.	800	1000	0	0	1800	3.44	0.53	Accepted
23	Financial institutions, such as banks and microfinance organizations, have expanded their operations due to market activities.	1100	300	200	200	1800	3.28	1.04	Accepted

24	The growth of markets has led to the expansion of communication and technology services within the region.	1000	800	0	0	1800	3.56	0.46	Accepted
25	Markets have contributed to the development of industrial activities by driving demand for locally manufactured goods.	900	800	0	100	1800	3.28	1.14	Rejected
26	The presence of markets has increased the need for security services, boosting the private security sector.	1400	300	100	0	1800	3.67	0.83	Accepted
27	The health sector has experienced growth due to the increased need for medical services in market communities.	573	628	309	290	1800	2.82	1.06	Accepted
28	Markets have positively influenced the development of the real estate sector through increased demand for commercial spaces.	800	700	250	50	1800	3.25	0.51	Accepted
29	Cultural industries, such as arts and crafts, have benefited from market platforms for showcasing and selling their products.	379	823	541	27	1800	2.83	0.83	Accepted
30	The energy sector has grown as markets have increased the demand for electricity and alternative energy sources.	310	1066	330	44	1800	2.88	0.75	Rejected

**Key: X Mean Standard (Standard Deviation)**

**From table 3:** it was discovered that all the items from 21 – 30 were accepted with the mean scores of 3.5, 3.44, 3.28, 3.56, 3.28, 3.67, 2.82, 3.25, 2.83 and 2.88 respectively. This implies that the respondents agreed that markets have facilitated the growth of the transportation sector by increasing the demand for logistics and movement of goods, it has stimulated the growth of hospitality businesses such as hotels and restaurants, financial institutions, such as banks and microfinance organizations, have expanded their operations due to market activities, it has led to the expansion of communication and technology services within the region, it have contributed to the development of industrial activities by driving demand for locally manufactured goods, it has increased the need for security services, boosting the private security sector, the health sector has experienced growth due to the increased need for medical services in market communities, it have positively influenced the development of the real estate sector through increased demand for commercial spaces, cultural industries, such as arts and crafts, have benefited from market platforms for showcasing and selling their products and finally, the energy sector has grown as markets have increased the demand for electricity and alternative energy sources as how has the presence of markets in South-east Nigeria contributed to the growth of other sectors in the geo-political zone.

**Discussions**

On the extent cultural affinity has taken place in South-east Nigeria as a result of the presence of markets in the geo-political zone, it was discovered that: local languages and dialects are frequently shared and learned in market settings, it promotes cooperation and collaboration

between people of diverse cultural backgrounds, traditional attire and fashion are exchanged and promoted through market interactions, it has increased awareness and appreciation of different cultural practices, traditional music and dance are often showcased and exchanged within market environments, the sale and trade of cultural artifacts and crafts in markets have enhanced cultural awareness, interactions in markets have fostered the establishment of inter-ethnic friendships and alliances, it has reduced cultural prejudices and stereotypes among traders and buyers, cultural norms and values are respected and upheld during market transactions and finally it have created opportunities for cross-cultural marriages and relationships in the region. This finding was in line with the discovering of Onah et al. (2019), who discovered that these markets create opportunities for social interactions among traders, customers, and intermediaries from different communities. These interactions foster mutual understanding and strengthen cultural ties. Also Ukaegbu (2020), found that frequent interactions in markets enhance linguistic exchange and the development of shared linguistic codes, which in turn foster a sense of belonging among traders and customers. Finally, Nwachukwu and Udeh (2022), agreed that economic activities in the region's markets encourage cross-cultural partnerships and long-term relationships. For instance, partnerships between Igbo traders and their counterparts from the Northern and Western regions of Nigeria often transcend economic transactions and evolve into social bonds, further solidifying cultural affinity.

On the extent markets in south east Nigeria contributed to the socio-economic development of the geo-political zone, it was discovered that: it has contributed to job creation for residents in the geo-political zone, it has improved the standard of living for the local population, it has enhanced trade and economic exchanges within South-East Nigeria, it has provided opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to thrive, it has encouraged the establishment of financial institutions and services in the region., it has led to the growth of transportation networks and infrastructure, the activities have promoted agricultural productivity through demand for local produce, it has created opportunities for cross-border trade and exports, the socio-economic activities in markets has reduced unemployment in the region and the presence of markets has improved access to goods and services for the rural population.

These findings were in line with Nwankwo and Okafor (2021), who reports that urban centers like Aba, Onitsha, and Nnewi have grown significantly around markets, leading to improved access to social amenities. The markets' economic vitality encourages public and private sector investments in infrastructure, which benefits the surrounding communities. Also Nwoye and Ibe (2020), emphasized that the robust trading networks in these markets enhance regional cooperation and promote the exchange of goods and services between Southeast Nigeria and other geopolitical zones. This integration reduces economic disparities and promotes unity. Finally, Okechukwu (2019), noted that the informal apprenticeship model in Southeast Nigeria is one of the most successful grassroots skill development systems in the country.

On how the presence of markets in South-east Nigeria contributed to the growth of other sectors in the geo-political zone. it was discovered that the presence of markets in South-east Nigeria contributed to the growth of other sectors in the geo-political zone through: facilitating the growth of the transportation sector by increasing the demand for logistics and movement of goods, it has stimulated the growth of hospitality businesses such as hotels and restaurants, financial institutions, such as banks and microfinance organizations, have expanded their operations due to market activities, it has led to the expansion of communication and technology services within the region, it has contributed to the development of industrial activities by driving demand for locally manufactured goods, it has increased the need for security services, boosting the private security sector, the health sector has experienced growth due to the increased need for medical services in market communities, it has positively influenced the development of the real estate sector through increased demand for commercial spaces, cultural industries, such as arts and crafts, have benefited

from market platforms for showcasing and selling their products and finally, the energy sector has grown as markets have increased the demand for electricity and alternative energy sources.

This finding is in line with the discovering of Ukaegbu and Okoro (2022), who discovered that banks, microfinance institutions, and cooperative societies have established branches near major markets to tap into the economic activities there. These institutions provide traders with access to loans, savings accounts, and insurance services, thereby increasing financial inclusion. Also Okeke et al. (2020), noted that markets create demand for technological innovations such as point-of-sale (POS) systems, inventory management software, and e-commerce platforms. The adoption of digital tools by market traders has spurred the growth of tech startups and service providers in the region. Finally Nnadi and Onuorah (2021), highlight how urbanization around major markets in cities like Onitsha and Aba has led to real estate booms, contributing to economic diversification.

## CONCLUSION

From all indications, the study serves as an eye opener on how far markets have been used as a vital tool in fostering cultural affinity and socio-economic development and relations among peoples of diverse backgrounds. For instance, local languages and dialects are frequently shared and learned in market settings; people from diverse cultural backgrounds learn to cooperate and collaborate with each other, thereby increasing awareness and appreciation of different cultural practices. These have created opportunities for cross-cultural marriages and relationships between people of different cultures residing in the region.

Also, markets in south east Nigeria have contributed to the socio-economic development of the geo-political zone, by contributing to job creation for residents in the geo-political zone, improving the standard of living for the local population, enhancing trade and economic exchanges within South-East Nigeria, providing opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to thrive, encouraging the establishment of financial institutions and services in the region., led to the growth of transportation networks and infrastructure, amongst others.

Finally, the presence of markets in South-east Nigeria has stimulated the growth of hospitality businesses such as hotels and restaurants. Financial institutions, such as banks and microfinance organizations, have expanded their operations due to market activities. It has also led to the expansion of communication and technology services within the region and has contributed to the development of industrial activities by driving demand for locally manufactured goods, to mention but a few.

Based on the above assertions, it is therefore, evident from the study that markets in south-east Nigeria play a vital role in the promotion of cultural affinity, and fostering of socio-economic development in the region.

### Funding

This research was made possible through the generous sponsorship of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund).

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