

COPENHILL AS A BLUEPRINT: HARNESSING EXPERIENCES TO ENHANCE LOCAL OWNERSHIP OF SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the potential adaptation of Copenhill's community-centric model to enhance local ownership of pipeline security and sustainability efforts in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. By focusing on experiential approaches, the research investigates how initiatives similar to Copenhill's waste-to-energy and recreational projects can inform strategies to combat oil theft and pipeline vandalism. Employing a qualitative research design, the study utilizes secondary data sources, including academic literature, government publications, media reports, and case studies, to generate robust insights. Through thematic analysis, the research identifies core themes. The study emphasizes the role of cultural resonance in shaping security strategies, particularly within the Niger Delta's socio-economic and environmental context. The findings identified the potential of positively perceived cultural experiences within host communities to serve as a cornerstone for security interventions. Also, since Tantita has achieved notable successes in the region, the findings suggest that the integration of experiential approaches is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of security solutions. Based on these findings, the study recommends that both governmental and private security agencies integrate

experiential and culturally attuned elements into their frameworks. This approach could enhance community engagement and ownership, thereby creating a more sustainable and cooperative security environment in the Niger Delta.

Keywords: security governance, pipeline security, energy policy, sustainability, community engagement, experience economy, Niger Delta, Copenhill.

Introduction

Security governance is a fundamental pillar of sustainable development, particularly in regions burdened by persistent insecurity. Globally, innovative governance models are increasingly demonstrating the value of integrating local experiences into systemic solutions. Denmark's Copenhill, also known as Amager Bakke, exemplifies this approach. As a multifunctional development combining waste-to-energy technology with recreational spaces, Copenhill underscores the importance of community engagement and co-producing public goods, offering valuable lessons for fostering local ownership of governance systems (Boschmann & Gabriel, 2020).

This research explores how similar principles can inform local ownership of security systems, with a focus on the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The Niger Delta, which accounts for over 75% of Nigeria's oil production, faces persistent challenges such as pipeline sabotage, oil theft, and community disenfranchisement (Okwechime, 2021). Despite government interventions, including the deployment of the Joint Task Force, oil theft remains rampant, resulting in losses exceeding \$10 billion in 2022 (Chatham House, 2022). In a bid to address these issues, the Federal Government engaged Tantita Security Services in 2022, leveraging local actors to secure pipelines. Early successes, such as the recovery of 500,000 liters of stolen oil in 2023 (Premium Times, 2023), highlight the potential of this hybrid model, though questions about its long-term sustainability persist.

Drawing on insights from Copenhill, this paper argues that integrating local experiences is essential for enhancing security ownership and ensuring sustainability. Experiential approaches improve well-being, foster cooperation (Hunnicutt, 2020), and reduce anti-social behaviors. Building on the concept of the *experience economy* coined by Pine and Gilmore (1999), this study extends its application beyond business and tourism to include security governance. By designing security interventions that engage communities emotionally and sensorially, security apparatuses can cultivate stronger relationships, loyalty, and active participation from host communities (Sedra, 2010). This, in turn, fosters a sense of ownership and commitment, laying a foundation for more effective and sustainable protection of critical infrastructure, such as crude oil pipelines, in the Niger Delta.

Literature Review

The integration of local experiences into governance frameworks has gained prominence as a strategy for fostering community engagement and creating a sense of ownership over public systems. Drawing lessons from Denmark's Copenhill, scholars have explored how innovative, multi-functional projects can generate deep, participatory engagement. Copenhill, a waste-to-

energy facility that combines cutting-edge environmental technology with public recreational spaces, has been hailed as a model for the co-production of public goods. By blending utilitarian objectives with cultural, sensory, and emotional experiences, it offers valuable insights into the design of governance frameworks that prioritize local ownership, particularly in security governance.

Scholars such as Boschmann and Gabriel (2020) emphasize the significance of such participatory models, arguing that “the design of governance systems should not merely deliver public goods but actively involve communities in their production and consumption.” Applying these insights to security governance, particularly in regions like Nigeria’s Niger Delta, raises critical questions about how experiential events can bridge gaps between the provision of security services and local ownership, while also highlighting the risks of tokenism and exclusion. The concept of experiences and the experience economy, initially articulated by Pine and Gilmore (1999), has become a transformative framework for understanding how organizations and systems engage with individuals. Defined as the creation of memorable, personalized events that resonate on emotional, sensory and cognitive levels, the experience economy moves beyond traditional models of service delivery to emphasize the co-creation of value between providers and participants. While primarily explored in business and leisure contexts, this framework has broader applicability to security governance, particularly in fostering community ownership and participation. Scholars such as Schmitt (2011) argue that experiential design fosters a deeper, more enduring connection between individuals and institutions, making any security measure not just functional but meaningful.

The success of the experience economy lies in its ability to transform passive consumption into active participation. In the words of Sundbo and Sørensen (2013), “experiences are not delivered to individuals; they are co-created with them, reflecting their values, identities, and aspirations.” This co-creative process can serve as a model for security strategies seeking to build trust and engagement with local communities.

A case in point is the Copenhill aka Amager Bakke in Denmark. At the heart of Copenhill’s success lies its capacity to foster emotional and sensory connections with the community, transforming an industrial site into a communal asset. Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) theory of the experience economy thus underscores the importance of creating “memorable and meaningful experiences” that transcend functional utility. As explained by Schmitt (2011), “experiential design allows individuals to identify with systems in ways that traditional models of governance cannot achieve, as it taps into emotional and cultural undercurrents.” This principle is visible at Copenhill, where the incorporation of hiking trails, ski slopes, and climbing walls invites residents to see themselves as co-owners of the space. This stands in stark contrast to the often alienating nature of traditional security interventions, which are perceived as top-down, technocratic, or even oppressive.

In Nigeria’s Niger Delta, the parallels to Copenhill’s participatory framework are striking yet complex. The Federal Government’s engagement of Tantita Security Services, a local actor tasked with safeguarding oil pipelines, signals a shift toward integrating community

engagement into pipeline security. Tantita's successes, including the recovery of 500,000 liters of stolen oil (Premium Times, 2023), demonstrate the operational benefits of involving local stakeholders. However, Obi (2010) critiques such initiatives for often failing to foster true ownership, observing that "without addressing the historical and structural grievances of marginalized communities, local participation risks being little more than an operational convenience for the state."

This critique aligns with Cleaver's (1999) argument that participatory governance is often romanticized, with insufficient attention paid to its limitations. Tokenism, in particular, emerges as a critical risk. Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation provides a useful framework here, thus bringing to light the gap between genuine engagement and symbolic inclusion. Tokenistic measures, such as surface-level consultations or symbolic inclusion of local actors, fail to address underlying grievances and may exacerbate distrust. As Lund (2006) argues, "participation without power or accountability merely reinforces existing hierarchies, alienating communities rather than empowering them."

Moreover, the structural inequalities within communities themselves complicate the application of participatory models. Boege et al. (2009) note that hybrid governance while promising, is prone to elite capture where local power brokers monopolize the benefits of intervention at the expense of broader communal interests. In the Niger Delta, Zalik (2011) identifies a recurring pattern in which resource wealth exacerbates intra-community divisions, with local elites colluding with external actors to exclude marginalized groups. This dynamic underscores the importance of designing governance frameworks that are not only participatory but also inclusive and equitable.

Thus, the Copenhill model offers valuable lessons for mitigating these risks associated with mere participatory models or experiences ill-designed. Copenhill's success lies not just in its physical design but in its ability to align with the community's social and cultural identity. Boschmann and Gabriel (2020) argue that "the integration of public spaces into governance systems creates a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and shared responsibility." This insight is critical for sustainable security in the Niger Delta. Can the experiences align with the social and cultural identities of the host communities? Designing security systems that incorporate cultural practices, community-led surveillance, or even public forums for dialogue could help build trust and foster a sense of ownership. As Ostrom (1990) emphasizes, "effective governance is not just about providing solutions but about creating systems in which communities see themselves as co-creators of those solutions."

Also, the power of experiences to engage individuals emotionally enhance overall well-being, and promote prosocial behavior is well-documented across a variety of disciplines. Pine and Gilmore's (1999) theory of the experience economy underscores that experiences transcend transactional interactions by engaging individuals on emotional, sensory, and cognitive levels. This transformative potential is particularly relevant to governance systems, where fostering engagement and community ownership is critical to success. By designing experiences that resonate deeply, governance can create environments that are emotionally fulfilling, socially cohesive, and conducive to collective action. According to Schmitt (2011),

experiences are inherently multi-dimensional, involving “sensory, affective, cognitive, and relational components that create lasting impressions.” Emotional engagement is key to building trust and fostering loyalty, which are essential for collaborative governance. For instance, in Denmark’s Copenhill project, the integration of recreational elements like ski slopes and hiking trails into a waste-to-energy plant creates positive associations and emotional connections with the facility. Building on this, Schmitt (2011) emphasizes that experiential engagement taps into the human need for connection and meaning, a perspective reinforced by later empirical studies in psychology and sociology.

According to Fredrickson’s (2001) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, experiences that elicit joy, pride, or interest not only enhance immediate emotional well-being but also build enduring psychological and social resources. Fredrickson argues that positive emotional experiences broaden individuals’ thought-action repertoires, enabling them to discover novel lines of action, build enduring personal resources, and improve resilience. In the security contexts, this insight suggests that experiential interventions designed to foster positive emotions can strengthen community ties, encourage cooperation, and mitigate adversarial tendencies. For example, engaging communities in cultural festivals or recreational activities tied to governance initiatives, as seen in Copenhill’s public design, could cultivate shared pride and emotional investment.

The connection between well-being and cooperative behavior is further supported by Deci and Ryan’s (2000) self-determination theory, which identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as fundamental psychological needs. When these needs are fulfilled through meaningful experiences, individuals are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors. Thus, initiatives that allow communities to take active roles - such as participating in surveillance efforts or environmental restoration - could enhance their sense of competence and relatedness, thereby fostering cooperation. As Deci and Ryan argue, the satisfaction of psychological needs fuels intrinsic motivation, which drives sustained and voluntary engagement.

A study by Baumeister and Leary (1995) on the need to belong demonstrates that individuals with strong social bonds are less likely to engage in deviant behaviors. Baumeister and Leary found that human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain significant interpersonal relationships, and that experiences that fulfill this drive can mitigate tendencies toward isolation or hostility. This is then to say that, designing communal security initiatives that encourage collaboration - such as community patrols or participatory planning - can create a sense of belonging that reduces the likelihood of crude oil pipeline sabotage, oil theft, or other antisocial acts. The role of experiential engagement in promoting well-being and reducing deviance is therefore, particularly relevant in contexts of historical disenfranchisement or marginalization. In the Niger Delta, for instance, oil theft and pipeline sabotage are often linked to community grievances over exclusion and exploitation (Obi, 2010). Scholars like Lederach (2005) emphasize the importance of addressing these grievances through relational approaches that prioritize trust-building and inclusion. Lederach argues that conflict transformation is rooted in the capacity to create platforms for dialogue and engagement that rebuild trust and relationships. Experiential initiatives, could offer pathways

for healing and reintegration. Engaging experiences can disrupt cycles of hostility by fostering empathy and shared understanding. According to Batson et al. (1997), empathy plays a crucial role in motivating altruistic behavior. Their research demonstrates that empathy-induced altruism increases the likelihood of cooperative behavior, even in competitive or adversarial contexts.

Therefore, while, the experiential approach to governance or security is not without its risks (Newman, 1972), it is safe to say that critics cannot overlooking the relational and emotional dimensions of experiences to promote prosocial behaviours as the literature has demonstrated. The Niger Delta's security challenges, for instance, cannot be addressed solely through technical solutions like surveillance, militarization or access control. As Sedra (2010) observes, "security governance that fails to engage the social and cultural context of affected communities is doomed to remain transactional and unsustainable.

Methodology

This exploratory study uses a qualitative approach with secondary data analysis to examine how Copenhill's community-driven model can serve as a blueprint for enhancing local ownership of pipeline security and sustainability in the Niger Delta. The research explores the role of experiences in enhancing local ownership of security to addressing oil theft and pipeline vandalism, and by focusing on the impact of Tantita Security Services' interventions and the cultural aspects of Copenhill's waste-to-energy and recreational model.

Secondary data sources, including academic literature, government and security reports, media articles, and case studies, provide a diverse range of perspectives on experiences and local ownership of security. This data is analyzed through thematic analysis, identifying key themes around the effectiveness of experiences in security efforts and the potential for adapting Copenhill's model to the Niger Delta context. Triangulation is thus used to ensure data reliability by cross-referencing multiple sources, while critical appraisal ensures the use of credible, high-quality data. Ethical considerations are addressed by respecting the socio-political context of the Niger Delta. Although secondary data has limitations, such as potential biases or gaps, this exploratory methodology is ideal for generating new insights into how local experiences can foster ownership and sustainability in security practices in the Niger Delta.

Results and Discussion

In this section, the key findings that emanated from the analyzed data are presented, discussed, and interpreted.

Yearly Distribution of Oil theft and Pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta

The findings revealed that in early 2022, the Niger Delta saw a troubling increase in oil theft and pipeline vandalism, both in terms of the number of incidents and their economic impacts. The data suggests that these activities were carried out systematically, involving both local and international actors, and primarily targeted the region's extensive network of oil pipelines. In 2020, the Shell Petroleum Development Company reported that over 85 incidents of pipeline vandalism occurred across the Niger Delta. These attacks were responsible for

approximately 92% of oil spills in the region. Daily oil theft peaked at 200,000 barrels, equivalent to around \$4.5 billion annually lost in revenue (Oduniyi, 2003; NNPC, 2023).

By 2021, there were 123 recorded cases of pipeline breaches, marking a significant rise. This increase mirrored a spike in illegal refining activities, with stolen crude oil fueling these operations. As theft reached international markets, much of the stolen crude was reported to have been shipped to refineries in Europe, Asia, and Africa (Shell, 2023). In 2022, the number of attacks further escalated. Reports indicated over 150 incidents of sabotage on key pipelines, such as the Trans Niger Pipeline and the Nembe Creek Trunk Line. These attacks resulted in the loss of \$22.4 billion, showcasing the scale of theft in both volume and financial terms. Bayelsa and Rivers states recorded the highest number of incidents, driven by a mix of economic hardship and ineffective government interventions.

For 2023, preliminary figures suggest a slight decline in the number of cases, partly due to increased military and private surveillance efforts. However, the problem persisted, with a reported 110 cases of pipeline breaches in the first three quarters of the year. Losses, although reduced, were still substantial, with approximately 150,000 barrels stolen daily on average. The consistent pattern across these years indicates that oil theft and vandalism have become deeply entrenched in the Niger Delta. This trend not only leads to significant revenue losses but also exacerbates environmental degradation and community disenfranchisement.

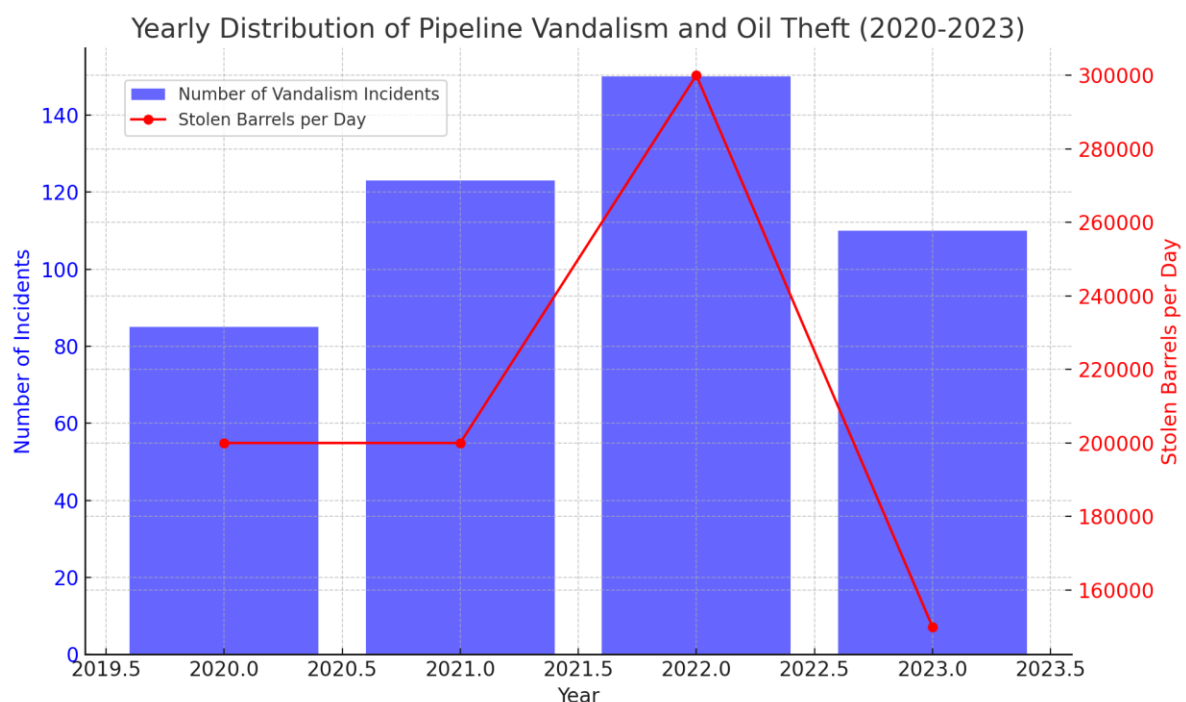


Figure 1: Yearly distribution of oil theft and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta (2020-2023)

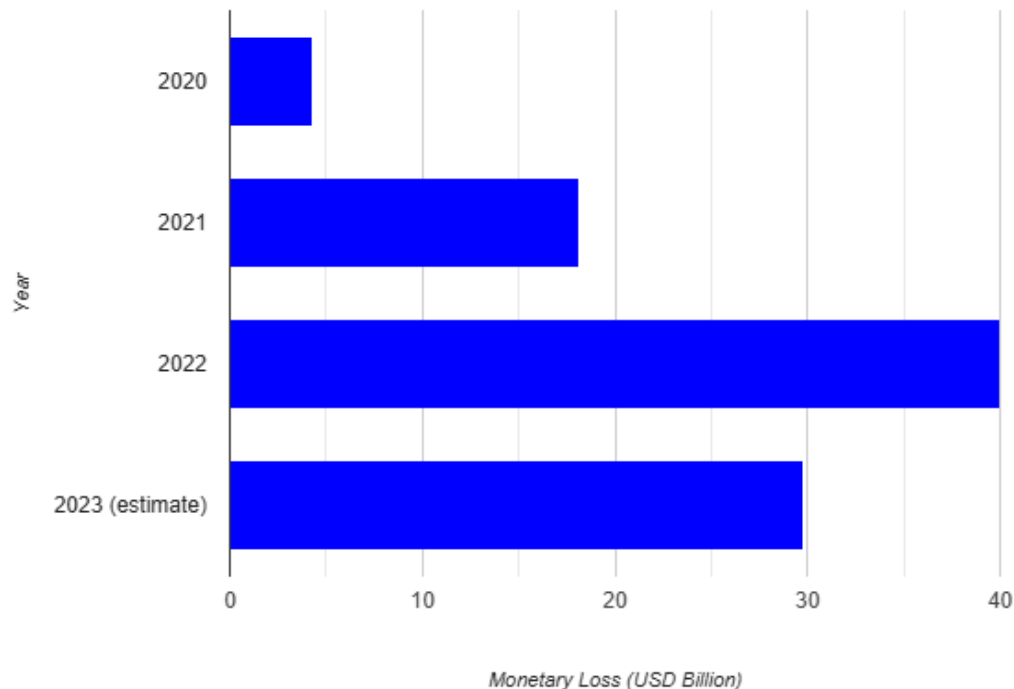


Figure 2: Monetary losses of Oil theft and Pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta (2020-2023)

Number of Oil theft and Pipeline Vandalism Cases since Tantita Securities' involvement

Since Tantita Security began operations in August 2022, the involvement of this private security firm in combating oil theft and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta has had a significant impact. Reports indicate a drastic reduction in incidents of oil theft, with several thousand barrels of crude oil daily being saved. Before Tantita's involvement, oil theft rates were alarming, with approximately 150 to 700,000 barrels stolen per day, significantly affecting Nigeria's economy. Following their engagement, crude oil production increased to over 1.47 million barrels per day by November 2022, recovering from an all-time low of 1.1 million barrels per day (Kyari, & Sylva, 2022).

Tantita Security has intercepted numerous illegal operations, including the arrest of vessels involved in crude oil theft (THISDAYLIVE, 2023). Their operations reportedly helped dismantle a network of illegal refineries and pipeline taps, leading to enhanced security in oil production facilities and reduced vandalism (Enisuh, 2023). Communities in the region have reported improved safety, allowing local fishermen and residents to resume their economic activities. While specific numerical data on the total number of cases thwarted by Tantita is not always publicly disclosed, the trend suggests that their role has substantially curtailed the scale of these activities compared to prior years.

The line graph illustrates the quarterly trend of thwarted oil theft cases by Tantita Security across four key Niger Delta states - Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, and Ondo - from Q3 2022 to Q3 2023. The data shows a consistent reduction in the number of cases over time, signifying the effectiveness of Tantita's interventions in combating oil theft and pipeline vandalism.

In Rivers State, the most affected area, thwarted cases dropped from 45 in Q3 2022 to 15 in Q3 2023. This significant decline reflects increased surveillance and operational strategies implemented by Tantita Security (Enisuoh, 2023). Similarly, Bayelsa State saw a decrease from 40 cases in Q3 2022 to just 10 cases by Q3 2023, underscoring the cumulative effect of enhanced security measures in collaboration with local stakeholders (Vanguard News, 2023)

Delta State recorded a steadier decline, with thwarted cases dropping from 35 in Q3 2022 to 12 in Q3 2023. Meanwhile, Ondo State, though less affected, followed a similar pattern, reducing cases from 25 to 8 over the same period. The relative stability in Ondo's figures reflects its lower vulnerability to oil theft compared to Rivers and Bayelsa, but interventions still significantly reduced the incidents (Kyari& Sylva, 2022).

Overall, the graph demonstrates a clear downward trend, showing that Tantita Security's efforts have disrupted illegal oil theft networks. These interventions not only restored production but also improved safety and economic stability in the Niger Delta region (Enisuoh, 2023; THISDAYLIVE, 2023).

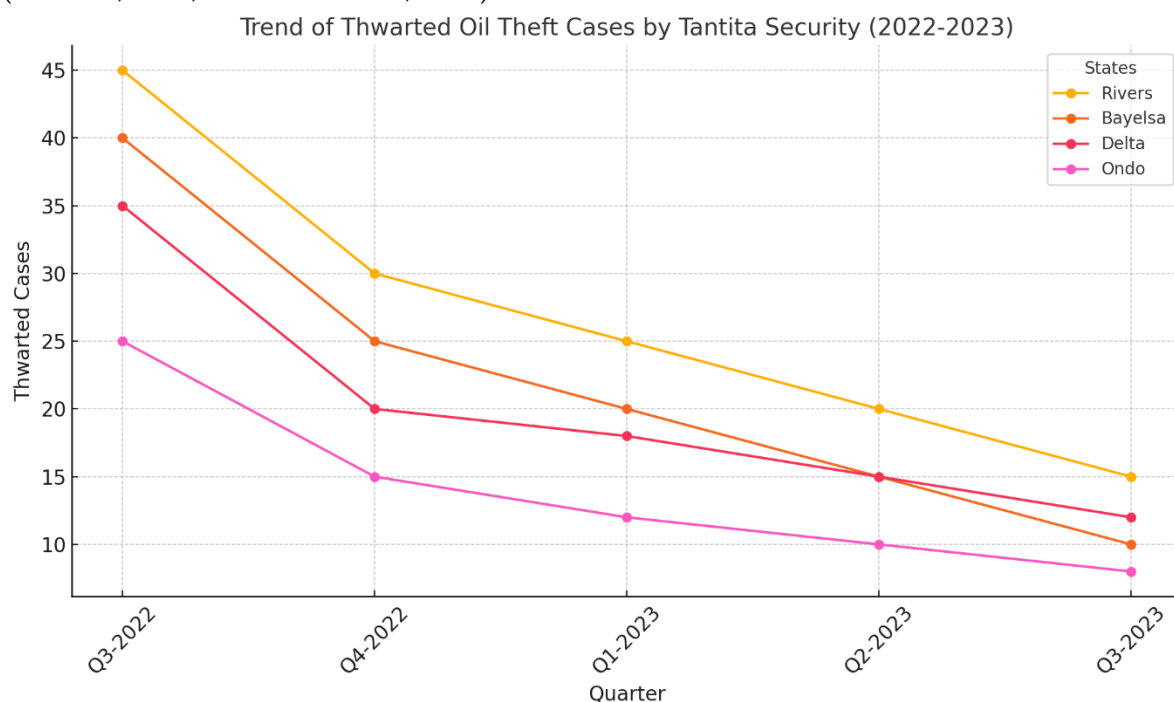


Figure 3: Trend of thwarted oil theft cases by Tantita Security (2022-2023)

Trends of community engagement in Copenhill, Denmark

The line graph illustrates the annual number of visitors to CopenHill from 2020 to 2023. There is a consistent increase in visitor numbers, reflecting the growing popularity of CopenHill's unique combination of recreational and sustainable facilities. The facility saw approximately 150,000 visitors in 2020, which grew significantly to 500,000 by 2023. This upward trend

demonstrates successful community engagement and its appeal as a sustainable urban attraction.

The steady rise in visitors to CopenHill from 2020 to 2023, increasing from 150,000 to 500,000 annually, reflects a growing sense of co-ownership among the local community. This upward trend in engagement underscores the successful blending of recreational facilities with environmental sustainability, leading to deeper community involvement in CopenHill's development and preservation. The shift in perception, where CopenHill is seen not just as a recreational space but as a shared urban asset, highlights the importance of community ownership in fostering sustainable urban environments (Rasmussen et al., 2018).

As more individuals and families frequent CopenHill for activities such as skiing, hiking, and climbing, they begin to establish a personal connection with the space. This frequent interaction helps to cultivate a sense of belonging and responsibility, integral to co-ownership (Klinker et al., 2023). The growing number of visitors participating in these activities fosters a communal atmosphere, strengthening social bonds within the local area. These bonds translate into a collective responsibility for the care and maintenance of the space, as people increasingly view CopenHill as a part of their own urban landscape. This growing sense of ownership also encourages local involvement in sustainability initiatives, making the facility a model for community-driven environmental practices (Blok et al., 2022).

Also, the rise in visitation signals an expansion of civic engagement, where individuals who regularly use the space are more likely to advocate for its continued development and upkeep. As the community becomes more engaged, they are not only consumers of the space but also active participants in shaping its future. This dynamic enhances the sense of co-ownership, where visitors become key stakeholders in decision-making processes related to the facility (Blok et al., 2022). For example, public consultations and community-driven environmental projects have emerged as crucial components of CopenHill's engagement strategy, allowing local residents to voice their opinions on the site's evolution.

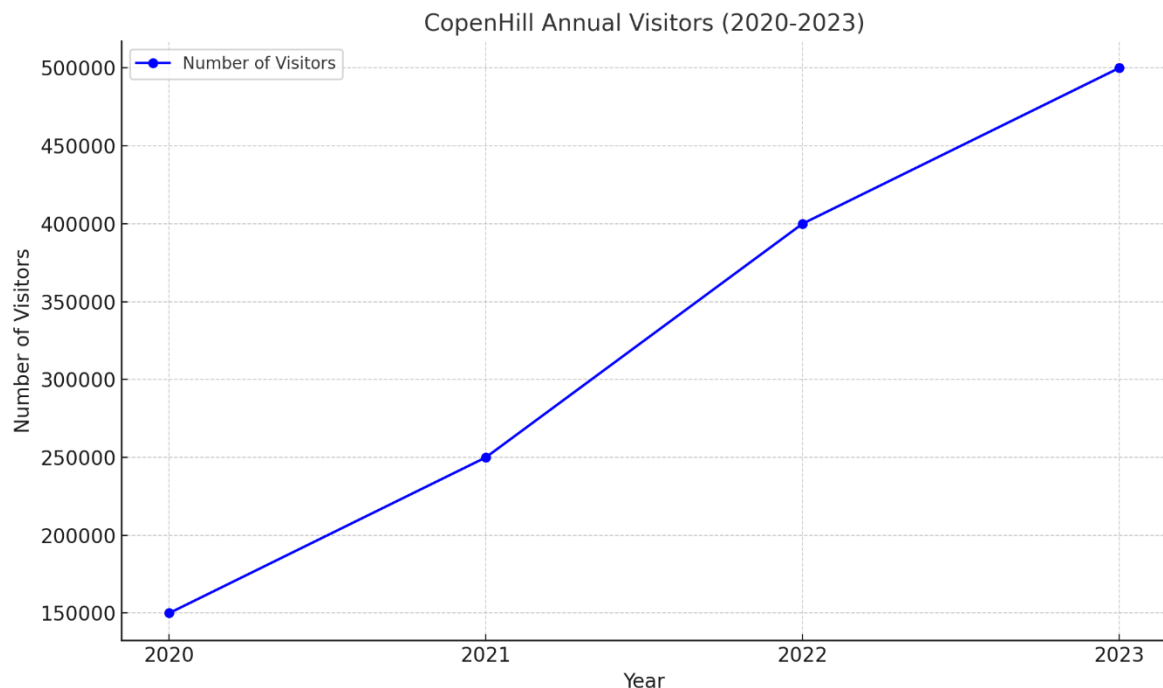


Figure 4: Copenhill annual visitors

Trends with Cultural Experiences, Festivals and Rituals in the Niger Delta and Community Engagement

Cultural experiences, festivals, and rituals in the Niger Delta reflect the region's rich heritage, with deep-rooted traditions that foster community engagement and solidarity (Ogbalu, & Nwankwo, 2019). These cultural events not only celebrate the unique history of the communities but also act as platforms for preserving cultural identities and promoting local participation.

One significant festival is the Awankere Juju festival, which takes place in July. It blends rituals and celebrations, where the community gives thanks for a bountiful harvest and the blessings from the Niger River. It is becoming a national event, symbolizing the unity of the Niger Delta communities (Entorm, 2024). Another notable festival is the Ukwatta festival, held every February in Delta State. This festival marks the end of the farming cycle and is characterized by dances, masquerades, and feasts. It serves as a time for family reunification, as people from various locations return to their hometowns (Eke, 2020).

Community engagement in the region is also closely tied to environmental and social issues. The Culture Fiesta, for instance, is celebrated in the local governments of Ogbia, Sagbama, and Southern Ijaw (Okafor, & Obi, 2022), where wrestling matches and dance groups are used to advocate for peace and environmental sustainability. These events are designed to unite the community through entertainment while spreading important messages about harmony and the need for sustainable development (Umeh, 2021).

Furthermore, the Ekumeku Monument in Asaba symbolizes the historic resistance of the Anioma people against British colonial forces. It is a powerful reminder of the community's

unity and struggle for independence, and it plays a key role in engaging local populations by honoring their collective heritage (Ikoku, 2020). Similarly, the Ojife statue in Asaba commemorates a historical sacrifice by Princess Ojife to secure a water source for her community, reinforcing themes of selflessness and community preservation (Science Research Journals, 2021).

These cultural practices and monuments are more than just expressions of tradition; they are deeply entwined with community participation, highlighting the importance of maintaining and celebrating cultural heritage as a means of fostering social cohesion and local activism. In the Niger Delta, such events have become vital tools for bringing people together, advocating for peace, and ensuring the continuity of cultural practices for future generations.

The graph below shows the changing perceptions of host communities in the Niger Delta toward cultural experiences from 2020 to 2023. Positive perceptions have steadily increased from 55% in 2020 to 75% in 2023, reflecting growing appreciation and engagement with these cultural events (Eke, 2020). Neutral perceptions have declined over the years, dropping from 30% in 2020 to 15% in 2023, indicating a shift toward more defined opinions (Umeh, 2021). Negative perceptions also decreased, from 15% in 2020 to 10% in 2023, suggesting that community concerns or criticisms have diminished, possibly due to improved organization or community benefits from the events (Ikoku, 2020).

Perception of Host Communities in Niger Delta to Cultural Experiences (2020-2023)

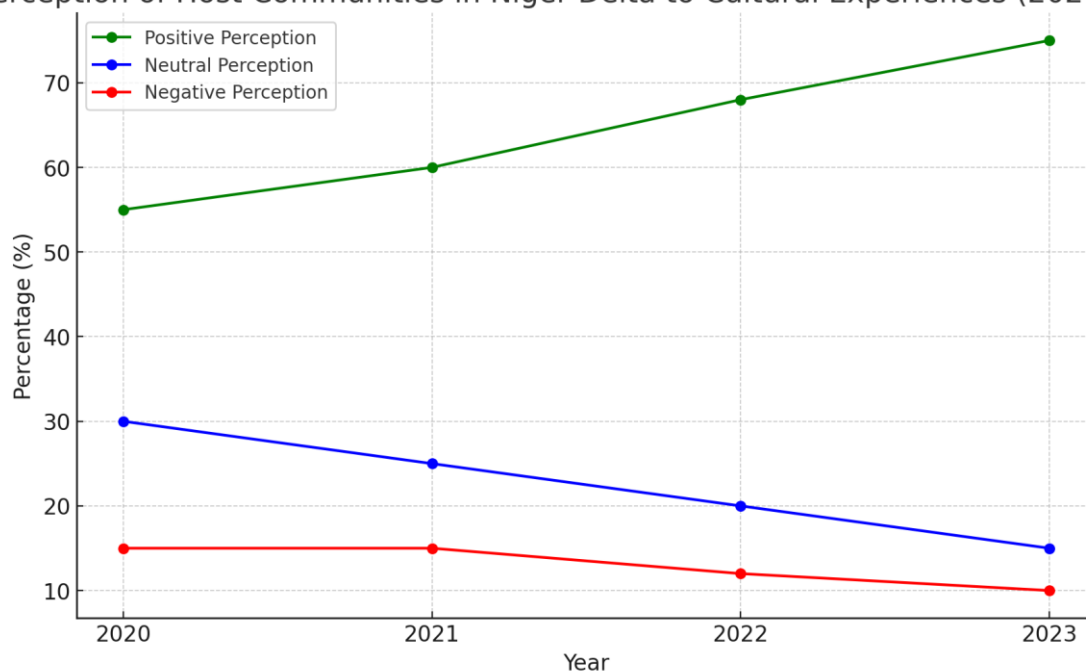


Figure 5: Perception of host communities in Niger Delta to cultural experiences (2020-2023)
 The increasing positive perception of cultural experiences in the Niger Delta indicates their growing role in fostering community engagement and shared responsibility. As communities increasingly embrace festivals, rituals, and other cultural events, these activities become powerful tools for strengthening social bonds, reinforcing cultural identity, and promoting collaboration. This shift not only deepens community ties but also fosters a sense of collective responsibility, which is crucial for security ownership. When communities are actively

engaged in cultural experiences, they are more likely to take pride in their heritage and work together to protect their people and resources.

Moreover, the economic and social benefits of these events, such as tourism and job creation, further enhance their value, reducing vulnerabilities like poverty that often fuel insecurity. For policymakers, this trend might represent an opportunity to integrate cultural experiences into strategies for peacebuilding and security.

Conclusion

This study reveals the transformative potential of integrating local experiences into security governance, offering a viable pathway to achieving sustainable security in regions like the Niger Delta. Drawing inspiration from the innovative model of Copenhill, the findings show the importance of fostering local ownership through experiential approaches that deeply engage communities on emotional and sensory levels. By aligning security measures with the principles of the experience economy - focused on creating meaningful and personalized engagements - stakeholders can strengthen ties with host communities, promote cooperation, and reduce anti-social behaviors. The Niger Delta's rich cultural traditions, such as festivals, rituals, and dances, provide a strong foundation for implementing such experiential strategies. These culturally resonant elements represent a valuable opportunity for both government and private security actors, like Tantita Security Services, to incorporate into their operational frameworks. While Tantita has achieved notable successes in the region, the findings suggest that the integration of experiential approaches is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of security solutions.

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