

# HARNESSING THE OJUDE-ObA CULTURAL FESTIVAL AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

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## Abstract

Ojude-Oba festivals are periods when the Ijebus and other people from the south west part of Nigeria converge as a group to renew their familial relationships, fortify their solidarity, cohesion and contribute to communal development through culture, music, food, art, fashion and merriment. In fact, they are sacred times when the people are free from social divisions and class segregation to unite as a community and show support by partaking in cultural activities that facilitates tourism, socio-economic development and communal development. In the light of this, the objective of this paper seeks to examine how the Ojude-Oba festival can be a tool for enhancing sustainable community development in South West, Nigeria. Qualitative method based on document investigation was adopted and the findings from this paper revealed that the Ojude-Oba has brought about tremendous community development that has led to urbanization and globalization in terms of trade, technology, entrepreneurship, industrialization and patriotism not just in Ijebu-Ode but in the entire South-West Nigeria. However, for this communal development to be sustainable, it concludes and recommends that the local and state government in collaboration with social and traditional institutions should enact policies that support the promotion and preservation of the Ojude-Oba culture from annihilation as they not only reflect the cultural identity and heritage of the South-West people, but play a huge role in enhancing sustainable community development.

**Keywords:** Cultural Cohesion, Globalization, Industrialization, Ojude-Oba Festival, Sustainable Community Development

## Introduction

Nigeria since its independence has been going through a myriad of problems ranging from sectarian youth restiveness, ethnic variance, religious conflicts, terrorism, banditry and genocide. These violent attacks are most often debilitating to human capital development and antithetical to community development. Thus, a unifying activity in the form of cultural festivals is needed and so cultural festivals are special occasions which are generally marked by feasting, cultural socialization and communality. Its observance brings about social and ethical control as well as indigenous entrepreneurship and religious unity. Therefore, cultural festivals create a potent platform that guarantees peace and this is so because peace is the only condition where any form of development can take place (Hart,2014).

Basically, cultural festivals have for years influenced and determined the spate of development in communities. In fact, cultural festivals in any community is an indispensable factor for the attainment of community development goals. Fundamentally, cultural festivals are not only a catalyst for peace, it encourages indigenous administration, communality and grassroots participatory governance that will steadily create a conducive and peaceful environment which will enhance the system with opportunities that will propel community development This suggests that

cultural festivals are transformational forces that facilitate industrialization, modernization and globalization (Olojede,2020).It is on this premise that the Ojude-Oba reflects the multifarious cultural heritage ,political and administrative sophistication prevalent among the people of the South-West, Nigeria and these socio-cultural communality is displayed during the Ojude-Oba festival on an annual basis. These festivals are most popular and peculiar to the Ijebu speaking community, a sub-group of the Yoruba ethnic group and this festival is always a celebration of the synergy of the Yoruba customs, fashion, politics, music, ethnic unity as well as the social and administrative welfarism. Thus, the Ojude-Oba is a significant medium of local governance, cultural education, administrative cohesion, familial bonding, communal consciousness, grass root leadership and intergenerational communication that transmits knowledge and experiences to future generations (Oladunni and Adeogun,2022) including the platform that unites all social, political, religious and interest groups using culture, leisure, glitz and glamour, arts, entertainment, revelry, commerce , industry and tourism to facilitate ethno cultural unity ,increased business opportunities, income generation, public enlightenment and by extension infrastructural and community development (Agbabiaka,Omoike,Abiodun and Omisore,2017).

Therefore, the Ojude-Oba is a remarkable socio-cultural tradition held every third day after Eid-El Kabir (Oresegun, 2016) which has not only metamorphosed into a tourist event, but has attracted corporate branding that has resulted in the generation of funds for the community. Proceeds from the festival are reported to be used for the provision of boreholes, electricity transformers, hospitals and for the repair of public schools, community roads, street lights and drainages. Hence, the precedence of the Ojude-Oba festival has revealed that the Ojude-Oba carnival has given room and created an atmosphere and lessons on the power of communitarianism as a tool for sustainable community development in the south-west, Nigeria. (Kukoyi, Aremu and Ololajulo, 2020). Again, it has been observed that Because of the entrepreneurship and intense commercialization that goes on during the annual ojude-Oba festival, the cultural carnival creates an opportunity for reduction in poverty and unemployment. For example, it has been noted that during the festival, industrialization and urbanization is increased thus transporters make a lot of money because all the means of transportation such as transportation by air road, railways and sea records an increase by virtue of different families, clans, interests groups, well-wishers, politicians, business owners and tourists coming to participate in the ojude-Oba festival. Similarly, there is always a speedy increase in industrialization particularly in the food, hospitality, banking, hotel, fashion, makeup jewelry, beads, realtor, clothing, arts, entertainment and photography industry because there is always the inevitable need for these services which ultimately accelerates cosmopolitanism, entrepreneurship and socio-economic communal development and eventually spirals down to the entire South-West Nigeria. In the light of this, this paper seeks to examine how the Ojude-Oba festival can be a tool for enhancing sustainable community development in South West, Nigeria.

### Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to examine how the Ojude-Oba festival can be a tool for enhancing sustainable community development in South West, Nigeria while the specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the prospects of the Ojude-Oba cultural festival in achieving sustainable community development
2. The findings of this study will offer the relevant ministries, local governments, traditional institutions and community leaders pragmatic data that will serve as a roadmap for partnership with the grassroots people and provide policy solutions on how the Ojude-Oba cultural festival can remain sustainable for community development

### Concept of Sustainable Community Development

Community development originates from the endeavors or ability of an individual, inborn, attained or expanded to exploit the resources of nature using his creativity and capital not only for his existing sustenance but also for the continuous advancement of his community. Thus, sustainable community development implies the procedures and outcomes of improving the well-being of the people, not of a group or some classes of people but all persons within the community and by extension, the totality of the citizens. In the light of this, sustainable community development is grassroots development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own communal needs. Hence, sustainable community development seeks to retain indigenous economic advancement and progress while guarding the long-term value of the community. Therefore, in order to achieve sustained community development, enhanced investments from the grassroots are imperative (Fapohunda, 2019). Similarly sustainable community development is concerned with consistent welfarism. It implies regular development at the grassroots level and so sustainable community development is the continuous communal transformation which involves an advancement in indigenous appearance, nature, condition or character (Onah and Oguonu, 2010).

Thus, sustainable community development is a process which the members of a community capacity is enhanced to create and consume wealth on a lasting basis. It requires a socio-economic, political and cultural environment which enables the indigenous people to engage in and sustain the development process particularly at the grassroots level. Therefore, sustainable community development is the continuous communal development that results into a long and healthy communal life, knowledge and unlimited access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living as well as being able to participate in the life of the community without putting the future generations at the risk of squalor. Essentially, sustainable community development incorporates all aspects of the community's well-being, from their health status to their economic and political freedom without jeopardizing on the future. This implies that sustainable community development is the consistent increase in the community's political, economic, agricultural, educational and technological progress that takes care of posterity (Olojede, 2020)

### The Seventeen Sustainable Community Development Goals

Goal 1: Eradicate poverty in all communities globally

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture in all communities

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages in all communities

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning in all communities

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls in all communities

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all communities

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all communities

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all communities

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation in all communities

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within communities and among countries

Goal 11: Make cities, communities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns in all communities

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact in all communities

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas and marine resources for sustainable development in all communities

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss in all communities

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels and in all communities

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development in all communities.

Source: Aransi (2017)

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Growth Pole Theory of Development**

The growth pole theory was propounded by Perroux in the 1950s and this theory focuses on the promotion of regional development which will serve as a focal point and incentive for further development in communities. Such a regional concentration helps to reap the benefits of cultural and technological advantage and makes the growth centre attractive to investors, entrepreneurs and activities that will facilitate communal development thus initiating sustainable community development (Opaluwa and Akanni, 2014). Hence, the ideology of the growth pole theory is that the idea of community development is not uniformed across an entire region but instead takes place around a particular pole and so this pole is often characterized by regular cultural

festivals that facilitates the development of industries at the grassroots that leads to the expansion of indigenous entrepreneurship, expansion in employment and other related investments that also contributes to technological improvements. This is because the scale and agglomeration at the pole propels a network of community development across the regions. In the light of this, this theory is relevant to this study because it reveals how cultural festivals can open doors to industrialization at the grassroots that transforms into globalization for community development, encourage indigenous governance, collaboration and dialogue.

## **Methodology**

Documentary method was adopted for this study. Hence, data was sourced from local, national and international academic publications. These consisted of relevant text books and academic journals. The data gathered from the aforementioned method was analyzed using qualitative descriptive technique.

### **Brief Historical Background of the Ojude-Oba Festival**

According to Fahm (2015) he explained that the Ojude-Oba means the king's fore-court or frontage. Thus, the Ojude-Oba is considered as one of the important festivals that brings all clans, kinsmen, families, religion and socio-economic groups from Ogun state together. The native age group (regberegbe), indigenes, friends and associates from far and near throng the palace of the Awujale of Ijebu land for the carnival and this festival is usually celebrated on the third day after Id-El-Kabir. In addition to that, this socio-cultural festival is one of the most glamorous indigenous, political, socio-economic and administrative festivals in Ijebu land and in Ogun state in general that has been celebrated for more than 100 years and has its origin in the entrance of Islam into the town (Oladunni, 2022). This lends credence to the fact that the festival began when Balogun kuku, one of the indigenous pioneers in the community became a Muslim and decided to gather his friends, families and well-wishers to pay homage to the king for giving them the opportunity and atmosphere to practice their religion peacefully. In another account, the festival was said to have started when Imam Tunwatoba led his friends and family members to pay homage to his friends who was also the Awujale of Ijebu land, Oba Fidipote during the Eid el adha festival. Imam Tunwatoba was grateful to the king for being instrumental to the liberty enjoyed by the Muslims of the community to practice their religion. Since then, the cultural festival has been monumental in facilitating the continued religious, social, communal, political and administrative development, unity and

tranquility in Ijebu land and by extension Ogun state. (Kukoyi,Aremu and Ololajulo,2020).

## **HARNESSING THE OJUDE-ObA CULTURAL FESTIVAL AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA**

Cultural festivals are commemorative celebrations that strengthen the identity of people in communities (Duke and Osim,2020) and bring together all social classes of people as it provides an avenue or outlet for building social cohesion and building ties (Hart,2014).Therefore, cultural festivals are an important source of community development because cultural festivals provide the opportunity for international public relations, globalization, international public administration and to see how the local communities use their culture to facilitate community development. Hence, cultural festivals are the subsets of grass root development concerned with engendering socio-economic development at the indigenous level. For example, cultural festivals provide higher returns on invested capitals, increases agricultural production, foreign exchange revenue and communal welfare. Thus, cultural festivals create a niche for small and medium enterprises and the opportunity to establish civic communal consciousness all of which contribute to the achievement of sustainable community development goals. Therefore, cultural festivals usually impact on the socio-economic and infrastructural development of host communities by attracting tourists from outside a place who are going to spend time and money in their host communities. Thus, these revenues generated from tourists activities will in turn provide new employment opportunities and taxes from these revenues can be used in paying for some economic and infrastructural development projects (Jimada,2018).

Furthermore, it is a significant weapon for attracting and sustaining foreign investors and reducing the negative international image considering the fact that Nigeria faces the risk of being treated as a pariah nation because of its notoriety for fraud, large scale corruption, human rights abuse, insecurity and drug trafficking. For instance, the continued daily execution of Nigerian youths guilty of involvement in illicit narcotic trades and other violent crimes in some strict Asian and Muslim countries of the world has made an international slur and joke of the rebranding project of Nigeria and other diplomatic/international relations efforts in the country. This has further contributed to an erosion of Nigeria's corporate image and resulted in brain drain. However, the sustenance of cultural festivals can serve as an instrument in salvaging Nigeria's international image in ways that attract foreign investors that lead to community development (Olojede,2020). Hence, it is an asset for economic and

social empowerment (Diminiyi,Oba,Abutu,Eta and Anselem,2022).

Again, Nigeria has been faced with multi-dimensional issues challenging its communal development and these challenges do not come without its attendant consequences particularly for grass root development. Thus, many of these challenges to community development can be traced to matters such as religion, political, ethnic or regional quagmires. At times these challenges also include the prolonged menace of the multi ethnic, multi-cultural and multi lingual crises that has resulted in the sabotage of the efforts to attain lasting peace and development within communities which has also been further exacerbated by political and economic corruption, poverty ,unemployment, militancy, uncompleted developmental projects, regional control for power, environmental degradation, ineffective poverty alleviation projects and social injustice within communities and regions and as such, since the people and culture are inseparable despite all of these challenges, then it is expedient that exploiting the cultural festivals as an agency for sustainable community development can be harnessed since it is a channel for stemming ethnic tension and propelling communality, industrialization, revitalization of the local economy, urbanization, reduction in poverty, unemployment and by extension sustainable community development (Ezebuilo and Ndukwe,2023). Fundamentally, cultural festivals are important in stimulating the growth and development of the grass root. This is because cultural festivals provides the market place for indigenous administrative skills, grass root governance and a wide range of goods and services as well as entrepreneurial opportunities (Abba and Abubakar,2019)

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Since culture is a way of life particularly for most Nigerians and especially for people living in the South-West, the cultural and informal sectors can be a productive branch of the economy which should be contributing to the development of the communities. In the light of this, there is the need for policy makers to exploit the cultural lifestyle of people as an agency to facilitate community development in ways that are sustainable by funding festivals that encourage communal collectivity. Therefore, based on the findings of this study, the following policy recommendations are proposed.

1. Policy frameworks should be made wherein the ministry of information, culture and tourism in collaboration with local governments, community leaders, regional leaders, agnatic head of families, community youth leaders, traditional leaders and women associations supports the Ojude-Oba cultural festivals technically, logistically and financially in ways that provide the planning and implementation



of initiatives that enhance social capital, entrepreneurship, social inclusion, participatory governance and a reduction in brain drain, crime and poverty in grassroot areas and underdeveloped communities

2. The federal ministry of information and national orientation in collaboration with journalists, broadcasters and Information Communication Technology experts need to aggressively promote international sensitization of the Ojude-Oba cultural festivals to showcase the cultural heritage of Nigerians using cultural festivals as a means to propel globalization and international public administration through mainstream and social media outlets to attract foreign investors, entrepreneurs, tourists, researchers, educators and entertainers in order to enhance broader

economic and social advantages, international collaboration as well as opportunities for speedy community development in sustainable ways.

3. Autonomous departments, institutes, agencies in institutions of learning and websites should be created wherein cultural education is dispersed in ways that prevent the annihilation of the Nigerian culture, reduce identity crisis and help the youths manage or solve conflicts at the infancy stage in grassroot areas. This will encourage patriotism, reduce ethnic tension, strife and divisions within communities and consequently produce social justice and peace that creates an environment for sustainable community development.

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