**The Globalization of Indigenous Cultural Festivals: A Global South Residents'
Perspectives**

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Highlights

- Residents remain indispensable in festival sustainability, but their level of ownership is very low or nonexistent.
- Local festivals are at risk of losing their authenticity due to Westernization/globalization and global commodification effects.
- Power distribution is unbalanced among festival stakeholders – residents' influence is inconsequential.
- Younger residents are more open to innovations in deconstructing and reconstructing the Osun Osogbo festival, but negotiations must be premised on local values and tradition.

Abstract

The globalization of indigenous cultural festivals has increasingly been affecting the way Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is portrayed and utilized as tourism products due to the deconstruction and reconstruction of cultural meanings and productions. Meanwhile, the role of residents in festivals' planning, management, and marketing is minimal at best, and non-existent at worst, despite the very essence of these festivals being deeply rooted in their own community culture, beliefs, and shared history. Framed by stakeholder and resource dependence theories and Indigenous Knowledge Systems thinking, this empirical study sought to investigate the interplay between residents and other stakeholders involved in the production and consumption of the Osun Osogbo festival (Nigeria). The findings revealed new theoretical and applied understandings about indigenous cultural festivals planning and management and proposed a stakeholder's framework to foster a better-informed planning and management process that is economically viable, socially just, and environmentally sustainable in the long term.

1. Introduction

Cultural festivals are a significant component of tourism destinations' offerings. As tourism products, they contribute to destination attractiveness and competitiveness, appealing to visitors from within and outside the area, as well as international visitors (Richard & Kings, 2022; Lee et al., 2014). Their evolution, growth, and popularity have been exponential in rural and urban areas (Scholtz, et.al, 2019; Small, et al., 2005), becoming a vibrant segment of the tourism and leisure industries (Getz, 1997; Getz, 2005). In many cases, festivals have become a crucial factor in urban development and revitalization and have been contributing also to the enhancement of the city's image and their residents' quality of life (Choi et al., 2020; Richards & Palmer, 2010).

Festivals have been presenting opportunities for the residents to showcase their cultural landscapes and rich intangible heritage (McKercher et.al. 2006), preserve local traditions and values (Xie, 2004), foster a sense of community (Derrett, 2003), promote economic development (Tanford & Jung, 2017), and enhance destination competitiveness (Getz & Page, 2016). They can function as a "distinctive identifier of place and people" (Derrett, 2003, p.57) and, consequently, serve as the outreach demonstrators of community values and traditions (Gursoy et al., 2004; Karlsen & Nordstrom, 2009). Additionally, cultural festivals present an opportunity for traditional and modern cultures to interact (Huang, 2017), providing a platform for cultural exchanges and a vehicle for national integration in a globalization context (Zou et al., 2021).

However, cultural festivals are also described as controversial sites for cultural contestation (Thomasson, 2022) and power struggles among varying interests in and around the local community. Getz et al. (2007, p.104) asserted that festivals are players within an environment "in which goals and resources for the event are negotiated by multiple parties". Local festivals can be competitive, attractive, and sustainable when their original meaning is preserved within their

own authentic culture and theme (Lai et al, 2021), as a true and uncontested representation of the local community culture, values, beliefs, and history of resident communities.

Song et al., (2015) asserted that the support of local people and visitors is extremely important for festival sustainability at the community level. Whilst residents have been recognized as indigenous legacy holders and hosts of cultural festivals, their goodwill, understanding, and support in organizing these events are often overlooked leaving them to deal with potentially negative consequences. In this regard, Aleshinloye et. al (2021a; 2021b) highlighted that it would be a herculean task to get the consent and cooperation of residents if they are left without much involvement in the planning, management, and marketing of the festival or any tourism-related activity in their community. Locals' apparent lack of enthusiasm, apathy, and reservations to support tourism development, including festivals, could stem from feeling excluded from decisions impacting their communities' lifestyles and overall well-being.

The influence of globalization on indigenous cultural festivals cannot be ignored. It involves deconstructing and reconstructing the cultural meanings and productions of local cultural festivals to attract international audiences and promote tourism globally. Phipps (2010) argued that cultural festivals should be negotiated largely on the indigenous terrain and to strengthen indigenous agency in the context of intercultural accommodations. Cultural festival sustainability is heavily dependent on a balance between private and public partnerships internal and external to the residents' cultural identity and orientation (Booth, 2013).

Events and festival production are resource-dependent and involve the participation of many entities/stakeholders with varying contributions, interests, and expectations. Accordingly, Getz (2008) identified as festival stakeholders those individuals who have a stake in the festival and its outcomes and who influence or are influenced by it. Within the intangible cultural heritage

context of indigenous cultural festivals, residents are the most important destination stakeholders (Megeirhi et al. 2020; Ramkissoon et al., 2020) as they are, amongst many other things, the guardians of traditions and key celebrations' participants (Bae & Park, 2018) and, as such they should be accorded special roles in the organization and delivery of any activity taking place in their communities, in collaboration with other stakeholders (Kruger & Heath, 2013).

Earlier studies on festivals and events have focused on stakeholder management strategies, generally ignoring residents' perspectives (Karlsen & Nordstrom, 2009; Savage et al., 1991; Van Niekerk, 2014; Van Niekerk, 2016). Most studies have examined the response of one stakeholder, such as sponsors (Crompton, 1994, Dees et al., 2006), visitors (Moital et al., 2012, Özdemir & Çulha, 2009, Thrane, 2002), or volunteers (Barron & Rihova, 2011), most typically in developed destinations, with the growth of festival and events as a Global South phenomenon remaining generally unexplored. Rogers and Anastasiadou (2011) asserted that "community involvement through participation, sponsorship, and attendance is important for the long-term viability of festivals and their economic and social sustainability". Regardless of the consciousness of the importance of community support for festivals (Getz, 2005), there is a lack of research into finding ways to help local people feel included (Rogers & Anastasiadou, 2011), most specifically in planning, organization, and content development of cultural festivals.

This paper responds to the call for further festival studies and specifically on the role of residents and their interplay with other stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in the production and consumption of festivals in Global South settings (Getz & Andersson 2010; Tiew et al., 2015). By using the Osun Osogbo festival (Nigeria), as a representative context of an age-long, traditional and cultural heritage festival, this paper responds to the need to better understands the dynamics associated with the planning and management of festival and events in Africa, where

festivals and events are increasingly utilized to diversify destinations' tourism portfolio. Drawing upon the theoretical lenses of Stakeholder Theory (Freeman et al., 2010) and Resource Dependence Theory (Getz & Andersson, 2010; Van Niekerk & Getz, 2015), and framed by Indigenous Knowledge Systems (Khupe, 2017; Smith, 2012; Chisenga, 2002) thinking, this study endeavors to unravel the complex relationships and power dynamics between the residents of Osogbo and various stakeholders involved in the Osun Osogbo festival. These frameworks provide a robust foundation for understanding the dependencies and interactions that shape the festival's planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. The purpose of this paper is threefold: first, to delve into the extent of Osogbo residents' involvement in the festival's lifecycle; second, to explore the nature of relationships and power relations between the residents and other stakeholders; and third, to propose a comprehensive framework aimed at improving stakeholders short-term and long-term relationships management processes in indigenous community-based (cultural) festival settings. Through this investigation, the study seeks to contribute valuable insights to the expanding field of festival and events studies, particularly in the context of the Global South, where such communal celebrations hold significant socio-economic implications.

The Osun Osogbo festival, as a vibrant and significant cultural event held annually in Osogbo, Nigeria, offers a unique lens through which to explore community involvement in cultural festivals and their impacts on local traditions and values. This paper presents findings derived from participant observations focused on community dynamics and interactions among various festival stakeholders, photo diary records collection, and semi-structured interviews (24) with Osogbo residents, using a purposeful snowball sampling method to evaluate their involvement in the festival's planning and implementation, along with their relationships and power dynamics

with other stakeholders. The research was framed by three critical questions: 1) To what extent are Osogbo residents involved in the cultural production and presentation of the Osun Osogbo festival? 2) What role do residents play (if at all) in the construction and deconstruction of the meanings, values, and history of the Osun Osogbo festival? 3) How does the festival affect the local community's traditional values and cultural heritage in both the immediate and long-term?

Based on three main themes emerging from the study - 'Westernization, Authenticity and Global Commodification'; 'Power Dynamics in Context'; and 'Resident Involvement Festival (Tourism) Development', new theoretical and applied understandings about indigenous cultural festivals planning and management are discussed and a framework to improve stakeholders relationships management processes in indigenous community-based cultural festival settings is proposed.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Stakeholder Theory and Cultural Festival

According to Jones et al. (2007), stakeholder theory posits that firms bear a responsibility towards a diverse spectrum of stakeholders, encompassing individual customers as well as society. The Stakeholder Theory is predicated on the idea that value is created on a medium- and long-term orientation and that any individual (i.e., third party) who is affected or influences the firm's activities and policies has a dependent connection with them (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010). There exist three distinct approaches within the framework of Stakeholder Theory: the first, referred to as the empirical approach, addresses the organizational environment and clarifies how external forces interact with the organization's limited control (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). The instrumental approach involves a strategic corporate vision that balances the

interests of various stakeholders to meet the expectations of a broad range of stakeholders. Lastly, the normative approach analyzes the legitimacy of stakeholders and their rights to receive attention from the organization. Freeman (1984, p46) characterizes a firm's stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objective". Power, legitimacy, and urgency are the characteristics of the stakeholders that make them stand out in negotiations, whether consciously or unconsciously.

In the tourism context, stakeholders could be defined as anyone who is impacted by development positively or negatively, resulting in reducing the potential conflict between the tourists and host community, thus shaping the way tourism develops (Bramwell & Lane, 1999). Similarly, the term stakeholders refers to a group or individuals who have a legitimate interest in the destination activities and thus have either the power to affect the destination performance and /or have a stake in its performance (Sautter & Leisen, 1999; Van Niekerk, 2014). Thus Getz (2008) identified festival stakeholders as those individuals who have a stake in the festival and its outcomes and who influence or are influenced by it.

Scholars (Getz et al., 2007; Todd et al., 2017; Van Niekerk & Getz, 2015) have classified stakeholders into two categories: primary and secondary according to their importance to the event. Employees, volunteers, sponsors, suppliers, spectators, attendees, and participants would be the primary stakeholders. They can have a formal role or a contractual relationship with the organization (Van Niekerk & Getz, 2015). Government, residents, media, and travel agencies would be of secondary importance because the event organizer is not directly responsible for managing it (Reid & Arcodia, 2007). Getz et al. (2007) analyzed how researchers have classified the stakeholders involved in their festival and acknowledged that some stakeholders are occasionally related to the event while others have a long-term relationship.

Van Niekerk and Getz (2015) proposed that festival stakeholders can be internal or external for the organization and identified eight universal categories of festival stakeholders. Lastly, they differentiated them into 45 unique groups that can exist, or not, in a specific festival context. Nevertheless, it is important to evidence that each event is unique, and stakeholders should be classified according to their relevance in the subject studied (Todd et al., 2017) as well as the study context under investigation. In their study, Getz et al. (2007) examined 13 festivals in Canada and Sweden and identified various categories of stakeholders. These included regulators, allies and collaborators, co-producers, facilitators, suppliers, venues, the audience, and those impacted by the festivals, as well as the festival organizations themselves, which encompassed owners, investors, employees, and volunteers. Considering so many agents and their interactions, one could assume that festivals are a collaborative discretionary effort of all parts involved in its organization as a "voluntary network of stakeholders" (Getz et al., 2007, p. 121), that must work together to make the event possible.

2.2 Resource Dependence Theory, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Cultural Festival

Dependence theory has its roots in political science, but inter-organizational context-dependence occurs when one stakeholder has a relevant need and another stakeholder controls the resources "that satisfy the other's need" (Getz & Andersson, 2010, p. 533). When analyzing Italian music festivals, Presenza & Iocca (2012) found that organizers are highly dependent on stakeholders responsible for providing funds and low dependent on logistics and facilities-related groups. They also evidenced that the network of relationships between festival stakeholders (i.e., media, artists, sponsors, government agency, local authority) in more than 20 editions was considered as intense.

Church & Coles' (2007) "social production of power" is reflected in festivals, as they have historically been considered displays of power within and over communities (Rinaldo, 2002). Power is determined by every stakeholder's degree of interest in the event, their financial resources, resource ownership, and decision-making influence (Reid, 2011). More specifically, these power dynamics, in turn, determine how events are built, organized, and delivered, as well as the impact they have on attendees and other event consumers (Jepson & Clarke, 2014). Power dynamics are a critical issue in the achievement of festival goals (Adongo & Kim, 2018). Analyzing power relationships, Getz and Andersson (2010) found four patterns of dependency among festival stakeholders: venue dependence, government dependence, customers' dependence, and sponsor dependence. Stakeholders' relationships with festival organizers are generally unequal (Getz & Andersson, 2010; Presenza & Iocca, 2012). Therefore, it is important to recognize how the dimensions of power, legitimacy, urgency, and dependence are balanced in the festival context. Stakeholders' network and resource-dependent relationships can shape festivals' strategic choices. A strong network and formal collaboration among stakeholders can reduce uncertainty. Festivals need to manage relations, develop networks, and neuter support of the host communities to avoid scarcity, fluctuation, and variability of resource needs (Getz & Andersson, 2008). In such context, the use of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (Khupe, 2017; Smith, 2012; Chisenga, 2002) thinking is fundamental to better read the environment in which events takes place and have a more accurate interpretation of local challenges, opportunities, and changes required (if at all). Indigenous knowledge unleashes localized innovation potential, as it provides knowledge that is accumulated over time, better informing sustainable ecosystems development thinking, potentially contributing to a more inclusive and rewarding experience for all stakeholders involved.

2.3 Cultural Commodification and Festival Sustainability

Cultural sustainability is key in the sustainment and support of a destination appeal and long-term attractiveness and communities' culture and heritage survival, and cultural festivals can play a vital role in doing this. They enrich modern city cultural programs, as they foster an atmosphere of entertainment and celebration (Richards & King, 2022). They offer a way to diversify the tourism product, extend the travel season, foster community pride, preserve local traditions and energize the local entertainment scene. Destinations have long utilized cultural festivals as a deliberate strategy to enhance cultural tourism (Richards, 2021), however, in some circumstances cultural commodification has generated a dissonance between the ambition of preserving and promoting authentic cultural heritage experiences and the market led adaptions often affecting cultural sustainability (Bai & Weng, 2023). Commodification and representation of culture and heritage have been studied from different perspectives, the one of staging in which aspects of cultural simplification, stereotyping, and homogeneity are actively utilized to meet tourists' expectations (Rickly, 2022) is of relevance in the context of this study as destinations seeking to extend their market by luring additional cultural tourists face significant risks of festivalization. Intended as a process of commodification, festivalization is characterized by the negotiation of authenticity, as Booth (2015) puts it, leading to the gradual demise of local cultures due to globalized creative production (Richards & King, 2022). The concept of authenticity first attracted scholars' attention when concerns were raised about the impact of commodification (see: Rickly, 2022) in destroying the meaning of local intangible cultural heritage and unintentionally reducing the tourist experience (Greenwood, 1977). The definition of authenticity has been a contested issue with many scholars focusing on it either from the consumer (tourists) or the supplier (residents) perspectives. Cohen (1988) defined authenticity as

a socially constructed concept and asserted that its social connotation was negotiable. The authenticity concept was then classified by Wang (1999) into three distinct forms, namely, objectives, constructive, and existential. Objective authenticity represents the authenticity of original content and is mostly used to portray the authenticity of cultural artifacts and events (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Constructive authenticity is a projection of explored objects subjective to tourists' expectations, imagery, preferences, and beliefs (Wang,1999). Existential authenticity has rich philosophical implications and is a state of being or freedom from restrictions (Yi et al. 2017). Consequently, based on Wang's (1999) classification, objective and constructive authenticity belongs to object-related authenticity, while existential authenticity includes activity-related authenticity (Yi et al. 2022).

Bai and Weng (2023) asserted that 'the perception of authenticity is a dynamic, flowing, negotiated, and creative process, and evaluation changes along with the specific context and personal perspectives. In so being, there have been many documented cases showing that festivalization involves the negotiation of authenticity (Booth, 2015). In other words, the cultural festival may lose its authenticity to accommodate the potential global appeal. Generally, festival tourism has been associated with cultural homogenization (Shaw, 2020). For instance, Mokgachane et al. (2021) examined the cultural commodification and authenticity of Botswana's iKalanga music festival, showing that the addition of modern instruments to traditional ones has significantly changed the festival core focus, by encouraging commercialization at the expenses of its authenticity, with potential effects on the erosion of local cultures.

The challenge of maintaining the authenticity of festivals while ensuring their socio-economic and environmental sustainability is significant for stakeholders (Choi et al., 2020), given their diverse viewpoints on and interests in preserving traditional cultural events, safeguarding their

related intangible cultural heritage, and managing global markets' demands. Previous research on cultural and heritage festivals' sustainability forms a destination point of view has shown a dichotomous relationship between tourism entities and local populations. While some festivals have successfully supported cultural sustainability (Duran et al., 2014; Flecha et al., 2010; Hassanli et al., 2021; Zou et al., 2021), others have not (Chew, 2009; Suntikul, 2018). The festivals that failed at achieving this goal have been critiqued over their "cultural inauthenticity, commercialization, lack of economic development, and local disempowerment" (Chew, 2009, pg. 34). It is important for destinations utilizing cultural and heritage festivals as part of their tourism development to work in a reciprocal relationship with the involved tourism entities to prevent a power-imbalance. By focusing on this beneficial relationship, cultural sustainability becomes a much easier target (du Cros, 2001; Giudici et al., 2013; López et al., 2018; Obradović et al., 2021).

2.4 Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

A global conversation has emerged around the significance of sustainability in festivals. In 2003, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) was established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to preserve cultural diversity and guarantee sustainable development. UNESCO (2003) defined ICH as follows:

> The "intangible cultural heritage" means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history, and

provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural

diversity and human creativity. … compatible with existing international human rights

instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities,

groups, and individuals, and of sustainable development.

The ICH is manifested in the following domains: (a) oral traditions and expressions, including

language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; (b) performing arts; (c) social practices,

rituals, and festive events; (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; (e)

traditional craftsmanship. The cultural festival is an integral part of ICH but unfortunately, it is

susceptible to deterioration and degradation due to its intrinsic intangibility and the impacts of

globalization and societal transformation. According to Kasongo (2010), African cultural

practices, values, and norms have been altered, modified, and influenced continually since the

end of colonialism in the 1960s, by the effect of Westernization, globalization, and

modernization. Globalization is affecting the deconstruction and reconstruction of the Osun

Osogbo cultural festival's production and meanings, which is held annually at the Osun Sacred

Grove, a World Heritage Site. Furthermore, Amusa, (2019) asserted that the nature of the annual

celebration of the Osun Osogbo festivals, coupled with the management, ownership, and control

of Osun Sacred Grove at Osogbo have been greatly influenced by innovations driven by Western

civilization. The primary catalyst for the globalization of the festival is the influx of international

attendees, whom the organizers particularly targeted through their marketing strategies.

3. Research Design and Methods

3.1 Study Context

Osogbo, the capital of Osun State, Southwest Nigeria, the host community of the United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site (WHS) – Osun Scared Grove, and where the annual Osun Osogbo festival takes place was selected for this study. Following the declaration of the Osun Scared Grove as WHS in 2005, the local authorities have promoted the festival with the government and local king leveraging the touristic value of the inscription to advance their cultural and political drives (Zeppel, 2013). Arguably, the Osun Osogbo festival is the most popular cultural and religious festival not only in contemporary Yorubaland, but also one of the most recognized traditional festivals in the whole world (Amusa, 2019).

According to Osogbo tradition, the Osun Osogbo festival is celebrated annually in commemoration of the founding of the town, and the pact made between the founding king (Ataoja) and the Osun deity (Probst, 2011). The Osun deity is the only female of all the major sixteen Yoruba deities and is regarded as the goddess of wealth and beauty; healer; diviner; dyer; a giver of children; a goddess of fertility, protection, and blessings (Amusan, 2019; Badejo, 1996). The festival is a twelve-day event, held every August, involving prayers, rituals, and dancing, among several traditional and religious rituals.

The King and the Osun devotees lead a grand possession to the Osun Grove on the last day of the festival for divination and sacrifices (Jones, 1997). The Grove, the abode for the Osun deity (Badejo, 1996), is a sacred sanctuary, covering approximately 75 hectares of primary rainforest vegetation and an active religious site where daily, weekly, and monthly worship takes place. In recognition of its global significance and cultural value, the Sacred Grove was inscribed as a

UNESCO (WHS) in July 2005, thereby joining the elite list of special cultural or physical significant sites in the world.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

This research was carried out in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria, encompassing the duration of the two-week annual Osun Osogbo Festival in August 2022, and extended through to January 2023. Drawing on Indigenous Knowledge System (Khupe, 2017; Chisenga, 2002) thinking and in line with methodological approaches, which value the plurality and decolonized of world views (Smith, 2012), cultural differences, and research praxis (Pritchard et al., 2011), the research was conducted and co-authored between an "insider" and field researcher, who has origins from the locality under investigation and four "outsiders" (see Beebe, 2001), one of which has extensive research experience in the destination, thus created a high level of trust with local communities, giving unique access to key stakeholders and facilitating an equal exchange of ideas with the research participants, who were recruited through the insider's local contacts and snowballing (see other studies using a similar approach: Novelli et al., 2012; Novelli et al., 2015; Milano et al., 2024). The critical reflections on the evolution of the festival since the insider/field researcher's first visit in August 2019 were instrumental in identifying key research milestones and in critically considering the impacts of the event on the community. These reflections were mediated and reviewed by the co-authors, who had more "distance" from the locality and event, through the formulation of probing questions utilized during the interviews.

This study employed a qualitative research methodology, a purposeful (snowball) sampling method, analyzed through a grounded theory approach. Snowball sampling is one of the most popular methods of sampling in qualitative research, central to which are the characteristics of networking and referral (Parker et al., 2019). Moreover, snowball sampling is more effective

than random sampling in recruiting enough qualified participants (Biernacki & Waldort, 1981), particularly in settings like the one under investigation, as it allows for a more inclusive and meaningful process where a specific issue needs to be addressed by a specific group of research participants.

In fact, through the broad guiding principle of concentrating on the Osogbo community directly or indirectly impacted by the festival, data was collected through a snowballing approach where a sample of twenty-four (24) individuals - 7 females and 17 males, were identified as central to the study. While recognizing the need for an inclusive and gender-balanced process, it became evident that the research context was characterized by a generally male-dominated environment, over which the field researcher had no control, hence the prevalence of male research participants. However, the study included key community representatives deemed essential to gain the insight required for the specific purpose of this paper, and specifically residents representing the local chieftaincy council, Osun worshippers (devotes), State and Local government officials, market leaders, trade union leaders, artisans and artwork dealers, and political/opinion leaders. All twenty-four (24) study participants were at least 25 years old and above, had lived most of their adult lives at Osogbo, and had attended the Osun Osogbo festival at least five times in the last ten years (see Table 1 for research participants' profiles).

In addition to this, participant observations were conducted by the first author, who attended every festival activity throughout the event duration. This involved paying close attention to how the planned events unfolded, how the local community reacted to the events, and how the various festival stakeholders interacted with one another. The field researcher attended this event from 2019 to 2023, except in 2020 due to the international travel restrictions because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study is cumulative, utilizing visual diaries made up of event images and

participant observations' diary notes, which were then enriched by interviews with residents conducted between August 2022 and January 2023.

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The research team sought consent from all the research participants and confidentiality was assured before we commenced the interview process. The insider/field researcher (first author of this paper) conducted semi-structured interviews utilizing a set of guiding questions addressing: the level of community involvement and participation in the festival planning and organization, the extent of power struggle and dominance between the stakeholders involved in the organization and hosting of the festival, and the impact of 'the business of the Osun Osogbo festival' on residents. The research participants were interviewed either at their homes, offices, or other agreed locations, with each interview session lasting between 45 to 90 minutes. An interview guide comprising a list of questions was prepared to ensure all research participants were asked the same questions to maintain consistency in the data collection process (see Appendix A). The interview responses were all audio recorded with the permission of the participants with a digital voice recorded and a cell phone. The data collected was analyzed through a "qualitative analysis software", "QSR NVivo11.3" resulting in the emergence or identification of major themes from the interview transcripts. The application of the NVivo software helps in compressing the transcripts such that the main themes and sub-themes that speak to the research questions and objectives are easily identified. The transcribed reports were distributed to the participants to crosscheck for accuracy and any misrepresentation of their opinions. This helps to validate the accuracy of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2003).

Qualitative thematic analysis was adopted for data analysis as it is the most widely used qualitative approach to analyzing interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Based on the grounded theory, the analyzed transcribed interviews came up with the major codes/themes, and unrelated matters were discarded.

4. Findings and discussion

The purpose of this paper is threefold: 1) to delve into the extent of Osogbo residents' involvement in the festival's lifecycle; 2) to explore the nature of relationships and power relations between the residents and other stakeholders; and 3) to propose a comprehensive framework aimed at improving stakeholders short-term and long-term relationships management processes in indigenous cultural festival settings. Three major themes emerged from the study's thematic analysis. These are: A. 'Westernization, Authenticity and Global Commodification'; B. 'Power Dynamics in Context'; and C. 'Resident Involvement Festival (Tourism) Development'.

A. Westernization, Authenticity, and Global Commodification of Osun Osogbo Festival

Traditional festivals are a major component of cultural tourism and intangible cultural heritage and play a key role in global tourism and community-based tourism since they provide a unique opportunity for tourists seeking authentic experiences (Cohen, 1988; Khanom et al., 2019). The authentic culture of local communities as reflected in their traditional practices, festivals, and rituals are major appeal in fulfilling tourists' expectations.

In line with Yi et al. (2017), the study evidenced how existential authenticity was present in the packaging and marketing of the Osun Osogbo festival and some of the traditional practices and celebrations. Findings from this study highlighted the impact of authenticity and commodification of the event from the residents' perspectives. The Osun Osogbo festival is not

just an ordinary event, it is a community-based festival that revolves around the Osun goddess, the Osogbo people, and the annual renewal of the mystic bond between the latter and the former. It is observed as a religious and spiritual festival by the locals with a specific meaning to the establishment of the town. The event is a symbol of cultural identity for the whole Yoruba race and a rallying point for its sons and daughters both at home and in the diaspora.

The government leveraged the recognition and inscription of Osun Grove as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) in 2005, during their congress in Durban, South Africa to market the festival to the international community. On the premise that the world's attention shifted toward a WHS after its inscription in the UNESCO WHS list, the government of Nigeria seized such an opportunity to showcase the Osun Osogbo festival as a religious festival, deeply rooted in African traditional belief. Notwithstanding the good intentions associated with such actions, the local community began to feel the impact of transformation and globalization in 2005, as the government began to market the event as a cultural, entertainment, and religious gathering (Aleshinloye, 2023), with the religious aspect of the festival being downplayed and given lesser prominence. One of the research participants clearly referred to the on-going commercialization and commodification of the festival with the sole purpose of attracting tourists, by stating:

> *Osun festival is an ancient traditional and religious event that has been in existence from time immemorial. When I was young, the way and manner the festival was being celebrated completely deviated from the norm and completely changed from what we grew up to know. My family plays a key role in the festival celebrations, and it was passed down from the past generations to the present. We are responsible for the religious aspect of the event such as offering sacrifices to the gods, consultations with the oracle, and playing a major role in the days leading to the festival and beyond on all spiritual matters. But nowadays, it seems as if our roles are not respected by anyone because any of our demands or actions are being questioned and we are not getting the recognition we deserve again. Even though the king is very supportive, the impact of commodification is taking its toll on the originality of the festival. The festival consultants and the sponsors make all the decisions. (RES2)*

Research on cultural commodification has brought mixed views, with some advocating for it as a process bringing positive economic impacts, while others highlighting its negative impacts on the Ifa community and its culture for instance. Cohen (1988) argued that cultural commodification driven by tourism development can preserve traditional culture. In the same vein, Medina (2003) emphasized that it can promote cultural revival but Cheers, Reeves & Laing (2013) gave a contrary result in their study, indicating a potential conflict between ethnic and cultural traditions and commodification. In merit to this, a research participant highlighted the importance of preserving the originality and authenticity of the Osun Osogbo festival in her shared view:

> *Osun festival is enmeshed in Yoruba culture and tradition and that should be strictly adhered to because Western influence on its contents is making the event lose its originality and if care is not taken, the festival will not be recognizable again to the locals. It is our (locals) festival, we do not need to change its direction or focus because of tourists. The organizers and tourists should accept the festival the way it is. For example, the organizers have added many contents to it which has nothing to do with Yoruba culture and tradition.* (RES 7)

In line with Bai & Weng's (2023) thinking on the perception of authenticity as a dynamic, flowing, negotiated, and creative process, cultural commodification should be promoted in a way that will prevent the desecration of cultural authenticity, as indicated by the following response:

> *Some of the events added to it include the Osun golf tournament and the Osun beauty pageant competition, which have nothing to do with the local culture and the festival we are celebrating. We can promote local culture using the same route by infusing local content with Western one. For example, instead of promoting Western dresses with beauty pageants, we can use local and traditional dresses. Also, we can promote traditional sporting events such as (ayo olopon) to revive the forgotten games played by our forefathers which are almost going into oblivion mow*. (RES 7)

Though, in order to preserve cultural authenticity, the indigenous knowledge held by the community should play a central role in defining what is or should be or not part of the tourism

product. However, the study clearly highlighted the challenge faced by the community where the Osun Osogbo festival takes place and their inability to participate in the decision-making associated with the organization of the event.

B. Power Dynamics in Context

Inclusivity is a key factor in cultural festivals' success as it is focused on accommodating and valuing community interests. Like in many other community-based tourism contexts, planning a festival effectively and guaranteeing its long-term success requires the empowerment of the host community, their direct involvement in the governing process, and/or their role as co-creators of the event experience with organizers (Derrett, 2003; Jepson & Clarke, 2016).

In line with power dynamics outlined by Church & Coles (2007) and Jepson & Clarke (2014), Rinaldo (2002) view of festivals historically being a display of power within and over communities and Getz and Andersson's (2010) resource dependency patterns, the study found that organizers of the Osun Osogbo were highly dependent on residents responsible for providing the indigenous knowledge and traditions to deliver on the festival. However, they appeared to have lost sight of the traditional connotations of the event and the fundamental role of the community in its organization and execution, paving the way for a mere commercial exchange of sponsorships and excluded the community from the palling and organizations, as indicated by one of the research participants:

> *It appears that we have surrendered our local festival to the most powerful people, or perhaps I should say organized bodies. I'm referring to the sponsors who are taking advantage of this event to promote their companies' products and services. Though I appreciate their financial support for the festival, they have entirely taken over event planning and organization. They are so powerful that they will not even let our local content on the event program, and our views and opinions are irrelevant. Due to their*

apparent lack of funding, the State and Local governments rely on the sponsors to cover the event's costs. Through the festival consultants, the main sponsors dictate to the government committee, local chiefs' council, media, and poor locals. The sponsor believed they paid for the event, and its decisions on the planning, content, and management are binding and absolute on all. (RES11)

It is not new that residents' involvement and/or participation in decision-making processes associated with major events are often curtailed due to power influence and capital distribution, but the local community remains a salient part of the heritage, spiritual, and cultural assets celebrated in the festival itself and it is only just that they must have ownership and control over it. Bai & Weng's (2023) view about the dynamic evolution of authenticity and Getz & Andersson (2008) one about the importance of recognizing how the dimensions of power, legitimacy, urgency, and dependence are balanced in the festival context were captured in one of the participants' observations and call for the urgent improvement of the festival contents. They emphasized how this should happen through legitimate negotiations and power sharing, making it more interesting for both residents and tourists:

> *The world is not static but dynamic, I concur that we cannot celebrate the festivals we have been doing in the past. We should incorporate some new ideas into it but not the Western-inspired content. The powerful stakeholders should not impose their influence or exert their authority on us at the expense of our local customs. There are some of our traditional values and cultures going to extinction that can be revitalized and brought into national and international limelight. For example, Yoruba traditional folklore (poetry) songs such as Ewi, Ijala, and Rara sisun should be promoted with the festival. Also, the Yoruba language is losing popularity among the young ones because it is less spoken than English. We can use the festival to promote Yoruba language quiz competitions among primary and secondary school students, which we go a long way in celebrating our cultural values. They should use their authority to revive local cultures and traditions. (RES12)*

What was also suggested was that any strategic choices should be based on better informed process drawing on indigenous knowledge systems. This would enable the existing Osun Osogbo

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stakeholders' network and resource-dependent relationships to deliver a more sustainable and inclusive festival practice, reducing potential antagonism, uncertainty, and loss of interest by the community.

C. Resident Involvement in Festival (Tourism) development

Sustainable festival development and promotion seem impossible without active collaboration and support from the local resident community. Residents can celebrate their beliefs and preserve their intangible cultural heritage through cultural events, but Western influence may be a threat to their survival, which is what is happening in the context of the Osun Osogbo festival too. Previous studies have shown that it is difficult, if not impossible, for destinations to compete in today's diversified and ever-changing tourism market if their residents are not actively interested and supportive of tourism initiatives in their domain (Aleshinloye et al., 2021b; Song et al., 2015). Resident support for the community festival is predetermined by their level of involvement or participation in the planning and management process. One of the research participants shared his personal experience of representing the community on the planning committee and questioned the autocratic decision-making process merely prioritizing economic interests, which was reflected into an insignificant levels of community involvement in the festival planning process:

> *Even though I am part of one of the festival planning committees, I believe my presence and that of others is merely ceremonial. For example, we only take and follow directions from other stakeholders such as festival consultants, sponsors, and the senior government officials directly involved with the event. We are just being dictated to, with little or no input to the committee resolutions. Years back, my advice for promoting the Osogbo School of Arts and the Tie and dye industry – the local heritage Osogbo people were known with, along with the festival was discarded without any consideration. It is so painful when constructive ideas that help further the course of the festival and promote Osogbo heritage are not welcomed at all. The most frightening part of it is that one can be labeled a rebel, and thrown out of the committee, and in the worst-case scenario, one*

can be arrested and jailed. Moreover, I do not want to forfeit the little stipends I get from my involvement and my influence in the community.

To effectively implement festival tourism and embed local communities' indigenous knowledge, values and traditions into it, it is crucial to investigate community interests as much as the impact that any decision to develop a new community-based tourism product may bring. It is indeed a matter of power, legitimacy and urgency (Adongo & Kim, 2018), but also of ethics, community well-being, and social justice relevance, that can no longer be ignored, particularly as they could potentially affect communities' everyday existence and ultimately the sustainability of any interventions associated with the festival. In the words of one research participant (RES 10):

> *The Osun festival is growing bigger every year with lots of visitors coming from within and outside the country. The residents live with the festival's positive and negative impacts which without mincing words affect our well-being. Our (resident) involvement is necessary so that we can offer our contribution to issues that affect our economic and social lives. For example, the activities of the hoodlums need to be curtailed because they take advantage of the massive crowd to harass, extort, and steal from vulnerable visitors. I am very influential among trade workers/motor unions, and actively involved in local politics. If someone like me can be given a chance to contribute my quota to the planning and administration of the festival, it will go a long way in making it safe for all and sundry. The local active involvement in the festival preparation will give us a sense of belonging not to the privileged few, who have nothing to offer but got involved because of their godfathers' influence.*

5. Final Considerations

5.1 Theoretical implications

Findings from the study advanced knowledge on the role plaid by residents as crucial stakeholder in the development and execution of sustainable festival tourism. However, in the specific context of this study, their level of involvement and ownership of the Osun Osogbo festival was very low. Previous research (i.e., Song et al., 2015; Jepson et al., 2014), has highlighted that the

involvement of and support by residents in festivals can help preserve their cultural heritage and enhance social cohesion within the community hosting the festivals. Residents' lack of influence over the festival could have long-term consequences, if they are not actively engaged and even excluded from the decision-making processes, given the significance of their knowledge and traditions constituting the essence of the festival itself. The residents' active involvement and collaboration with other stakeholders in the festival management process will help preserve the authenticity of the experience and local intangible cultural heritage from being lost, increasing the likelihood of continuity of the festival itself. Managing festival stakeholders' relationship is indeed a complicated endeavor as it is open to potential contentious positions (Robinson et al., 2010), and getting the right balance, representation and respect of stakeholders' opinions is germane to stakeholders' structure management.

The study also highlighted a significant imbalance of power distribution between residents and other festival's stakeholders, as the influence of the former had been inconsequential in deconstructing and reconstructing the Osun Osogbo festival contents and the Yoruba traditions and interpretations. The private sponsors who provided resources for the event had gained greater power and influence because of the government's lack of financial means. Moreover, as the festival is free for all attendees, and the source of income is limited to the sponsors alone, their control over the festival was evident in the expantion of scope of the event, altering the traditional nature and narratives to appeal to international audiences. It appeared that intangible cultural heritage was being portrayed and promoted regardless of residents' views or visitors' desire for authenticity (Khanom et al, 2019). The government gave legitimacy to the sponsors in place of their inability to fund the festival, thus, making them the most powerful of all the Osun Osogbo festival stakeholders. It was interesting to note that the local residents believed the

sponsors held more power than businesses, government representatives, volunteers, visitors, and the media. Furthermore, the emerging commercialization of the festivals was identified as one of the major threats jeopardizing the authenticity of the event and the sustainability of the Osun intangible cultural heritage.

5.2 Indigenous Community-Based Cultural Festival (Tourism) planning, development and management – an Indigenous Knowledge Systems Approach

While our research recognized the pivotal role of indigenous knowledge and traditions in the sustainable development, planning, and management of community-based festival tourism, it evidenced the lack of innovative interventions that may facilitate and advance a more cohesive set of community-based initiatives and enhance benefits for all those that live and work in proximity to the sites of the Osun Osogbo festival, should they wish to be involved. The study also revealed the importance of engaging the Osogbo youths in providing continuity to this traditional festival. Youths' openness to festival innovations became evident, however it was felt that these must be negotiated based only on legitimate contents that promote the Yoruba culture and values, avoiding interference from any Western influences.

In line with Chisenga (2002), Smith (2012) and Khupe's (2017) views on the importance of drawing on traditional indigenous knowledge-based resource systems to better read the environment in which events takes place, it appeared that engaging local key stakeholders and particularly resident community members (i.e. entrepreneurs, associations, and religious groups) is essential to have a more accurate interpretation of local challenges, opportunities, and changes required. Co-creating processes and practices is key in co-delivering cohesive efforts fostering innovative indigenous-centered pathways for sustainable festival tourism development in the region. This remains an unexplored field and indigenous knowledge, assets, and traditions should

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be better explored and supported (i.e. through capacity building) facilitated through a co-designed process of intervention that would foster a better-informed community-based festival tourism planning and management process that is economically viable, socially just, and environmentally sustainable in the long term (figure 1).

<<INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE>>

Such an approach would enable innovation and entrepreneurship to flourish, accelerating the improvement of tourism development conditions and foster socio-economic upliftment in global south destinations such as the Osun Osogbo festival setting.

5.3 Practical implications

The Osun Osogbo Cultural Festival is a historically significant event that ought to be institutionalized with the active involvement of all parties involved, both inside and beyond the community. To operate efficiently and effectively, a local event should be self-sustaining rather than dependent on ad-hoc management. The festival planners and organizers should engage all the stakeholders in their discussions and decision-making process. Adongo & Kim (2018) asserted that the enduring advantages of local festivals will hinge on the extent to which the concerns of all participants are considered. While stakeholder theory promotes equitable involvement alongside effective stakeholders 'cooperation, the challenge of maintaining a harmonious distribution of power and control among festival stakeholders, ensuring that no groups are marginalized or rendered insignificant within the system, remain. Finally, the festival

program should accurately represent Yoruba people traditional celebration, focusing on promoting their cultural values and customs and event planners and organizers must ensure that any festival's innovations are not only universally embraced by all festival stakeholder, but remain in line with principles of preservation and sustainability of the Yoruba intangible cultural heritage.

5.4 Limitation and direction for future research

As it happens no research is perfect in its planning and execution. In this specific study, for instance, the research context was characterized by a generally male-dominated environment, hence the prevalence of male research participants. Future research may expand into other resident groups where women's presence may be more prominent, or specifically focus on studying the role of women in festival settings in male dominated society.

Subsequent research could consider the perspectives of the visitors regarding motives, expectations, and experiences regarding the Osun Osogbo festival. More precisely, to assess their opinions on the host's perceived globalization of the cultural festival. Researching visitors' expectations will provide more evidence to support their viewpoint, especially if it aligns with the residents' desire to preserve the authenticity of the event.

Furthermore, while some of the findings of this research may be transferable to other geographical locations, it would be useful to carry out a comparative analysis with cultural festivals in other Global South settings. Finally, while this study specifically focused on local residents as key festival stakeholders, future research on the indigenization and globalization of traditional cultural festivals could include a wider set of stakeholders, such as sponsors, vendors, local government authorities, organizers, volunteers, and the media.

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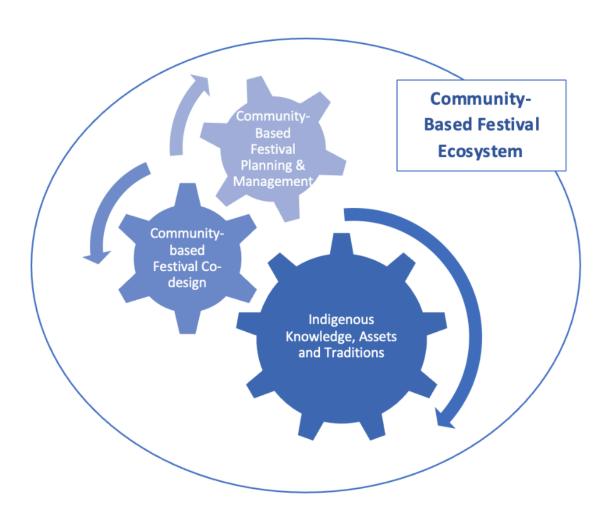
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Table 1: Profile of the Research Participants

Code	Gender	Age	Residency status/Occupation	Length of Residency (Years)	Frequency of attending the festival (Numbers)
RES 1	Male	25-34	Artwork dealer	20 years	> 7
RES 2	Male	55-64	Osun Devotee/High Chief	Since birth	> 20
RES 3	Female	35-44	Primary school teacher	> 25	> 10
RES 4	Male	65 & Older	Retirees (Gov. worker)	> 45	> 15
RES 5	Male	25-34	Student (1)	> 22	> 6
RES 6	Male	45-54	Food Market leader (1)	> 28	> 15
RES 7	Female	55-64	Osun Devotee/Historian	Since birth	> 40
RES 8	Male	65 & Older	Traditional Ifa healer (1)	Since birth	> 35
RES 9	Male	25-34	Student (2)	> 18	> 5
RES 10	Male	35-44	Trade union/political leader (1)	> 32	> 12
RES 11	Male	55-64	Local Chiefs (1)	> 60	> 45
RES 12	Male	35-44	Tour/cultural operator	> 40	> 10
RES 13	Female	55-64	Food Market leader (2)	Since birth	> 15
RES 14	Female	65 & Older	Bead and local clothes dealer	> 50	> 30
RES 15	Male	35-44	Traditional drummers	Since birth	> 22
RES 16	Female	45-54	Trade union/political leader (2)	> 22	> 12
RES 17	Male	35-44	Local government employee (1)	> 15	> 10
RES 18	Male	55-64	Traditional Ifa healer (1)	Since birth	> 45
RES 19	Female	65 & Older	Opinion/Political leader (1)	> 40	> 25
RES 20	Male	45-54	Opinion/Political leader (2)	> 25	> 15
RES 21	Female	25-34	Youth leader/ Bar owner	> 12	> 5
RES 22	Male	65 & Older	Local Chiefs (2)	> 50	> 18
RES 23	Male	55-64	Local Chiefs (3)	> 35	> 20
RES 24	Male	45-54	Local government employee (2)	> 25	> 9

Figure 1: Stakeholders relationships management processes in Indigenous community-based festival settings

Appendix A. Semi-structured interview guide

1. Personal information - Demographics (Gender, age, residency status, occupation, length of

residency, & frequency of attending the festival)

2. History and knowledge about the Osun festival?

2.1. do you have any family obligations related to the event?

2.2. what is the meaning/significance of the festival to the local people?

2.3. what is the history behind the festival according to your opinion?

2.4 do you believe in the spirituality of the festival? and why?

3. Festival planning and organization?

3.1. what are the roles played by the residents in the management of the festival?

3.1.1. are the roles voluntary or obligatory?

3.1.2. to what extent are the roles played?

3.2. Is the festival management committee all inclusive?

3.2.1. if yes, why? If no, why?

3.2.2. what are the criteria used in the selection of members into the committee?

3.2.3 what are the roles of the festival consultant in the management of the event?

3.2.4. what are the roles of the traditional royal family in the planning?

3.2.5. in your opinion, do you think the residents have a role in the planning?

3.2.6. If yes or no, are the resident treated fairly?

4. Declaration as a UNESCO World Heritage Site?

4.1. Since the declaration of the Osun Grove as the WHS, as there been any noticeable
difference in the planning and management of the festival?

4.2. Is the declaration a blessing or a curse for the festival and the Osogbo residents?

4.3. does the resident have a role pre, during and post declaration of the Osun Grove?

4.3.1. If yes, what are the roles?

4.3.1.2. If not, what went wrong?

5. Modernization of the festival?

5.1. Do you believe that the festival should be restructured to reflect present day realities?

5.1.1. If yes? Why do think so?

5.1.1.2. If no, what are your opinion?

5.2. What is your concept of globalization?

5.2.1. to what extent do you believe the festival should be modernized?

5.2.1.2. Yoruba culture and heritage?

5.2.1.3. meanings/originality/authenticity

5.2.1.4. tourist inflow and satisfaction

5.2.1.5. production and presentation.