# SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM: A FOCUS ON UDIROKO TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL IN ADO EKITI, NIGERIA.

**Akintunde John Oloidi & Maureen Ogechi Aruomah**
Department of Archaeology and Tourism,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
*Corresponding Author*: Maureen.ukaegbu@unn.edu.ng
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## Abstract
*Cultural heritage tourism is classified as the fuel that powers different sources of revenue and a catalyst to promote heritage resources across the globe. This research examines the socio-economic consequences of cultural heritage tourism in a community using Udiroko festival in Ekiti State as a focal study. The data for this descriptive qualitative research were explored through in-depth interviews and participant-as-an-observer technique. 50 key informants who were conversant with the festival and its socio-economic impacts were purposively selected on convenience and interviewed as sampled population size to achieve the objectives. This study was anchored on the modernization theory which emphasises on applying modern systems to promote cultural events without damaging their authenticity and values. The research discovered that Udiroko festival is highly celebrated in Ado Ekiti and has contributed immeasurably to social and economic activities of the people since different tourism stakeholders and modern methods are involved in rebranding it. The study, therefore, recommends public enlightenment on the benefits of heritage tourism, stakeholders' involvement and hybridization of traditional and modern methods to boost socio-economic activities and preserve cultural heritages in the community.*
**Keywords:** Traditional festival; cultural heritage; tourism; *Udiroko* festival; Ado-Ekiti; Nigeria

## Introduction
There are several cultural events that motivate people across the globe to travel beyond their usual place of residence and work. This travel generates socio-economic activities for the rural people and community at large in the efforts to cater for the demands of the tourists or visitors. According to Gurniwan et al. (2016), traditional festivals are parts of cultural motivations that encourage tourism activities, income generations and social welfare of the community. They further stated that performing arts and exhibitions of traditional objects during festivals encourage cultural sustainability from one generation to another. Festival is a significant part of intangible cultural heritage that continues to reflect the culture of communities in the present and the future, as they did in the past. The festival was an avenue to showcase the rich cultural heritages of the people from different cultural backgrounds. The attractions that are being exhibited during the festivals range from physical, cultural and man-made which are authentic tourism potentials if they are considered in national planning and development (Ndubuisi, 2019). However, festivals, which are regarded as a part of intangible cultural heritage, are also one of the cultural values that should be passed on to the future in their

original forms by conserving their traditional characteristics. A festival is an extensive concept that reflects the perceptions of a community with all its activities and rituals regarding its culture and world vision. Countries across the globe celebrate culture and historical events as festivals. Nowadays, festivals are also known as fests, carnivals, fairs, festivities, and feasts (İmirgi, 2005). Gregory (2008) explained that traditional festivals are much invaluable beyond communal satisfaction orchestrated in societal celebrations. He further noted that from the time immemorial festivals are classified as avenues for the elders to transmit indigenous knowledge and their connotations to younger generations. The festivals are indigenous celebrations credited with the exhibition of uncommon customs, folktales, costumes and culinary skills. Traditional festivals are communal celebrations involving carefully planned programmes outpourings of respect, rejoicing or high revelry, established by custom or sponsored by various cultural groups or organizations. In his view, they are generally designed to encourage the practice, preservation and maintenance of traditional dance, song, and art. In another view traditional festivals mark special occasions in which a community gathers annually to remember, honour, and give thanks to God, the gods and the ancestors for their help and protection.

Historically, Kader and Yoa (2004) believed that traditional festivals and their celebrations are prehistorical events in the communities associated with either planting and harvest periods, circumstances, or honouring the ancestors. Traditional festivals are periodically celebrated to preserve, maintain, and display the tradition and behavioural activities of man in the community through songs, dances, drumming, belief systems, values, norms, costumes, and other forms of arts (Pra, 2004). Folklorists concurred that the celebrations of festivals are diverse and characterised based on ethnicity and provide indelible opportunity for elders to transfer traditional knowledge, experiences, and their authentic interpretations to younger generations for posterity. Festivals are the fundamental avenues for people and their chiefs to pay tribute and homage, and equally renew their loyalty to the paramount ruler. It is equally the period that those in the diaspora visit ancestral home, at least once in a year, and interact with their families which could bring about resolution of outstanding disputes, promotion of peace and unity, and sharing of ideologies.

Contemporarily, the celebrations of traditional festivals have gone beyond the preservation and maintenance of traditional values but also to create different fora or opportunities for the host community to invite and engage related stakeholders to promote people's culture and then enhance community development. This indicates that the roles and responsibilities assigned to the stakeholders to continuously design concrete action-plans before, during and after the celebrations and to make obsessive appeals for and on behalf of the host community to governments, non-governmental organisations, philanthropists, and politicians on the issues that border the people, and their cultural heritage are crucially indelible. Having taken

traditional festivals from mere celebrations to global standard by involving the stakeholders and modern activities, they have become major cultural attractions and events for tourists and cultural enthusiasts across the globe.

However, Eze-Uzomaka and Oloidi (2017) revealed that as a result of formal education, Christianity and misinterpretations of western method, some traditional festivals in Ekiti-State have been proscribed or neglected by the custodians and this is a threat to the management of cultural heritage (like traditional festivals) and sustainable tourism development. But, globally, traditional festivals (like Udiroko festival) that have been revitalised and promoted through incorporation of modern system, public awareness, funding and involvement of the stakeholders are presently contributing directly or indirectly to the development of the host community (Oloidi & Okonkwo, 2020). In view of this, it is crucial to know the socio-economic implications of traditional festivals among the rural community with a focus on *Udiroko* festival in Ado-Ekiti.

## Conceptual Framework

The word festival is originally Latin, used for the first time in early 1200 AD, and used similarly in Turkish (Çakır, 2009). Etymologically, the word originally meant "a big entertainment and feast" deriving from the Latin word "Festum". In this sense, a festival can be defined as an outstanding activity that should create a special atmosphere arising not only from art and quality of products but also from rural regions, a city and the traditions of a region (Quinn, 2005). The term festival is defined in the Turkish Dictionary by Turkish Language Association as follows: "an art exhibition with a particular significance and a specified program where the period, location, and the number or characteristics of the guests are predetermined within a program; a festivity or a national or international series of exhibitions carried out where plays and movies of a specific field of art are shown and awarded or placed in a competition; an exhibition or festivity for the most well-known product of a region; a noisy confusion, carousal" (Turkish Language Association, 2016).For centuries, traditional festivals are a part of intangible cultural heritage that several communities have built and nurtured with authenticity.

Historically, people have always held ceremonies or festivities shaped by their culture to express their happiness, sorrow and joy, and their successes in acquisition of food and clothes, and achievements (Uysal & Erşan, 2016). They have been defined differently following the culture of the community as festivals, carnivals, fairs, festivities, feasts, and carousals. Today, there are copious local, regional, national and international activities that are annually or periodically celebrated. As significant motivations of tourism, festivals are the leading figures of the development and promotion plans of numerous destinations (Duran, 2013). They are of universal importance in social and cultural roles; and they have been designed and developed as tourist attractions (Duran, 2013). Festivals provide opportunities to the local people in terms of sharing their culture, experiences and knowledge and help tourists

to observe how a nation celebrates its holidays and carries on its customs and traditions (Luna, 2015). Also, festivals are the seasonal ceremonies and celebrations, where group identities are displayed and shared by the group itself as a collective phenomenon on days based on the calendar, are cultural forms containing complex and multipurpose customs originating in the lives of the group. The ceremonies were based on a certain calendar under the regular transitions of months, seasons and years.

Heritage is known as the legacy or inheritance from the past, what people live with today and what they pass on to future generations. According to Prentice (as cited in Adeniran and Akinlabi, 2011, p. 75) heritage is "an inheritance or a legacy, things of value which have been passed from one generation to the next". Heritage is an essential source of individual and group identity, unity and life. It is what distinguished a family, people, community and country from others. Heritage of a community includes among others the relics of the past, cultural and artistic productivity produced in the past or replicated in the present (Oloidi, 2019a). This also includes all elements from the past that are distinctive, symbolic and appropriate to be passed on to future generations. Cultural heritage "is the unique and irreplaceable resource of people which are passed on from generation to generation" (Onyejegbu, 2014, p. 49). Cultural heritage resources "refer to the rich past evidence of human activities consisting of both material and non-material characteristics acquired within the society which are transmitted from one generation to the other" (Oloidi, 2014, p. 13). These include festivals, materials of royalty, folklores, folktales, stories, legends, work of arts, morals, historic and pre-historic artefacts, traditional ceremonies, local foods, mode of dressing, traditional architecture, language, values, local games, etc. (Oloidi, 2019a).

Tourism is a complex concept and thus defines as each sector or scholar view it. Mathieson and Wall (2010) define tourism as the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal place of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations and the facilities created to cater to their needs. Tourism could be regarded as the sum of the phenomena and relationship arising from the interaction of tourist, business suppliers, government and communities in the process of attracting and hosting these visitors. According to Pender (2005), tourism is an economic activity of immerse global significance and that following World Tourism Organisation (WTO); tourism is now the largest industry in the world. Accordingly, demand for tourism has grown faster than demand for other economic activity in the business showground. Also, tourism is an activity that has impact on many other areas. Pender (2005) advocated that tourism education has also been an area of significant development in recent decades. Tourism can be defined as the "study of man (the tourist) away from his usual habitat, of the touristic apparatus and networks responding to his various needs, and of the ordinary (outbound region) and non-ordinary (inbound region) worlds and their dialectic relationships" (Encyclopaedia of Tourism, 2000, p.585). Based on this definition, man is regarded as the focal point of

tourism activities; distinguishes a common environment from uncommon ones and then strategizes how to adapt in the new environment. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines tourists as people who travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four (24) hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (Wikipedia Online Encyclopaedia, 2012). This definition spells out the timeframe through which a tourist must stay, and that tourist must not involve in any payable employment at the destination.

## Theoretical Literature

Modernisation theory is found applicable for this study because the beginning of the age of enlightenment in the 18th century has brought speedy social, cultural, political, education, legal, economic and environmental improvements to the community with the impressions that people themselves could advance from traditionalism to modernism through physiological and philosophical modifications (Oloidi, 2014, Oloidi & Okonkwo, 2020). Modernization theory is anchored on the process of transformation and development through which the traditional characteristics, be it social, economic, religious, political and cultural environments are advanced technologically and ideologically to meet international standard with the introduction of modern methods and materials (Eze-Uzomaka & Oloidi, 2017). Modernization theory applies to every developmental aspect in the society, and the founding fathers of Sociology, like any other scholars, have different perspectives about it. In the view of Auguste Comte, the society had gradually evolved from the ideas and principles (theological) to the scientific or optimistic stage. Herbert Spencer sees this evolution from the simplest to the complex while Emile Durkheim in his stand explains it from the view of moving from a mechanical stage to organic solidarity stage (Oloidi, 2014). The modernisation theorists believe that inefficiency, low productivity, institutional handicap, wastages and lack of satisfaction are caused by traditional and primitive methods which are the factors responsible for underdevelopment and poverty in the community; and the remedies lie in the adoption of modern technologies, institutions and managerial systems (Eze-Uzomaka & Oloidi, 2017).

## Literature Review

Series of literature have proved that festivals are special historic and communal events devoted for merry-making, and parts of attractive cultural heritage resources that promote socialisation and enhance physical, social, economic and cultural development in the community (Bankole, 2013; Kashim et al., 2015; Luna, 2015; Nocca, 2017; Oloidi, 2014; Oloidi & Okonkwo, 2020; Onyejegbu, 2014). Ifegbo and Ibeanu (2019) also emphasised that traditional festivals are unique celebrations with a shared ideology that bring people together locally and internationally as a way to exhibit and manage cultural

heritage for posterity. There are many successful festivals around the world that enhance cultural promotion and economic expansion in their vicinities through tourism. Festival tourism is a segment of cultural or heritage tourism that is planned to promote the cultural activities of the city and boost the economic development of relative industries, through the system planning, development and utilization of local unique cultural traditions, ethnic customs and characteristic industry, regularly or irregularly held in a particular area has a specific theme, set tourism, culture, economy, life as a whole, with extensive people to participate in the festival celebrations (Obasola, 2014). Cultural heritage and tourism are fundamental tools for socio-economic development that have extensively gained the attention and imagination of scholars and developmental strategists in the contemporary period. Harnessing and propelling cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, for tourism development in the cities, countries and regions help in expanding and boosting the economy of the developing countries (Loulanski, 2006), and at the same time "offering new opportunities for development, and add impetus to industrial development marked by innovation, creativity and resourcefulness" (Government of Denmark, 2000, p. 4).

Tourism activities, including festivals, have been in existence since the creation of man, even though they were not pronounced until recently when modern method is applied to preserve and promote cultural heritage (Eze-Uzomaka & Oloidi, 2017). Historically, the ancient progenitors of every community were indulged in expeditions from one settlement to another and to participate in multifunctional cultural events like festivals, sightseeing, visiting friends and relations and to satisfy individual and communal curiosity. Importantly, those who lived or cultivated in the riverine areas enjoyed the waves and the inviting sounds of the running water, while others appreciated the vegetation and the sporadic movement of the birds and animals in the forest during relaxation (Oloidi, 2014). Presently, planned tourism activities have become indelible catalyst for community development. This indicates that if the momentum of the tourism growth is sustained responsibly, the immeasurable socio-economic opportunities that tourism can generate for community development around the world would be attained. Tourism is at the lead stage in the international level, and according to the WTO in the press release on January 20, 2020, it was ascertained that international tourism growth has sustained to outperform the global economy. That in 2019, 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals were globally recorded, with a projection of 3% to 4% increase for 2020, and this is confirming tourism as a foremost and buoyant economic sector, especially because of the current qualms (WTO, 2020).

Festival is a common way to celebrate people and promote their culture across the globe. The benefits accrue from festival are immeasurable in social, economic, religious, health and political sectors. Through festival tourism, innumerable cultural events and sites have been revitalized thereby supporting development of many sectors and improving the standard of

living of the host across the globe. Nocca, (2017) pointed out that if cultural heritage resources are appropriately managed and promoted, there would be sustainable tourism development which could bring more social, economic, cultural and physical development to the community. Also, according to Sazak and Eyüboğlu (2009), cities that appreciate the importance of traditional festivals and develop strategies to maintain them (through tourism) would attain cultural, social, economic and spatial opportunities. Moreover, "local festivals have significant contributions to destinations in terms of extending tourist seasons, reviving the destination in off-season, creating an image, increasing attractiveness of the range of products, and conserving and promoting natural heritage, and customs and traditions" (Şengül & Genç, 2016 cited in Uysal & Erşan, 2016, p. 328). Today, there are many successful festivals around the world that extremely budget for tourism activities annually as a result of the huge revenue acquire from its activities and this enhance cultural promotion and economic expansion in their vicinities through tourism. For instance, in Munich, according to Ruxandra-Irina and Răzvan-Andrei (2012) in the article entitled *The Role of Festivals and Cultural Events in the Strategic Development of Cities. Recommendations for Urban Areas in Romania,* Oktoberfest (Munich, Germany) is one of the paramount community festivals in the world. It is celebrated annually in Munich, from the middle of September and ending in October. According to the press released by the Munich City Department for Work and Economic Development in 2012, more than 6 million people take part in Oktoberfest every year, from which 72% are from Bavaria, 13% come from the rest of Germany, and 15% are foreign tourists mainly from Europe, USA, Australia and New Zealand. Oktoberfest has a great contribution to the economic development of the Munich city and the neighbourhood area. During the 16 days of festival, tourists spend approximately 830 million of Euros: 324 million from the food carts, drinks and entertainment, 205 million from shopping in Munich and using the public transportation, while 301 million represents the profit of hotels and other accommodation spaces.

In Valencia, Las Fallas festival, the 'Festival of Carpenters and Fire', is a famous celebration around the world, as it is broadcasted to be an event for international tourists around the world, which announces the arrival of Spring. During the festival hundreds of statues, called Ninot (which can be 10m taller), made from wood, carton or plastic are present during the procession. The statues represent books and movies characters, politicians, or celebrities. Other activities during the festival included bull fighting, paella competitions and beauty pageants. Las Fallas festival attracts more than one million tourists every year. 2011 was the rebirth year for this festival, as the degree of occupancy of hotels during the festival has reached almost 100% (Ruxandra-Irina et al, 2012). As this festival maintains its attractiveness, the opportunities from it range from the provision of employment opportunities in the host environment, promotion of cultural values, mutual interaction among the people of different cultural backgrounds, and thereafter boost the economic activities of the people. In Canada, Simon Brault, the Vice-Chair of

the Canada Council of the Arts, released an article titled: *The Arts and Culture as New Engines of Economic and Social Development* estimated the contribution of cultural industries in Canada to be $26 billion. In this case, he distinguished arts and culture as "incredible vectors of creativity, the principal driver of economic and social growth" (Brault, 2005, p. 56). He argues for a new cultural approach that could unlock the potential of culture, expanding its reach and allowing imaginative and promising links between education and culture, between health and culture, between citizenship and culture, and between economic development and culture.

In Nigeria, Festival of Arts and Culture, popularly tagged 'FESTAC' of 1977 served as an eye-opener to the promotion of traditional festivals. Other cultural events like *Osun-Osogbo* festival, *Ijele* festival, Arochukwu festival, Argungun festival, National festival, Calabar Street carnival, and host of others have economic implications and help in fostering national unity. This informs why Okpoko (2014) stated that, during cultural events like festivals can bring about awareness and respect for the cultural values and norms of these societies. This in turn can lead to national unity and as an avenue to display different cultural practices that would enhance mutual understanding among people of different backgrounds as they interact together. This makes this national festival a means to manage different cultural activities in Nigeria. According to Oyeweso (nd) in an article entitled *Osun Osogbo Festival: Its Origin, Nature and Significance for Global Yoruba Cultural Advancement*, *Osun-Osogbo* festival is one of the cultural events in Nigeria that is well documented and has contributed immensely to the classification of *Osun* grove as a world cultural heritage by United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The River *Osun*, whose source is in Igede-Ekiti, Irepodun/Ifelodun Local Government of Ekiti State, Nigeria, is highly important in the social, spiritual and physical well-being of Osogbo people. It has a supernatural power of healing, protection and fruitfulness. This has attracted development to the community in terms of income generation, job creation, provision of infrastructures and amenities, maintenance of arts and culture, and world recognition. *Argungu* fishing festival in Kebbi State, Nigeria, is a tourism festival that attracts thousands of participants annually. Out of thousands of competitors, the fisherman with the biggest fish will be the winner and be awarded with millions of naira and a brand-new car. This encourages more people to participate, generate money, develop the community, and then promote the irreplaceable tradition of the people.

According to Omolola (2013), *Mare* festival is a popular traditional event in Ondo-State that generates employment opportunities which are spread across domestic business activities in retails petty goods and services, crafts, construction and manufacturing, art and telecommunication as well as travel and tourism companies who act as facilitators. Omolola further affirmed that the festival has opened more access economically to a large proportion of people in the State and Idanre town in particular where predominantly small and medium sizes business activities take place during the festival.

Furthermore, Mare festival makes positive contributions to achieving sustainable development by attracting the attention of government to infrastructural development, such as road rehabilitation and development, recreational facilities, all of which have assisted socio- economic activities of the people with the movement of goods and services (Omolola, 2013).

The above instances have shown the social, cultural, political, and religious characteristics of various traditional festivals and cultural heritage resources. However, there seems to be no existing literature on the socio-economic values of the Udiroko festival in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria, despite its several decades of revival and publicity. Therefore, the objectives of this research are to examine the socio-economic implications of cultural heritage tourism using *Udiroko* festival in Ado-Ekiti as the case study. The implication of this research is to explore how the traditional festival contributes to the social and economic aspects of the host community. Furthermore, the study argues that when modern standards are incorporated in the planning and publicity of festivals, they help to attract domestic and international tourists and then boost the economic activities of the host community.

## The Study Area

Ado Ekiti with coordinates $7^0$ $37^1$ N and $5^0$ $15^1$ E is the Capital of Ekiti State and the Headquarters of Ado Local Government Areas. It is simply called Ado. The population in 2004 was 446,749. The people of Ado Ekiti are mainly Yoruba, one of the three (3) major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Ado Ekiti is the centre of activities in Ekiti State. Various public and private enterprises operate in Ado town, and these include among others trading of different kinds, hotel services, medical services, transportation services, banking; educational institutions, farming, as yam, cocoyam, maize, cassava, grains, cotton and tobacco, etc. are grown on abundance fertile soil. Where Ado Ekiti is presently situated is a land that according to oral traditions has been continuously inhabited or occupied by human communities since ancient generations without any evidence of further migration. Available research shows that, human societies of unknown antiquity occupied this present settlement about 11,000 years ago. These ancient inhabitants were the same progenitors or ancestors of Igbon near Ogotun, Erijiyan, Ijero, Ulesun and Asin (near Ikole) all within Ekiti, who were probably autochthones because available traditions show that they had lived in and near their abodes from the time immemorial. No one knew where the inhabitants of these settlements came from and for how long they had lived in those ancient sites (Oguntuyi, 1978). The expansion and growth of Ado Ekiti and its kingdom lasted for over for centuries. In the past generations, Ado people, by local standard, were known to be tough and brave warriors. Tradition has preserved numerous brave citizens in Ado and its subject communities, the best known were Ogbigbonihanran of Idolofin quarters, Ogunmonakan of Okelaja, Fasawo, known as Aduloju of Udemo quarters, and Eleyinmi Orogirigbona of Okeyinmi quarters and so many other ancient brave individuals in various

quarters (Oguntuyi, 1978). According to Chief Sasanyin (2013 and 2019: Personal Communication), these brave men are still being remembered in Ado Ekiti in this modern age to honour them and their families, most especially during *Udiroko* festival.

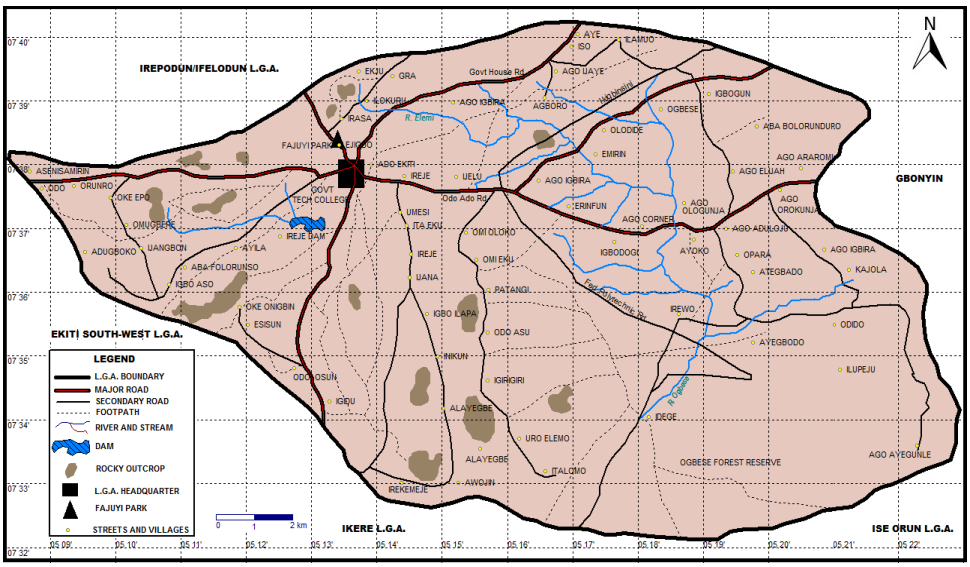



**Figure 1: Map of Ado Ekiti (Fieldwork, 2014).**

## Research Method

Some techniques and strategies were employed in the conduct of this research. To achieve the objectives, this descriptive research used the qualitative approach, and the data were elicited through in-depth interviews and participant-as-an-observer technique. Using interview guide during the interview sessions, useful information was acquired from 50 key informants who were conversant with the festival and its socio-economic values. They were purposively selected on convenience as sampled population size. Particularly, in-depth interviews were carried out in Ado-Ekiti between 2018 and 2019. Participants included the indigenes, committee members of *Udiroko* festival, traders, handicrafts producers, security agents, tourism enterprises, government agents and tourists. Out of the 50 participants, thirty (30) were males while twenty (20) were females. For the distribution of the informants by age, ten (10) were between 20-35 years, twenty-two (22) were between 36-50 years, while eighteen (18) of the participants were fifty-one (51) years and above. As regards nationality, forty-five (45) of the informants were Nigerian nationals, while the remaining five (5) were foreigners from Togo, Ghana, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the first author participated in several activities of the festival to authentically study its social and economic values. This enabled him to document the pictorial information during the festival. The findings were analysed using triangulation method in which the outcome of the interviews, observations and the data from the

secondary sources were presented and discussed concomitantly to complement one another.

## Results and Discussion

The following presentation is based on the data acquired through observation, in-depth interviews, and photographic documentation.

## Background of *Udiroko* Festival

According to the information gathered from the traditional ruler, Oba Rufus Adeyemo Adejugbe, the *Ewi* of Ado-Ekiti, the chiefs, and the people of Ado-Ekiti, the *Udiroko* festival is an ancient historical and cultural event that was established in 1310 AD. This was during the reign of His Royal Majesty, Oba Awamaro, the first *Ewi* of Ado-Ekiti who was also the son of Ewi Apa (Biritikolu). This happened after the defeat of King Elesun of Ilesun or Emure Kingdom and the destruction of his Empire. The *Udiroko* festival is regarded as an age long traditional event of the people and is celebrated annually in August. *Ewi* was not only a King, but also a supreme military Chief -General of his army, and when his kingdom became extremely larger than the original settlement in Osunle Odo (Odo-Ado), he moved to Oke-Ibon where he settled and founded Oke-Ewi - the Ado mother town. Nonetheless, the administrative and cultural demands of his office as a paramount ruler did not allow him to go on military expedition any longer. Therefore, he delegated his military responsibilities to the senior commanders of his army who thereafter became traditional war chiefs known as *Elegbe*. The war chiefs, headed by Chief Barafon, had the duty to report regularly, every successful exploit and military achievements to the *Ewi*. On every occasion of this report, they present the products of their exploits like captured slaves, farm products, weapons of war, among others, to the *Ewi*. The arrival of each successful war-chief was usually embraced with joy and various traditional songs. The people of Ado-Ekiti would assemble under *iroko* tree located in front of *Ewi*'s palace to welcome the military chiefs and rejoice with *Ewi*. At a point in time, *Ewi* decided to be meeting all his war chiefs once in a year on a specific day for such post-war reports.

In the ancient times, *Udiroko* was celebrated in the form of a universal Ado-Ekiti festival called *Olorunborun*. *Olorunborun* refers to the offering of praise, worship, and prayers to the heavens in every home in the town with the killing of a cock to pray and appease their Heads (*Ori*) and the Creator (*Eleda*). In the evening of the same day, members of the community assembled under the iroko tree in *Ewi's* palace to receive the monarch's blessings, because *Ewi* was believed to have the power to make prayers accepted quickly by the Heavens. This prayer is known to them as *Iwure* and is not taken with impunity because of the adage which says '*Ohun Ewi aye ba ti wi, ni Egba Orun n gba*', meaning, 'Whatever the *Ewi* of the earth pronounces is what the heavens accept'. *Ewi* picked '*Olorunborun* Day', the day that was initially specified for all indigenes of Ado-Ewi to make offering of Kolanut and

Walnuts in propitiation to their heads (*Ori*) and Creator (*Eleda*). The assemblage of people under *Iroko* tree in Ewi's palace on *Olorunborun* Day for the ceremony later became *Odun Udiroko* or *Udiroko* festival which is a derivative concept from the venue of the meeting. *Udiroko*, the Ekiti dialectic translation of *Idi igi iroko* (in general Yoruba language) means "under the *iroko* tree".

The *Ewi* is the principal celebrant while the War Chiefs (*Elegbe*s) and others participated actively. According to some of the interviewees, in the ancient *Udiroko* Day, the assemblage of the people under the *iroko* tree included the following: Ado-Ekiti indigenes, the returning military leaders of *Ewi's* Army, other military commanders and mercenaries, emissaries from subordinate kings and chief, messengers carrying different gifts and food items from the rulers of *Ewi's* vassal villages, captured slaves, and cultural displays. *Udiroko* festival is usually an occasion of happiness and merriment in Ado kingdom. The people generally rejoice that another milestone is covered or reached in their life's journey because the festival marks the beginning of the new year. No deity is worshiped or attached to *Udiroko* festival. It is now celebrated annually in August as an avenue to thank the Supreme God and to commune with the people of Ado-Ekiti.

## Social Implications of *Udiroko* Festival

Due to social evolution and existential realities, the present findings showed that Udiroko festival still features ancient social practices, but with some touches of modernity. The social activities during the weeklong celebrations include cultural dances, miniature exhibition of ancient and modern royal crowns (see Plates 1&2), renewal of oath of allegiance by the queens, chiefs, and their cohorts, parading of ancient sacred drums by the Queens (Plate 3), histrionic performances (Plate 4), endurance walk, visiting the aged and less privileged, local games, football competitions, lectures, pageant contest, fund raising, Jumat services in the mosque, thanksgiving services in the church, world press conference, and several aesthetic activities initiated by the related stakeholders and sponsors. The conglomeration of these entertaining social activities encourages indigenes of the town in the diaspora to come home for the festival and contribute their quota to the development of the town.




**Plates 1 & 2: Miniature exhibition of the royal crowns (Fieldwork, 2019).**



**Plate 3: *Olori* (Queens) parading with ancient drums (Fieldwork, 2019)**



**Plate 4: Drama Presentation (Fieldwork, 2019)**

One of the major characteristics of *Udiroko* festival is community integration and unity among the people. This brings old memories and friendships anew and enlightens the part of community development. Unlike some festivals, everybody is permitted to fully participate in the event because there are no taboos, deities, sacrifices, and irrational activities attached to it.

Both men and women, young and old, indigenes and foreigners are believed to have equal right to participate in the festival without any form of disparity. They enjoy local foods like pounded yam with *egusi* (melon) or *efo* (vegetable) soups with bush meats. The interdependent roles of both males and females brought forth more socio-economic advancement, mutual understanding and collaboration in the town. To maintain unity and peace in the community, this festival is an avenue for the people, especially the royal consorts and chiefs to renew their oath of allegiance to the *Ewi*, the 'mouth of the gods' and in turn receive royal blessings and advice as they begin the new year according to the traditional calendar. Also, according to some informants, a segment of the festival is scheduled to deliberate on the issues affecting the growth of the community and how to tackle them because government cannot provide everything alone. In addition, it strengthens the relationship and unity among the people at home and in diaspora by bringing them together to interact, share ideas, and be involve in community development.

As a part of the event every year, those who are old, the handicapped, the sick, prison inmates, and the motherless babies are visited and presented with assorted gifts so they can have a share in the blessings of the festival. The gifts include food stuffs, clothes, money, toiletries and royal greetings from the throne. It is believed that the *Udiroko* festival is a celebration of thanksgiving that signifies and promotes love, unity, courage, togetherness and entertaining mind in the community. During this visitation, the aged ones are encouraged to share their experiences in life for people to learn from them. The festival now embraces partnership with the stakeholders like the government, sponsors, tourism enterprises, security, hotel operators, media, religious leaders and cultural groups as a form communal effort to promote the people's heritage and cooperation among different sectors. According to the literature, when traditional festivals are well-packaged with modern activities without losing their cultural and historic authenticity, there would be cooperation among the people, wider global recognition of the cultural heritage, more domestic and international tourists' participation and the custodians would value and preserve them for posterity (Eze-Uzomaka & Oloidi, 2017; Ifegbo & Ibeanu, 2019; Oloidi & Okonkwo, 2020).

*Udiroko* festival improves community development by improving the level of social infrastructures and amenities which are the major fascinating services that sustain tourism destination and boost economic activities in this modern age. In this case, with the use of modern method to transform festivals in Ado town, the other social benefits include construction and management of roads, restoration of electricity supply, medical services, water supply, street decorations, public awareness programmes, and provision of those facilities and services that would create conducive environment and standard of living for the host and the visitors. Having these services encourages more people to settle in Ado-Ekiti for different business purposes. In relation to this view, Omolola (2013) opined that festivals that are well-planned have positive contributions to achieving sustainable development by attracting the attention

of government and other stakeholders to infrastructural development, such as road rehabilitation and development, recreational facilities, and these have improved socio- economic activities of the people and the movement of goods and services. As more people enjoy the conducive environment during the festival, the better for the artisans, food vendors, transporters, hoteliers, and other tourism enterprises to establish standard industries in the community to maximize their revenue (Eze-Uzomaka & Oloidi, 2017). At the destination of event, tourists spend money on variety of things according to their demands in exchange for money and stay longer or revisit the attractions if there are comfortable and sustaining modern amenities and services (Oloidi & Okonkwo, 2020).

Oloidi (2014) noted that it is misunderstanding, lack of awareness and mishandling of modern system and equipment that cause adverse effects on the traditions of the people, because modernisation cannot obliterate traditional values if the custodians and the major stakeholders still cherish them. For people to have sustainable control over the environment and their cultural heritage resources in this 21st century, modern methods are needed to move with the current trends. According to Ekechukwu and Oguamanam (2010), the integrative approach of traditional and modern methods cannot be overemphasised in the conservation and protection of cultural heritage resources especially in the aspects of policymaking, boundary demarcation, creation of awareness etc. The application of this theory will bring new ideas to the people's heritage and attract visitors to appreciate them.

One of the major characteristics of *Udiroko* festival is bringing different stakeholders together. One of the outcomes of the research through direct observation, interviews, and participation revealed that the event strengthens mutual relationships and understanding among the stakeholders like the host community, government, tourists, groups and companies. Annually, it brings the locals (both home and abroad) to the community to associate and share ideas with their people, and equally draws the attention of the philanthropists and merchants to establish their enterprises in Ado town and Ekiti-State at large. As social opportunity, *Udiroko* festival accommodates every people and religion and has prompted the masses and stakeholders from different religious, social, economic, educational and political institutions to actively participate. Likewise, the intervention of the different stakeholders and sponsors in *Udiroko* festivals has brought several social and economic opportunities to the town. For instance, the sponsors of various activities (government, La Casera Company, Goldberg Company, etc.), provided monetary rewards for those with outstanding presentations during the event. Such help in reducing poverty rate in the community. Stakeholders' involvement is another way people can be motivated to attend cultural activities. Nagy and Nagy (2013) concurred that traditional festival can create mutual relationship between the rural dwellers, foreigners (tourists) and the stakeholders based on the increase interest in the cultural events.

According to the Chairman of the 2019 *Udiroko* festival, the population of the participants and the stakeholders keep increasing every year even as more inbound tourists (both indigenes living in diaspora and non-indigenes) are recognised during the event. This indicates that this cultural event is heading towards a better understanding between the local community, stakeholders, and the international bodies. Mirbabayev and Shagazatova, (2009) opined that socially, tourism has a great influence on the host communities as a source of harmony, peace and understanding. Similarly, festivals preserve tradition, culture, and religion among the people of the same mind, and strengthen the social bond that binds the members of the community, thus encouraging group solidarity. Festival builds the cordial relationships between people and the stakeholders without minding religious differences and westernization (Lawal et al., 2005).

The findings further revealed that with the inclusion of modern activities and equipment, the involvement of stakeholders, sponsors, and the use of mass media, *Udiroko* festival has recently been publicised and promoted locally and internationally and this has encouraged preservation of cultural heritage and global recognition. Heritages of the people are conserved, documented, exhibited and promoted during festivals for global accessibility. Through festivals, people remember their past heroes and heroines as is the case of *Udiroko* festival and ask for their help and protection. The ancient meeting point under the *iroko* tree at *Ewi's* palace is being remembered in Ado-Ekiti as a historical site and the traditional method of community purification and outpouring blessings on the people of Ado are still maintained annually for the people to commence the New Year with love, confidence and hope. The *Ewi* of Ado-Ekiti stated that people should participate actively in their cultural activities, most especially festivals, for national and international identification just like many countries of the world like Brazil, Spain, Mexico, India, China and Argentina promote their cultural identities and values through festivals. Festivals tend to create awareness of cultural heritage resources and promote them for posterity (Eze-Uzomaka & Oloidi, 2017), but to manage and promote the people's heritage and cultural values in the community, cultural tourism resources which include the historical places, festivals and special events, business trips, religious places, local language, art and architecture, local games/sports, adventures, modern culture, historical monuments, and traditional cuisine and beverage must be preserved and promoted in the community (Luna, 2015; Uysal & Erşan, 2016).

## Economic Implications of Udiroko Festival

*Udiroko* festival is contemporaneously one of the earliest communal cultural activities in Ado-Ekiti that have brought different socio-economic opportunities and international recognition for community development because of its exceptional tourism potentials. The findings revealed that during *Udiroko* festival, temporary and permanent jobs are directly or indirectly secured or created ranging from petty trading to jobs at the

manufacturing industries. According to Mr. Tunji, a handcrafter, many art works are bought as souvenirs mostly by cultural enthusiasts during the festival, and this has prompted many craftsmen to make it a full-time occupation to increase productivity and income, and since then, the festival has remained a remarkable period of sales aside Ekiti State Festival of Arts and Culture. During the festival, the entrepreneurs from Ado town and many towns in Ekiti State identify and exploit available opportunities for market segmentation by selling assorted and customized items like raffia products, cultural objects, polo shirts, caps, hand fans, bangles, wall clocks, calendar, baskets, key-holders, handkerchiefs, portraits, artworks, textile materials and earth wares as souvenirs with the inscriptions depicting *Udiroko* festival to keep the memory afresh. Foods and drinks are also packaged for sale. Visitors usually patronized a locally made wine known as emu (palm wine), bush meat and local cuisines. In addition, kola-nuts and walnuts businesswomen and men also record more profits during the celebrations because every family buy them in high quantity as symbolic materials during the festival to pray in their respective homes and at the palace. Festival tourism, like the *Udiroko* festival, if well planned and implemented, helps to boost and create numerous jobs. Uysal and Erşan (2016) argued that during cultural events like traditional festivals, vendors are on high sales and there are intensifications in the development of small and medium scale enterprise (SMEs) within the host community. Likewise, tourism is classified as a multidisciplinary and multifaceted sector that touches all aspects of man in the environment and as a result of these characteristics, it provides employment opportunities for different categories of people in several sectors (Oloidi & Okonkwo, 2020; WTO, 2020).

According to the Director-General, Ekiti State Council for Arts and Culture, Ambassador Wale Ojo-Lanre, *Udiroko* festival has started boosting the economic activities and income generation of Ekiti people in many sectors. He pointed out that many tourists far and near come for the festival and spend averagely a week patronising available accommodation, transportation services, and making different transactions within the host destination, thereby helping in income generation and redistribution in the community. The festival is an avenue to generate funds for the development of every sector of the community. Apart from the help from the government and business-oriented individuals and groups, another strategy to raise money in Ado-Ekiti is through donations in which special guests are invited to donate money during the festival. It was unveiled that the money realized is used to execute several capital projects within the host community. Also, in Ado town, the mass media like the television stations, radio stations, internet service providers, and newspaper companies generate income during the festival as they accrue more funds through advertisements, sponsorship and programmes scheduled for the festival.

In addition to the above, the study found that many transportation and accommodation establishments benefit from *Udiroko* festival as the

participants from different locations and backgrounds receive services in exchange for payments. Most of them hire cars and book for accommodation in the hotels throughout the festive period. Ms. Regina, a staff of Prosperous Hotel affirmed that the festival annually boosts the income generation of the hotel because rooms, foods and beverages and other hospitable services of the hotel are hurriedly booked and paid for by visitors. Also, some transporters revealed higher income as most of the vehicles transport the participants from one location to the other with impressive fares.

Some informants confirmed that the wider the promotion and publicity for the festival, the higher the revenue for the media houses and the allowances of the staff. Every member of staff in these sectors receives regular salary/wages to cater for their needs and wants in the community. This equally helps in the circulation of money and redistribution of income. It was also noted that the government's internal generating revenue (IGR) increases during this period as taxes are paid by different sectors (Chidozie & Obubo, 2014). According to Obasola (2014, p. 532), "tourism contributes to sales, income, job and tax revenues. The tourist spends money on a variety of things in the community ranging from lodging, food, attraction and other services, thus creating a direct effect on the business in the form of income that pays wages and taxes".

## Possible Threats

Tourism development is at the early phase in Ekiti-State as the stakeholders, especially the government, still strive to create awareness about its benefits. Out of the numerous intangible tourism potentials, few are promoted, in which *Udiroko* festival is among, but the major threat is that there are no effective measures to evaluate them for sustainable tourism development and, its improper planning and execution have some adverse effects on the people. Apart from the above socio-economic opportunities of the festival, it was also gathered that the higher the number of cultural enthusiasts that participate in the festival, the increase in the prices of goods and services. There are seasonal inflation and commonditisation of cultural objects of indigenous values like textile materials, earth wares, beads, bracelets, carved images, local foods and others that serve as souvenirs to keep the memory of the festival. The replicas of cultural objects that depict the unique indigenous knowledge and technology of the Yoruba people and those customised items for the festivals are sold as souvenirs at higher prices.

As transportation and accommodation services are usually scarce and expensive during *Udiroko* festival, social amenities and infrastructural services are also overburdened or over utilised due to the increase in population. In Ado town and environs, there are unusually, over-crowding at the beer parlours, restaurants, sport centres, souvenir selling scenes, amusement parks, and the streets in general, and this intimidating population threatens the security state of the environment as the hoodlums could easily maneuver their ways to perpetrate evils. These aforementioned issues could be detrimental to

the tourists' and stakeholders' participations and the safety of the local populace at the long run. These issues result to pollution, traffic congestion, shortage of resources and inconducive environment for the inhabitants in the community. As posited by Oloidi and Okonkwo (2020), even though the revitalisation of cultural and historical events with modern touching attracts more people to a destination, if they are not professionally controlled and evaluated, especially in the aspect of commonditisation and security management, such cultural heritage could lose its authenticity and values in exchange for money and the comfort of the host community could be endangered.

Another threat that was pointed out is the issue of insecurity. This is a national issue that needs urgent measures to curb. The incessant kidnapping, killings by the *Boko Haram* sect, herdsmen ambush, robbery, raping and political crises affect the turn-out of some interested participants. Mr. Josh stated that many are willing to attend and participate in the Udiroko festivals across West African countries may be deterred by insecurity and political crises facing the country in general. Likewise, Dr. Cole Humphrey from the United Kingdom who has also been a regular participant during Osun-Osogbo festival, Abuja carnival, Calabar Street carnival and *Eyo* festival in Lagos State stated that many foreigners who wanted to witness the festival with him changed their minds because they were considering the state of insecurity in Nigeria.

## Summary and Conclusion

In pre-historic societies, festivals provided an opportunity for elders to transfer traditional knowledge and cultural activities to younger generations. The genealogical background of *Udiroko* festival shows that it is an ancient celebration that reminds the indigenes of Ado-Ekiti what transpired in the past. In the past, the festival was traditionally celebrated within Ado town, meaning that it was not known beyond the host community, and consequently, it was attended by few people. However, more recently, through the application of modernization materials and ideology, the festival is now more attractive while its cultural authenticity and significance remain untampered with. Economically, the 2019 *Udiroko* festival was highly publicized, promoted and sponsored locally and internationally which increased the number of the participants, and consequently gave a boost to the economic activities of the entrepreneurs in the community. The event has a huge significance on the income generation as it influences the small and medium scale enterprisers such as the transporters, food vendors, artisans, impressionists, hotel operators, entertaining groups, media, traders, printer, photographers, painters, fashion designers and other related sources of income. Most of the businessmen and women interviewed indicated that it is in the peak period that maximum sales are recorded due to the long stay of many participants and their interest in local activities and materials within the community. They further explained that several items with the inscription of

the festival were plentifully sold more than the previous years. The visitors mostly patronized a locally made wine known as emu (palm wine), bush meat, local cuisines, traditional textile products, local songs, etc. all of which helped in the redistribution of income.

This festival is an accessible tourism potential that involves many attractive cultural activities. Such activities include the miniature exhibitions of the royal crowns, homage and renewal of oath of allegiance to *Ewi*, performances of the *Olori* (Queens) with ancient drums, street demonstrations by the *Elegbe* (War Chiefs) led by Chief Barafon, the traditional regalia, cultural drama, dances and songs, jingles through the media and the indoor games. However, some informants believed that other activities like lectures, street trekking, and the variety night need more improvement in packaging for the host community to benefit maximally. In the aspects of adjustments, to control the overburdening of event centres, the final stage of the sport competitions and the variety night should involve gate fees as another strategy to generate income and to plan for the subsequent events. There is need for proper segmentation of all activities during the festival to create a conducive environment.

Security management is one of the major determinants for the tourists to choose a destination. It is now necessary for the stakeholders to equally help to curb the state of insecurity, traffic congestion, pollution, rape, kidnapping, robbery, killing, political crises, herdsmen attack and other social vices in Ekiti-State and Nigeria in general.

Conclusively, *Udiroko* festival is a traditional event with heterogeneous aesthetic characteristics that can invite domestic and international tourists to Nigeria and Ekiti State in particular. There should be proper implementation of cultural and tourism policies and legislations to curb the cases of insecurity and other social vices within and outside the host community. According to Oloidi (2019b) in a conference paper entitled: *National Tourism Policy in Nigeria: Issues and the Way Forward,* many aesthetic cultural heritage resources are abandoned while some are being destroyed in different communities as a result of weak policies and insecurity, and to ensure the management and protection of these resources for posterity and sustainable tourism development, these policies must be re-appraised for its effectiveness to meet global standard. The issue of insecurity must be addressed especially in collaboration with the newly launched Western Nigeria Security Network known as *Amotekun* in the Southwestern Nigeria. If cultural heritage resources (such as traditional festivals) are harnessed and maintained to international standard with high level of security and application of contemporary methods, they will continue to boost the socio-economic opportunities of the host community and at the same time preserve and promote the traditions of the people for posterity without destroying their cultural authenticity and values (Abara, 2015).

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