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Cultural Entrepreneurship: A Focus on Indigenous Knowledge Design and Community Engagement in Osun's UNESCO World Heritage Site for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

The Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove is recognised as a catalyst for sustainable national growth and development. This recognition stems from the fact that the sacred Grove, which hosts the festival's major rituals, is one of the last remaining pristine forests in Southwestern Nigeria. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Grove serves not only as a religious sanctuary, but also as an economic asset. This study examines entrepreneurial initiatives through indigenous knowledge design and community engagement to determine how innovations during the festival preserve cultural heritage while driving economic growth and social progress. Bill Drayton's social entrepreneurship theory serves as the theoretical framework, while the descriptive design, observation methods (participant and documentary observations), and interview instruments (Key Informant Interviews and In-depth Interviews) are employed. The study reveals that indigenous knowledge design offers valuable insights into developing community-led initiatives that promote cultural innovation, commercialisation and revitalisation of cultural festivals. It is, therefore, recommended that policymakers and practitioners focus on community-led initiatives and indigenous knowledge design in cultural development projects.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial, UNESCO World Heritage Site, Sustainable development, Indigenous knowledge, Community engagement

Introduction

The Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in Osun State, Nigeria, holds profound historical, cultural, spiritual, and ecological significance. Ojo (2008), as cited in Ewalefoh (2025, p. 55), emphasises that "the Osun-Osogbo Grove holds particular significance due to its annual festival, which attracts thousands of devotees and tourists, reinforcing cultural identity and communal spirituality". As the spiritual heartland of the Osun deity in Yoruba cosmology, the Grove symbolises the deep connection between indigenous spirituality and environmental conservation.

Central to this study is the concept of indigenous knowledge design, which refers to the systematic use of native epistemologies and cultural expressions to inform the development of products, services, and systems that are contextually relevant and environmentally sustainable. Jones and Choy (2021), as cited in Bawack et al. (2025, p. 1), state that indigenous knowledge, "encompassing traditional ecological knowledge, cultural practices, and community-based approaches, provide valuable insights into sustainable resource management and environmental stewardship". This had earlier been expressed by Sillitoe

and Marzano (2009, p. 14) when they argue that indigenous knowledge "varies within and between societies, comes from a range of sources and is a dynamic mix of past tradition and present innovation".

In the case of the Osun-Osogbo Grove, the myths, rituals, artistic sculptures, architectural forms, and medicinal flora provide rich resources for innovation in fields, including visual arts, eco-tourism, fashion, herbal medicine, and performance arts. By creating platforms that support knowledge transfer and capacity building among local artisans, youth, and culture bearers, the Grove has been transformed into a living laboratory for heritage-based entrepreneurship. This process is not only economically rewarding but also vital for safeguarding the intangible aspects of cultural heritage that are often vulnerable to modernisation and neglect. In their contribution, the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (2004, pp. 62-63) states that "the management structure of the Osun Grove demonstrates how heritage resources can support sustainable entrepreneurship. Revenue from corporate video and filming rights is shared between the Osogbo Cultural Heritage Council and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments…" These practices highlight how the Grove functions as a living laboratory for heritage-based entrepreneurship, with potential for innovation across various sectors.

Consequently, entrepreneurship in Osun-Osogbo thrives through a vibrant network of local commerce and tourism-related activities that empower the community and promote sustainable development. Within the sacred Grove, various individuals and groups, including cloth sellers, CD and music vendors, hairdressers, beer sellers, and photographers, generate income by providing goods and services to visitors. The collection of entry fees at the Grove entrance also contributes to local revenue. Additionally, informal service providers, such as motorcyclists, benefit from increased tourist traffic. These entrepreneurial activities are often supported through the formation of cooperatives, cultural clusters, and community-based management committees, which leverage the diverse skills and indigenous knowledge producers. The reason for this is not unconnected to the fact that when communities are positioned as active agents rather than passive recipients, such initiatives become more sustainable, inclusive, and rooted in cultural authenticity.

This study, therefore, advances a critical and timely discourse on heritage-led development by situating the Osun Grove at the intersection of indigenous knowledge, community agency, and entrepreneurial action. This holistic approach aligns with global best practices in sustainable development, while also reinforcing the unique cultural identity and resilience of Nigerian communities.

Literature Review

Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Community Engagement and Social Entrepreneurship in Contextual Perspectives

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are deeply rooted epistemologies developed by communities over generations through lived experiences, cultural practices, and interactions with the environment. As noted by Inuguidan (2025, p. 1068), "indigenous knowledge systems and practices have played a vital role in shaping the beliefs, values, and daily lives of diverse cultural groups". These systems encompass traditional technologies, oral histories, medicinal practices, spiritual beliefs, agriculture, crafts, and performing arts. Far from being primitive or obsolete, IKS embodies a wealth of sustainable and adaptable knowledge that offers viable solutions to contemporary challenges. Gaza and Masere (2025,

p. 387) emphasise the crucial role of IKS in climate change adaptation and mitigation from an African perspective. They highlight that "the significant role and critical relevance of IKS across various disciplines includes combating the consequences of climate change, traditional medicine, agroforestry and biodiversity".

Subsequently, cultural entrepreneurship is the process of generating economic value from cultural resources while simultaneously preserving and promoting cultural heritage. Suwala (2015, p. 513) describes it as "a sphere of activities subject to constant change between once unconnected fields of the arts, the cultural and business sector". It involves transforming traditional knowledge, expressions, and practices into creative products or services with economic, educational, or social value. In indigenous communities, cultural entrepreneurship serves as a powerful tool not only for generating income but also for reinforcing identity, pride, and agency. When applied to IKS, cultural entrepreneurship promotes sustainability and community development by rooting enterprise models in values such as collective ownership, ecological harmony, and ancestral wisdom.

For example, Ochonu (2018) cited in David (2023, p. 3), who suggests that precolonial African enterprising warriors were entrepreneurs who transformed their entrepreneurial ingenuity into "multiple social endeavours that involved planning, management, delegation, tasks, goals, deliverables, compensation, the creation of value in the form of war spoils, the distribution of dividends, and reinvestment in processes that are today associated with business management principles". Supporting this, David asserts that "these entrepreneurial practices were unwritten (not formalised in the western context) but well-understood business rules in Africa" (David, 2023, p. 3). This approach contrasts with conventional entrepreneurship, which is often individualistic and profit-driven, by placing community welfare and cultural continuity at the core of its operations.

Going by the above, it is evident that a critical benefit of integrating IKS with cultural entrepreneurship lies in its ability to resist cultural erosion and promote self-determined development. Many indigenous communities are facing the loss of cultural practices due to globalisation, urbanisation, and generational disconnection. Mawere and Tshamano (2024, p. 115) argue that "African Indigenous Knowledge Systems offer a unique approach to restorative justice by promoting healing and reconciliation through community involvement, storytelling, and cultural practices". This implies that cultural entrepreneurship, supported by intergenerational knowledge transfer, enables younger members of the community to rediscover and reinterpret their heritage in innovative ways. For instance, traditional textile techniques are now adapted for modern fashion lines, indigenous music styles are being fused with contemporary genres, and traditional ecological knowledge is informing sustainable farming and tourism models.

It is, therefore, necessary to state that the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems into cultural entrepreneurship presents a transformative approach to development that honours tradition while embracing innovation. It challenges dominant economic paradigms by promoting alternative models rooted in collective values, identity preservation, and ecological balance. To unlock the full potential of IKS in entrepreneurship, a multi-stakeholder approach is required, including local communities, cultural practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and investors. By elevating indigenous knowledge from the margins of development discourse to the forefront of cultural enterprise, societies can foster a more inclusive, equitable, and culturally enriched future. This synergy is not merely about preserving the past, but about building a future where culture is a dynamic asset in the development process.

However, community engagement is increasingly recognised as a fundamental pillar in heritage conservation, especially in contexts where heritage is deeply embedded in the identity and everyday practices of local communities. Amin et al. (2024, p. 50) state that "cultural heritage preservation is crucial for maintaining social sustainability, particularly through community engagement". This process involves the inclusive participation of community members in decision-making regarding the protection, management, and use of cultural and natural heritage resources. This participation goes beyond token consultation to include active involvement and co-ownership. In heritage conservation, communities are not merely passive custodians of tradition; they are dynamic agents capable of shaping and sustaining heritage initiatives. Nguyen and Nguyen (2024, p. 179) emphasise that "local communities play a fundamental and transformative role in the complex domain of cultural heritage conservation". Their life experiences, oral histories, and indigenous knowledge provide the cultural depth and legitimacy necessary for preserving heritage sites authentically and sustainably.

Similarly, the integration of community engagement with social entrepreneurship presents a promising model for heritage conservation. This is because social entrepreneurship is characterised by the application of entrepreneurial strategies to address social issues, focusing on sustainable impact rather than profit maximisation. In their contribution, Scaffidi et al. (2025, p. 1) argue that "social entrepreneurs have emerged as a powerful force driving societal change in today's dynamic and interconnected world. They identify societal problems and leverage entrepreneurial principles to create, manage, and implement innovative solutions that foster social change". Going by its application to heritage contexts, social entrepreneurship empowers communities to develop culturally relevant, economically viable, and socially inclusive initiatives that protect and promote heritage assets. These initiatives can include community-run museums, cultural festivals, handicraft cooperatives, eco-tourism ventures, or educational programs that celebrate local traditions.

Subsequently, one of the key strengths of community-led social entrepreneurship in heritage conservation is its ability to foster a sense of ownership, pride, and responsibility among local populations. Sauermann (2023, p. 1) argues that "social entrepreneurship has emerged as a contemporary driver for promoting sustainable development in low-income communities". This grassroots approach ensures that heritage is not seen as a distant or elitist concept managed by external agencies, but as a living and evolving resource shaped by the people it represents. For instance, when local artisans are empowered to produce and sell crafts inspired by heritage motifs, or when community members guide tourists through culturally significant sites, they become active participants in storytelling, education, and economic development.

Supporting this claim, Duffy and Ezra (2022, p. 1) highlight that "the handicraft sector plays an important role in providing economic benefits of tourism to local communities". These participatory dynamics contribute to the resilience of both the heritage itself and the community, strengthening cultural identity and social cohesion while creating employment and skills development opportunities.

However, despite its advantages, integrating community engagement and social entrepreneurship into heritage conservation faces several challenges. A major concern is the potential for cultural commodification, where heritage elements are oversimplified or decontextualised to appeal to tourist markets. Establishing this thought, Smith (2018), cited in Amin et al. (2024, p. 51), claims that the "preservation of cultural heritage faces numerous challenges, primarily driven by urbanisation, globalisation, and a lack of public

awareness. These factors can dilute the meaning and sacredness of certain practices". Such challenges highlight the need for ethical frameworks, capacity building, and inclusive governance mechanisms to guide community-based heritage entrepreneurship. It is on this note that this study encourages the development of a symbiotic framework that combines community engagement and social entrepreneurship for sustainable heritage conservation.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs Bill Drayton's theory of social entrepreneurship as its theoretical framework. The term "social entrepreneurship" first appeared in literature on social change during the 1960s and 1970s, gaining widespread usage in the 1980s and 1990s, largely due to Bill Drayton, the founder of Ashoka, which seeks to promote innovators for the public good (Nteere, 2021). Drayton's theory is based on the belief that everyone can be a change maker and that achieving sustainable, systemic social change requires entrepreneurial approaches to solving social issues. Nteere (2012), cited in Nteere (2021, p. 460), notes that "social entrepreneurship is a process of recognising a social problem and using entrepreneurial skills to organise, create, and manage a venture to bring social change".

Drayton's social entrepreneurship theory aligns with this study, which focuses on entrepreneurialising the Osun UNESCO World Heritage Site through indigenous knowledge design and community engagement for sustainable national development. This position places social innovation and impact at the core of entrepreneurial activity. According to Drayton, social entrepreneurs serve as change agents who identify urgent social issues and devise transformative, scalable solutions that enhance the lives of individuals and strengthen communities. This framework is directly applicable to the revitalisation of the Osun-Osogbo sacred Grove, where the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems provides innovative means for cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and economic empowerment.

Drucker (1985, p. 20) asserts that "an enterprise does not need to be small and new to be entrepreneurial. Indeed, entrepreneurship is being practised by large and often old enterprises". In this context, social entrepreneurship is purpose-driven rather than profit-driven, channelling the unique traditions, symbols, and values of the Yoruba people into sustainable development initiatives that uplift local communities while safeguarding their cultural heritage. This aligns with Peter Drucker's view that entrepreneurship involves purposeful innovation and responsiveness to societal change, without necessarily necessitating the start of a business or the generation of profit.

Drayton's theory of social entrepreneurship is defined by four core features: innovation, social impact, sustainability, and system change. Foregrounding Drayton's postulation, Nteere (2021, p. 463) highlights that: …those people who work in social enterprise are supposed to have the capacity to learn new things; innovative and providing the creative thrust, which, if properly motivated, can ensure the long-term survival of the social enterprise. Also, the theory evaluates how skills and knowledge developed over time in a social enterprise contribute to the enterprise's overall sustainability. Applying Drayton's theory to the Osun Grove promotes culturally grounded, community-led initiatives that empower locals, preserve heritage, and address the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge in Nigeria's national development policies. Drayton's theory reinforces the notion that entrepreneurship within public service spaces, such as heritage sites, can lead to transformative national outcomes for the nation.

In this context, entrepreneurship serves as a means to reimagine heritage, not merely as a relic of the past but also as a vibrant, functional tool for education, identity formation, and socio-economic development. Through indigenous knowledge design, cultural storytelling, environmental conservation practices, and participatory governance, the site can be repositioned as a living heritage and a nucleus of sustainable national development. Therefore, Drayton's model provides a robust framework for understanding how socially-oriented entrepreneurship, rooted in community participation and indigenous wisdom, can drive long-term, inclusive growth, while preserving Nigeria's intangible cultural assets.

Indigenous Knowledge Design as a Means of Cultural Innovation, Commercialisation and Economic Empowerment in Osun-Osogbo Festival

The Osun-Osogbo festival, held annually in Osogbo, Nigeria, is a vibrant celebration of Yoruba spirituality, culture, and heritage. Beyond its spiritual significance, the festival represents a dynamic ecosystem of innovation, commercialisation, and livelihood opportunities driven by Indigenous Knowledge Design (IKD). Indigenous knowledge, expressed through rituals, music, textiles, architecture, and commerce, serves not only as a cultural repository but also as a mechanism for economic empowerment. This analysis, supported by visual references from the festival, explores how various stakeholders - particularly motorists, vendors, artisans, and cultural entrepreneurs - leverage IKD to generate income and promote cultural sustainability.

For example, the gateway into the Osun sacred Grove exemplifies indigenous knowledge design as spiritual architecture, which attracts tourists and pilgrims. Income generated through gate fees supports the maintenance and custodianship of the Grove. The site's popularity also creates opportunities for local entrepreneurs, such as motorists (motorcycle taxi), who provide transportation services and capitalise on peak demand.



Plate 1: The carved festival gateway where tourists, devotees, and researchers drop monetary contributions to support the maintenance of the sacred Grove. Photo Credit: Researcher.



Plate 2: Motorcyclists transport tourists, researchers, and devotees to and from the Festival Grounds. Photo Credit**:** The Researcher

The Grove's unique indigenous knowledge design and spiritual architecture, featuring symbolic carvings and iconography, acts as a tourist attraction that boosts local economic activity and demonstrates how traditional design and cultural heritage can drive

commercial pursuits and support local entrepreneurship. The pictures below would be illustrative:

The above picture captures commercial bike riders, commonly known as Okada riders, positioned strategically around festival venues. Their economic relevance is rooted in their local spatial knowledge, awareness of festival timings, and understanding of cultural protocols. These riders provide more than just mobility; they also serve as informal guides and cultural brokers, particularly for non-local visitors. Their services see increased demand during the festival, resulting in higher income. The presence of these bike riders illustrates how localised knowledge, when aligned with cultural events, can facilitate economic empowerment through service provision.

Additionally, commercial activities thrive through strategic brand advertising. Local vendors play a crucial role in promoting indigenous aesthetics by selling traditional garments such as Adire, Ankara, and Aso-oke. These culturally significant outfits resonate with the spiritual and celebratory atmosphere of the event and are deeply rooted in Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), featuring motifs, dyeing techniques, and colour symbolism reflective of Yoruba cosmology. Demand for these garments surges during the festival, creating significant sales opportunities for local vendors, many of whom are women entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, companies like International Breweries, the producer of Trophy drink, and Grand Oak Limited, which produces Seaman's Schnapps, capitalise on the festival's vibrant setting by placing flex banners and placards around the venue that showcase visually appealing designs of their beverages.

This strategic positioning not only enhances product visibility but also aligns the brand with local cultural experiences. Trophy drinks and Seaman's Schnapps are sold at the event, with a portion of the revenue shared with festival organisers, blending commerce with cultural patronage. Together, these practices highlight how both local entrepreneurs and corporate brands contribute to the monetisation of culture and identity during the festival. See the pictures below for details: Food and drink vendors strategically align their products with the spiritual and social needs of the festival. For example, Seaman Schnapps, used in libations and rituals, becomes a highly sought-after item during the festival. As seen during the festival celebration, vendors apply their understanding of ritual timing and cultural preferences to effectively stock and market these products.





Their offerings cater not only to nourishment but also to spiritual obligations, illustrating the economic benefit derived from an understanding of indigenous rituals. Packaging and selling goods such as dolls, baskets, calabashes and fruits, among other offering items,

within this framework allows vendors to thrive in a temporary but lucrative market. The picture below will further buttress our explanation:



Plate 5: Osun Adherents with their offerings to the Osun's goddess during the 2024 Osun-Osogbo Festival. Photo Credit: The Researcher.

Performers, such as drummers and dancers, are central to the festival's spiritual and celebratory experience. These individuals are custodians of indigenous performance knowledge, including specific rhythms, chants, and dance movements passed down through oral traditions. During the festival, they are hired for public appearances, processions, and private rituals. Their skills are compensated through appearance fees or communal donations. By transforming cultural heritage into performative labour, these practitioners demonstrate how IKD serves as both a spiritual obligation and an economic opportunity. The graphic illustration below attests to our position:



Plate 6: Bata and Dundun drummers perform at the 2024 Osun-Osogbo Festival. Photo Credit: The Researcher.

Artisans who carve statues and maintain shrines utilise indigenous knowledge systems that are vital for the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, as well as intertwining cosmology, craftsmanship, and symbolism. Tolu Oyeniyi, one of the custodians and staff of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Osogbo, informed us that "most of the art works in the Grove are designed by Adunni Olorisa, who received the design inspirations from her ancestors" (Oyeniyi, 2024). Their works are often commissioned by spiritual leaders or purchased by tourists, transforming traditional artistic practices into marketable commodities. These artisans act as both preservers of heritage and participants in the creative economy. Their income is directly linked to the authenticity and cultural

depth of their products, highlighting the value of tradition within contemporary economic frameworks.

Vendors dealing in herbs and ritual objects apply traditional ecological and spiritual knowledge in their trade. Their understanding of indigenous botany, spiritual alignment, and ritual function is critical for healing, protection, or empowerment. During the Osun-Osogbo festival, their clientele expands beyond local to include tourists and seekers. These spiritual entrepreneurs embody IKD in both product and practice, transforming sacred knowledge into an economic resource through culturally rooted commerce. See the plates 7 and 8 below for additional information:



Iyamopo is the tallest among the sculptures. It has six hands – "some symbolically offering advice and others inflicting the consequences of either heeding or ignoring that advice" (Ademola. 2024). This imagery reflects the Yoruba belief in the dual nature of guidance and retribution, reinforcing moral consciousness and divine justice.



Plate 8: Sanpona and Ella picture at the 2024 Osun Osogbo Festival. Photo Credit: Researcher.

The image contains Sanpona and Ella, both significant spiritual entities in Yoruba belief. Sanpona is associated with smallpox and divine retribution, signifying the power of deities to control health and well-being, while Ella represents balance and protection. Their sculptural representation within the grove highlights Yoruba indigenous knowledge about disease, healing, and spiritual equilibrium.

Going by the above, it is believed that the Osun-Osogbo festival presents a compelling model of how Indigenous Knowledge Design operates at the intersection of culture, commerce, and

empowerment. Every actor - from bike riders to drummers, cloth vendors to sculptors - relies on intimate knowledge of indigenous customs, spatial practices, and symbolic meanings to create income-generating opportunities. This economic framework is cyclical and sustainable because it is intertwined with the cultural calendar and rituals of the community. By recognising and investing in IKD, there exists potential to formalise these economies, expand their reach, and further dignify the role of indigenous knowledge in modern economic systems. Thus, the festival is not merely a cultural spectacle, but a powerful engine for cultural innovation, commercialisation, and economic empowerment.

However, community-led initiatives have significantly contributed to the revitalisation and sustained popularity of the Osun-Osogbo festival. This is evident in the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Design (IKD) into local planning, festival structuring, and space management. A clear example is the spiritual architecture of the carved gateway to the Osun Sacred Grove, as previously discussed. The sacred Groove is maintained by local custodians using traditional knowledge. This gateway functions not only as a marker of a sacred space, but also attracts domestic and international tourists whose contributions, through gate fees, support the local economy. Artisans and transport operators also benefit directly from the increased traffic, demonstrating how the community's stewardship over sacred cultural assets has transformed spiritual tradition into a sustainable economic model. These initiatives, primarily managed by local stakeholders rather than external institutions, have empowered the community ownership of both cultural preservation and economic growth.

One of the most visible manifestations of community engagement is the role of local transporters – Okada riders - during the festival. These individuals do not merely provide mobility; they also act as informal cultural liaisons and navigators. By utilising their indigenous knowledge, they assist visitors, especially tourists, in navigating the festival's layout, rituals, and spiritual zones. Their ability to interpret the flow of human traffic, sacred time slots, and festival protocols becomes an economic asset during peak cultural periods. This informal, yet essential, role of Okada riders illustrates a broader pattern of decentralised community-led initiatives, where economic empowerment and cultural participation are inseparable.

Food and drink vendors, often strategically positioned throughout the festival, form another layer of community-led revitalisation. These individuals curate their offerings around the spiritual and practical needs of participants. The sale of ritual items such as Seaman Schnapps and products used in libations demonstrates an intimate understanding of the festival's spiritual expectations. Vendors align their stock with specific ritual hours, employing indigenous knowledge of cultural protocols to optimise sales. In doing so, they transform cultural understanding into a practical business model. Their contribution not only supports their households but also ensures that spiritual practices are upheld with authenticity. These micro and macro enterprises constitute an important part of the cultural economy that sustains the festival, often without formal institutional backing. See the pictures below for additional information:

Finally, the artists, drummers, sculptors, and herbal vendors, as previously depicted in plates 6, 7 and 8, represent some of the most direct forms of cultural and economic revitalisation. These practitioners serve as repositories of oral traditions and performance knowledge, which are often passed down through generations. By monetising their talents through appearances, sales, and services, they keep indigenous practices alive while promoting economic independence. Community-driven curation of shrines and performances ensures that the cultural richness of the festival remains intact and is not

diluted for touristic purposes. This alignment with local values allows the community to resist the complete commercialisation of the festival while still benefiting financially. These initiatives contribute to a model of cultural sustainability that is locally driven, economically viable, and deeply respectful of tradition. The Osun-Osogbo festival thrives not only due to external investment but primarily because the community leads the effort to make culture both a source of pride and a means of survival.

Summary

The Osun-Osogbo festival serves as a compelling model for harnessing Indigenous Knowledge Design in cultural innovation, commercialisation, and economic empowerment. Through various community-led initiatives, the festival showcases the potential of IKD to drive economic activity while preserving cultural heritage. The study underscores the critical involvement of local stakeholders in stewarding sacred cultural assets and converting spiritual traditions into sustainable economic models. By leveraging IKD, the community has cultivated a vibrant cultural economy that benefits local livelihoods and promotes cultural sustainability.

The study stresses the importance of community engagement and social entrepreneurship in heritage conservation, emphasising the need for inclusive and sustainable approaches to cultural development. The implications of this study are significant for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers interested in advancing cultural heritage and sustainable development.

Findings

The study reveals that the Osun-Osogbo festival is a vibrant example of how Indigenous Knowledge Design (IKD) can be utilised for cultural innovation, commercialisation, and economic empowerment. The festival showcases a variety of community-led initiatives that leverage IKD to generate income and promote cultural sustainability. From the intricately carved festival gateway to the services provided by Okada riders, vendors, artisans, and performers, every aspect of the festival highlights the potential of IKD to stimulate economic activity while preserving cultural heritage. The study emphasises the critical role of local stakeholders - including custodians, transporters, vendors, and artisans - in managing sacred cultural assets and transforming spiritual traditions into sustainable economic models.

More so, the study also highlights the importance of community engagement and social entrepreneurship in heritage conservation. By taking ownership of cultural preservation and economic growth, the community has established a thriving cultural economy that supports local livelihoods and promotes cultural sustainability. The study demonstrates that community-led initiatives rooted in indigenous knowledge and cultural practices can effectively drive economic development while ensuring the integrity of cultural heritage.

Conclusion

The Osun-Osogbo festival exemplifies the power of Indigenous Knowledge Design in driving cultural innovation, commercialisation, and economic empowerment. By utilising IKD, the community has developed a robust cultural economy that uplifts local livelihoods and champions cultural sustainability. The study highlights the vital role of community engagement and social entrepreneurship in heritage conservation, demonstrating the necessity for inclusive and sustainable development strategies.

The study concludes that the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Groove offers a valuable model for cultural development that prioritises community ownership, cultural integrity, and

economic sustainability. By scaling up community-led initiatives and fostering policy support for IKD, there is potential to create more dynamic and sustainable cultural economies that benefit local communities and promote cultural heritage.

Recommendations

In light of the study's findings, it is recommended that policymakers and practitioners focus on community-led initiatives and Indigenous Knowledge Design in cultural development projects. This can be achieved by supporting community engagement, capacity building, and social entrepreneurship in heritage conservation. Moreover, policymakers should recognise the value of IKD in driving economic activity and promoting cultural sustainability, and work to foster an enabling environment for community-led initiatives to flourish.

The study also recommends conducting additional research on the impact of IKD on local livelihoods and cultural sustainability. This could explore the potential for IKD to drive economic development in various cultural contexts, as well as the challenges and opportunities linked to scaling up community-led initiatives. By enhancing our understanding of the relationship between IKD and cultural development, we can develop more effective and sustainable approaches to promoting cultural heritage and economic empowerment.

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