

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM PRESERVING AND PROMOTING LOCAL TRADITIONS A CASE STUDY OF ORONA FESTIVAL ILARO OGUN STATE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This research study examined the cultural heritage tourism preserving and promoting local traditions; a case study of Orona festival Ilaro Ogun state in Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data in all, 120 questionnaires was distributed to the respondents and 100 recovered from respondents. The research findings of this study indicate that the Orona festival is one of the key festivals celebrated in the area attracting significant interest from the community. It has a positive effect on the local economy and has the potential to enhance tourism in the region. The importance of Orona is good for preservation of cultural heritage, 56% of the respondents said it very important because it preserve history and heritage, while 5% said it preserve traditional religious institutions and spiritual importance

Keywords: Cultural tourism, Local, Festivals, Traditional, Beliefs preservation

INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism is an integral aspect of preserving Nigeria's diverse and rich heritage, particularly through its vibrant festivals (Awodele & Ayeni, 2019). This involves safeguarding and promoting the cultural expressions, traditions, and customs of various ethnic groups for educational, economic, and social benefits (Scheyvens, 2011). Scientifically, preserving festivals for cultural tourism can be understood through multidisciplinary approaches involving anthropology, sociology, environmental science, economics, and conservation techniques (Skvarciany, 2020). The scientific

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preservation of festivals in Nigeria is essential for maintaining the cultural identity of its people while fostering sustainable tourism (Alhasni, 2021). Combining traditional knowledge with modern techniques ensures these festivals remain authentic and vibrant for future generations. Local festivals are vital for preserving cultural heritage and promoting sustainable tourism (Ayeni, 2013). They act as dynamic platforms for showcasing traditions while fostering economic growth, environmental conservation, and cultural exchange. By integrating scientific methods and community-driven strategies, festivals can thrive as sustainable and authentic cultural assets (Ayeni & Eboho, 2012). Anthropologists argue that festivals are living archives of traditions, enabling communities to perform and transmit knowledge in its authentic context (Aref, 2010). UNESCO recognizes festivals as a means of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Sociological studies highlight how festivals create a sense of belonging and collective identity, crucial for maintaining cultural coherence in the face of globalization. Economic models in tourism show that events attract tourist expenditure, which sustains local economies (Ziki, 2020). Studies demonstrate that festivals often lead to a "multiplier effect," where money spent by tourists circulates within the community. Many festivals are tied to sacred sites or natural landmarks, such as groves, rivers, or mountains. Their significance fosters conservation efforts, as preserving the environment is often integral to the festival (Ayodele, 2019). Environmental science supports the idea that cultural tourism linked to festivals incentivizes communities to protect their natural heritage, reducing environmental degradation (Seetanah, 2011).

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Study area

Ilaro, located in Ogun State, Nigeria, lies within the Yewa (formerly Egbadó) cultural region, historically inhabited by the Yewa people, who trace their ancestry to Ile-Ife, regarded as the ancestral homeland of the Yoruba ethnic group. Its development into a prominent settlement was largely influenced by its strategic position along key trade routes that connected various regions of Yorubaland and the neighboring Dahomey Kingdom (present-day Benin Republic). Ilaro experiences a bimodal climate with two distinct seasons: Rainy season extending from March to November, characterized by heavy and consistent rainfall and dry season: Lasting from December to February, marked by minimal precipitation. The region receives an average annual rainfall of 1,700 to 2,000 mm, supporting lush vegetation, with a consistent mean annual temperature of 26°C, indicative of a tropical monsoon climate. The area's original vegetation is tropical rainforest, known for its emergent trees rising above the canopy, multiple canopy layers providing dense cover and lianas and epiphytes, adding to the biodiversity. Prominent tree species include *Milicia excelsa* (Iroko), *Azizelia bipindensis* (African mahogany), *Brachystegia nigerica*, *Lourea trichilioides* (African walnut), *Terminalia ivorensis* and *Terminalia superba* (Black and White Afara), *Triplochiton scleroxylon* (Obeche). Due to agricultural expansion and

human activities, the original forest cover has significantly declined. The landscape is now dominated by secondary regrowth forests, thickets, and grasslands, with primary forest remnants largely confined to areas less disturbed by farming. This transformation highlights the ongoing impact of human activity on Ilaro's ecosystem, necessitating conservation efforts to preserve its remaining biodiversity (**Figure 1**).

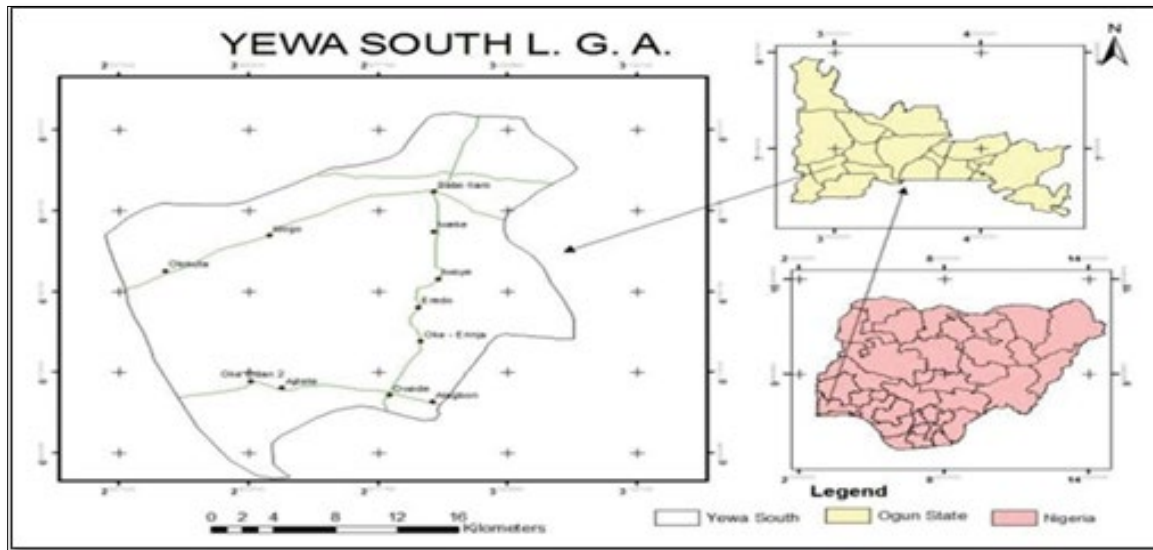


Figure 1. Map of the study area.

Research Method

This study employed the causal research design which is an experimental research design. Exploratory research design will be used for Orona festival Ilaro, was focused as case study. In this study, the causal design is chosen to show how variations in tourism variables affect the cultural heritage preservations of Nigeria. The experimental designed is also preferred because it does not permit for the manipulation of the predictor variables and has a high level of external validity.

Research Design

This study employed a survey research design, a methodological framework that allows researchers to collect data using tools such as personal interviews, questionnaires, and observations (Omotoye & Ukabuilu, 2023). The survey approach was deemed appropriate because the target population is well-defined and accessible, making it feasible to gather comprehensive information directly from the participants. This design supports the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, enabling the analysis of patterns and insights within the known population. By utilizing this method, the study ensures robust and systematic exploration of the research objectives.

Population of the Study

For this study, the population comprises all the indigenous people living in Ilaro, Yewa South Local Government. The population people living in Ilaro, Yewa South Local Government, Ogun State as at 2016 census is about 57,850, while that of tourists is currently not available as there is no official document that declares the actual number of people (tourists or visitors) that visited the Oronna festival Ilaro, Yewa South, Ogun State

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Data for the study will be generated during 2024 Oronna festival in Ilaro, Yewa South, Ogun State. The study adopted probability sampling procedure whereby out of the total number of the targeted population units. The sampling techniques that the researcher uses are randomization technique so as to avoid any element of bias in the subject to be included for the study. Due to large size of the target population, the researcher used the Taro Yamani formula to arrive at the sample population of the study.

Let's calculate the sample size n using the formula:

$$n = \frac{N^2 \cdot e^2}{1 + N \cdot e^2}$$

Given: $N=140$; $e=0.05$

Step-by-Step Calculation:

Calculate e^2 :

$$e^2 + (0.05)^2 = 0.0025 \quad e^2 = (0.05)^2 = 0.0025$$

Multiply N and e^2 :

$$N \cdot e^2 = 140 \cdot 0.0025 = 0.35 \quad N \cdot e^2 = 140 \cdot 0.0025 = 0.35$$

Add 1 to the result:

$$1 + N \cdot e^2 = 1 + 0.35 = 1.35 \quad 1 + N \cdot e^2 = 1 + 0.35 = 1.35$$

Divide N by this sum:

$$n = \frac{140}{1.35} \approx 103.70 \quad n = \frac{140}{1.35} \approx 103.70$$

Final Answer:

The calculated sample size n is approximately 104 (rounded to the nearest whole number).

Instrument of Data collection

A structured questionnaire was employed as the principal tool for data collection in the study. The questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale format, which served as the primary instrument for gathering primary data. This tool was systematically organized into two main sections: Part A and Part B. Part A: This section comprised questions specifically tailored to capture demographic and personal characteristics of the respondents, including details such as age, gender, occupation, and other relevant attributes. Part B: This section focused on questions aligned with the research objectives, research questions, and the hypotheses being tested. It was structured using a

four-point Likert scale, offering respondents a range of options to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. The response options included "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree." This format was chosen to quantitatively measure the respondents' perspectives and attitudes towards various attributes related to the study. The Likert scale facilitated the systematic assessment of the degree of agreement or disagreement, providing a reliable mechanism to analyze and interpret the participants' opinions in the context of the research goals.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic of the respondents., 66% of respondents are males 34% of the respondents are females, 46-55 age bracket with 43% was the among the respondents while, ≥ 56 with 15% was lowed among the respondents. Also, the educational level shows that non-educated 40% among the respondents, while \geq BSC with 15% was the lowest. 65% among the respondents were married and 7% windows the lowest. 46% of the respondents were traditional worshipers, and 23% I Christianity adherents was the lowest. The employment level shows that 54% among the respondents were self-employed while, 21% w of the respondents were farmers.

Table 1. Demographic of the respondents.

Variables	Status	Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	66	66
	Female	34	34
	Total	100	100
Age	25-36	17	17
	36-45	25	25
	46-55	43	43
	≥ 56	15	15
	Total	100	100
Educational Level	Non-educated	40	40
	SSC	32	32
	ND/NCE	16	16
	\geq BSC	12	12
	Total	100	100
Marital status	Single	17	17
	Married	65	65
	Divorced	11	11
	Widows	7	7
	Total	100	100
Religion	Christianity	23	23
	Islam	31	21
	Traditional	46	46
	Total	100	100
Employment	Self Employed	54	54
	Employed	25	25
	Farmers	21	21
	Total	100	100

Figure 2 below shows 75% of the respondents said Yes, they have attended Orona festival celebration while, 25% of the respondents said No.

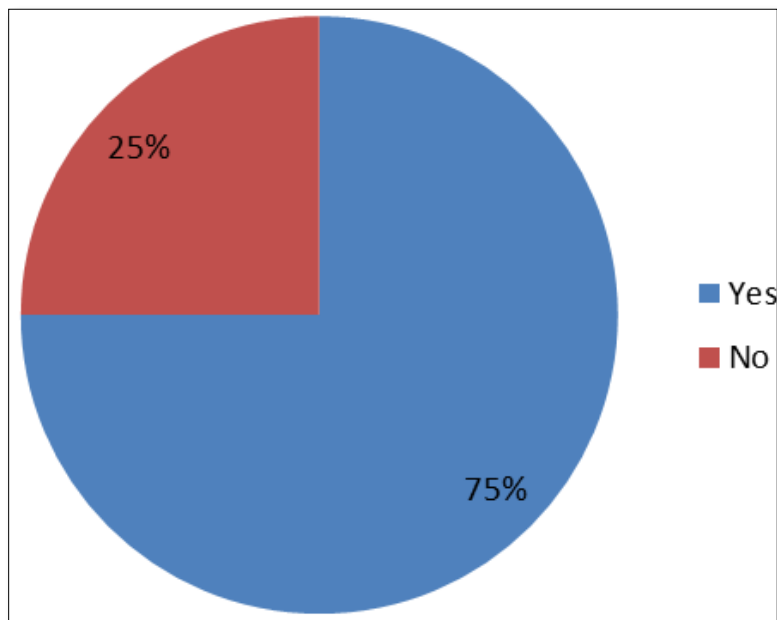


Figure 2. Orona festival celebration while, 25% of the respondents.

Figure 3 below shows number of festivals in Ilaro, 36% of the respondents said they know about Orona festival while 17% of the respondents said they know about Igunuko festival.

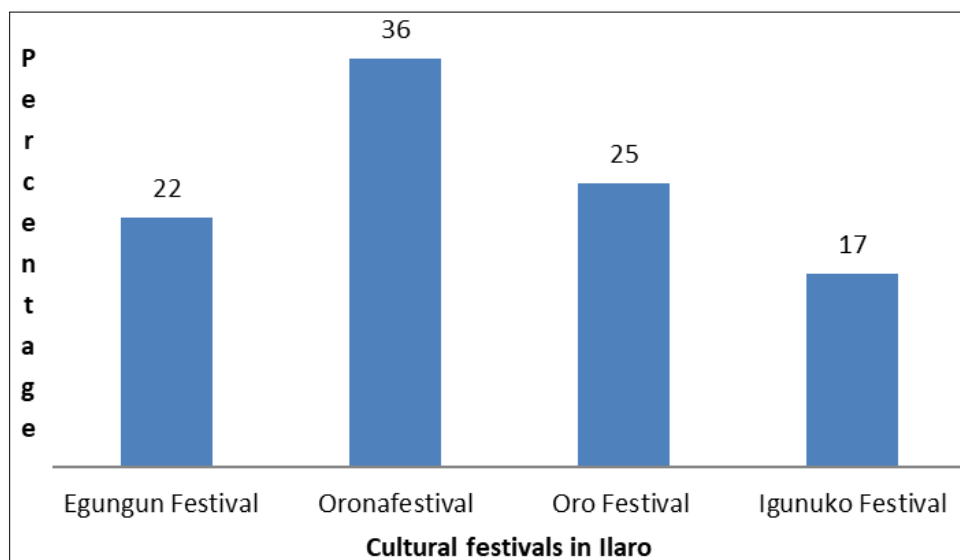


Figure 3. Orona festival while 17% of the respondents.

Figure 4 Shows the importance of Orona of for preservation of cultural heritage, 56% of the respondents said it very important because it

preserve history and heritage, while 5% said it preserve religious and spiritual importance.

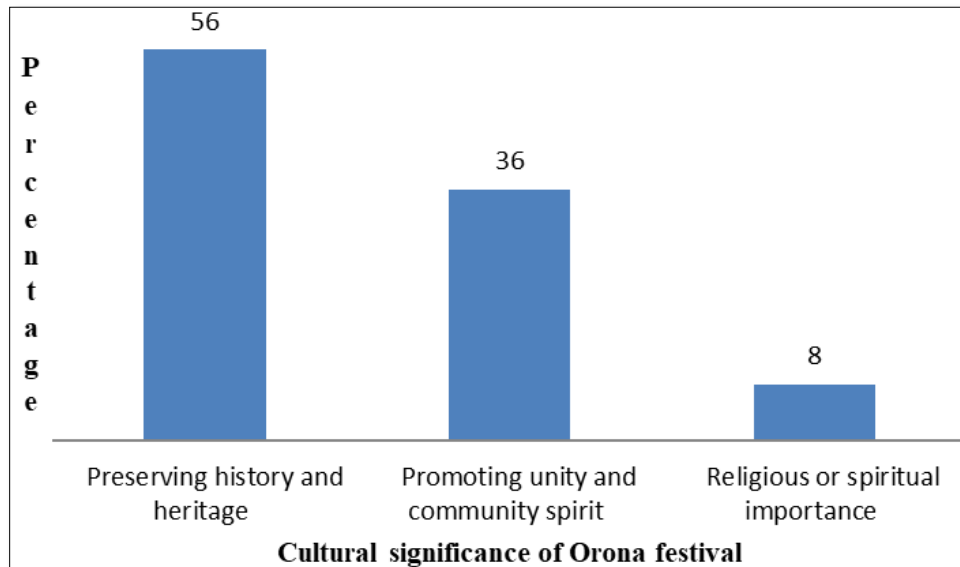


Figure 4. Orona of for preservation of cultural heritage, 56% of the respondents.

Figure 5 below shows what respondents enjoy most in orona festival, 33% of the respondents said Igba Aje, 23% of the respondents drumming and music, 9% storytelling and historical narratives which is the lowest.

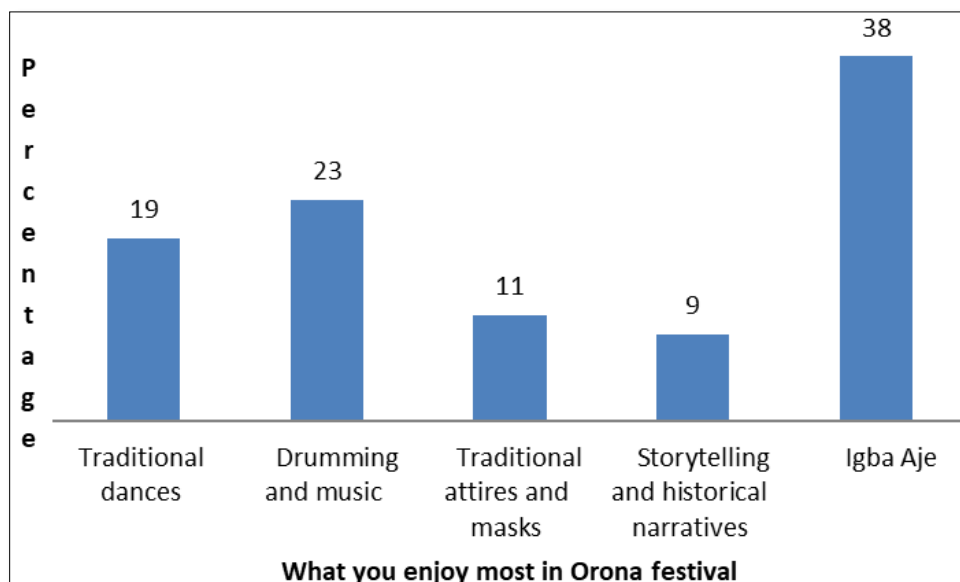


Figure 5. Orona festival, 33% of the respondents.

Orona is important in preserving cultural heritage, 46% of the respondents agree, 12% of the respondents were neutral and 5% of respondents strongly disagree. This finding aligns with the study conducted by

Aleshinloye et al. (2017), which highlighted that the Osun Oshogbo festival has the potential to safeguard cultural heritage and uphold traditional belief systems (**Figure 6**).

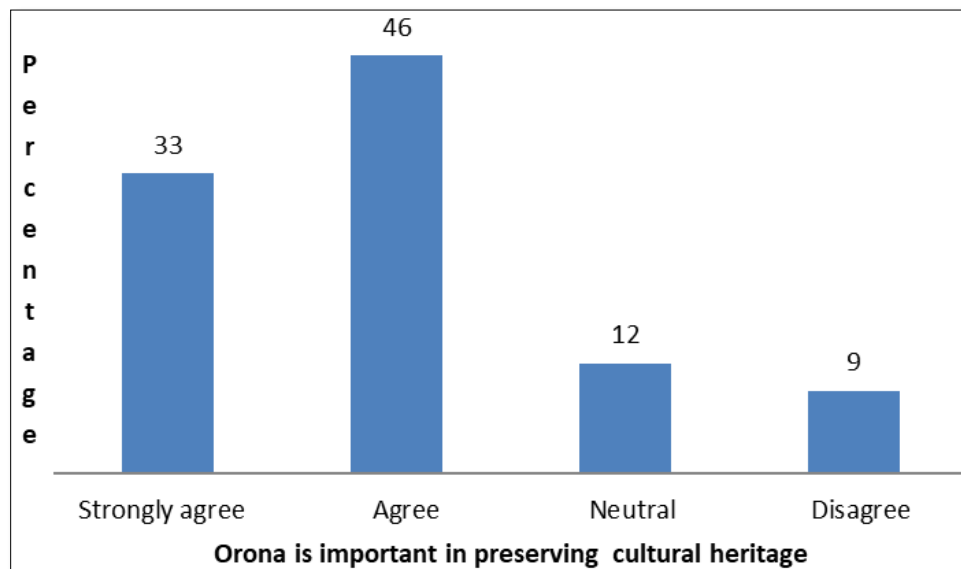


Figure 6. Orona is important in preserving cultural heritage.

Figure 7 below shows level of interest in Orona festival, 57% of the respondents are interested, 29% of the respondents are neutral and 11% of respondents are not interested. This finding is in agreement with Yusuf, (2016) who reported that the level of interest in local was above 56%.

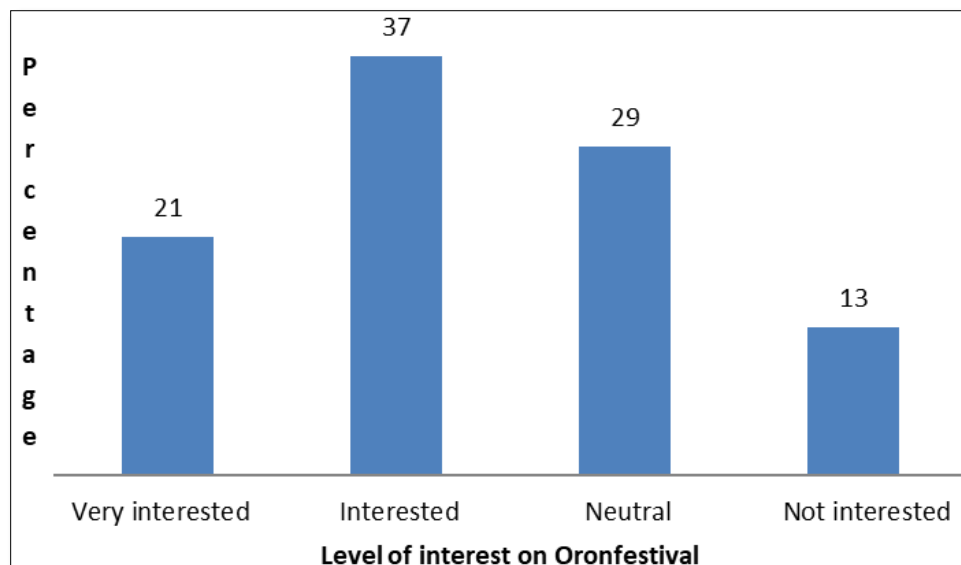


Figure 7. Level of interest in Orona festival.

Figure 8 below shows the factors that threaten the continuation of Orona festival, 41% said religious influence could threaten the continuation

Orona festival, 8% of the respondents said financial constraints could threaten the continuation of Orona festival. This finding is similar to Taiwo, (2014) who reported that the adherence to orthodox religious beliefs among the younger generation could negatively affect the preservation and continuity of the Orona festival.

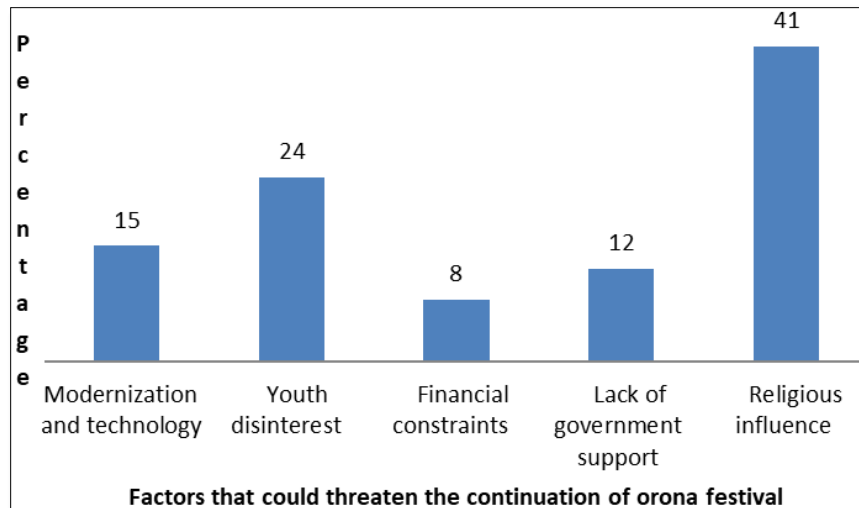


Figure 8. Factors that could threaten the continuation of Orona festival.

Figure 9 below shows the impact of Orona festival on local economy. 74% of the respondents said it has positive boost of the local economy, 2% said unsure how will impact on the local economy. This finding is consistent with Ogundiran, (2014) who reported that Osun Oshogbo groove has positive social-economic impact on the hospitality and tourism business for the local communities.

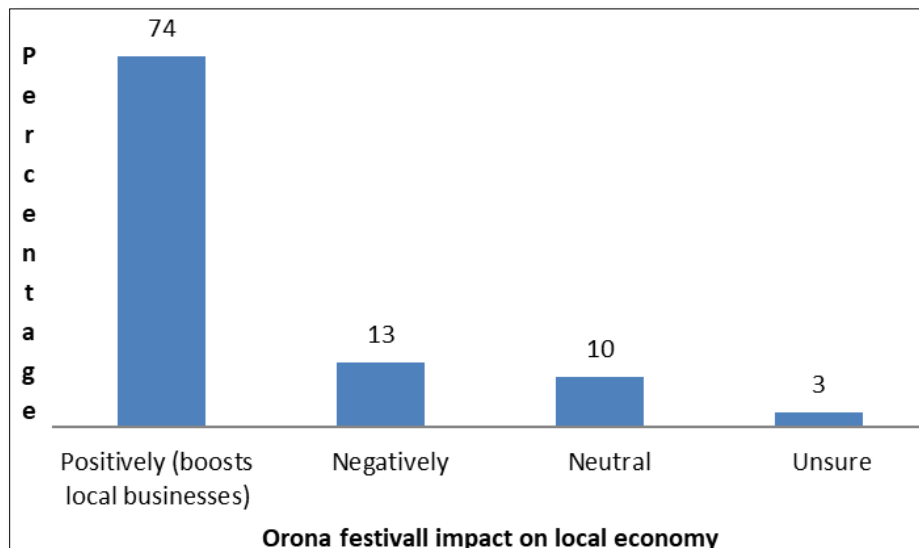


Figure 9. Orona festival impact on local economy.

54% respondents strongly agree that Orona festival can promote tourism, 6% of the respondents strongly disagree that it not promotes tourism. This finding is consistent with Esu & Arrey, (2019) who reported that is significant relationship between cultural festivals and tourism (**Figure 10**).

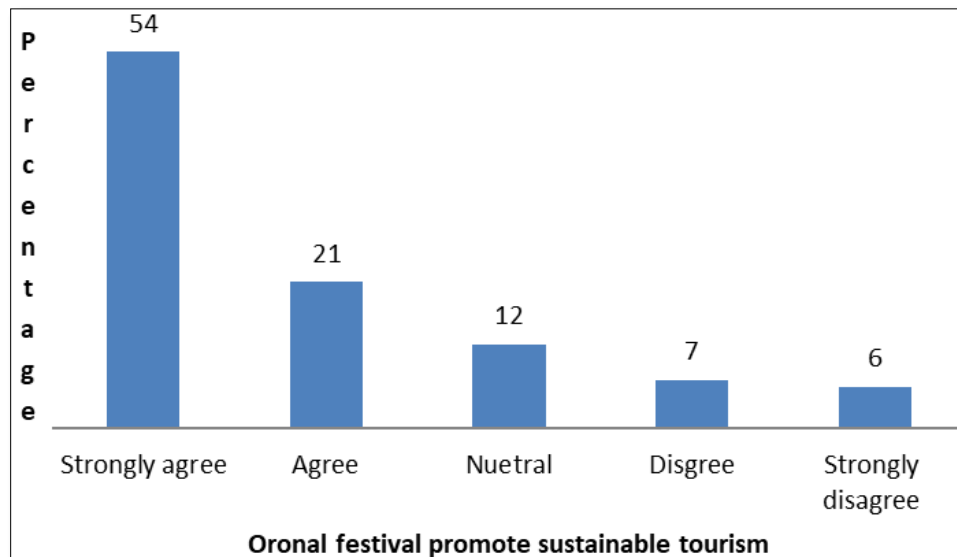


Figure 10. Orona festival promote sustainable tourism.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study indicate that the Orona Festival is one of the key festivals celebrated in the area, attracting significant interest from the community. It has a positive effect on the local economy and has the potential to enhance tourism in the region.

Recommendations

Engage elders and local custodians of cultural heritage in sharing knowledge, practices, and stories with both tourists and the younger generation. By involving local communities, cultural tourism becomes more authentic and meaningful, strengthening cultural identity and community pride. Promote traditional festivals as tourist attractions, ensuring they are organized with cultural integrity. Market these festivals internationally and domestically through social media, tourism boards, and cultural organizations. This can increase interest and attendance, generating economic benefits for the local community and encouraging pride and continuity of traditions.

Develop curated tourism packages that offer immersive experiences, such as traditional dance workshops, art creation sessions, cooking classes of local dishes, or visits to heritage sites with guided storytelling. Hands-on experiences provide tourists with a deeper appreciation of the culture and traditions, creating a meaningful connection with the heritage being preserved.

Partner with cultural organizations, schools, and universities to support cultural tourism initiatives. Collaborate with NGOs or private businesses interested in cultural preservation. Partnerships provide additional resources and legitimacy, expanding the reach and impact of cultural tourism while creating sustainable support structures for heritage preservation. Incorporate virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and other interactive technologies in cultural sites and festivals. For example, visitors can experience an AR guide explaining historical significance as they tour heritage sites. Technology can help attract tech-savvy tourists, including younger generations, and offer a unique, engaging way to experience and learn about cultural heritage. Train young people in the community as cultural guides or ambassadors, providing them with language and hospitality skills as well as knowledge about their culture. Empowering local youth instils a sense of pride and responsibility toward their cultural heritage while providing them with job opportunities in the tourism sector.

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