

Modern Cultural Festivals As A Tool For Africans In Diaspora in the Development of their Homeland Communities: A Case of Ekimogun Cultural Festival in Ondo Kingdom

Olaolu Awolola

Morgan State University, USA

Abstract

African diaspora still serves as a key factor in socio-economic and cultural growth of the African homeland societies. In the past, the slave trade across the Atlantic Ocean resulted in great socio-cultural displacement of Africans both in their homelands and foreign countries, yet the voluntary migration of 20th and 21st centuries brought relevant connections back. This paper considers cultural festivals as ones form of attaining recognition by the Africans in the diaspora towards home community development and under particular attention, the Ekimogun Cultural Festival in Ondo Kingdom in South-West Nigeria. Using historical, sociological, and cultural discussions based on a variety of open access in diversified sources, the paper places the African diaspora in the context of African history with the focus on its possible role as a catalytic agent of development. The paper concludes that policymakers, local authorities, and diasporas should use cultural festivals as a developmental tool and acknowledges the dimension of heritage promotion and a catalyst of real changes with immediate effect to homeland societies. These festivals serve as a good example of how cultural identity and community development are supportive of each other as they offer both symbolic and material gains.

Keywords: African Diaspora, African History, Cultural Festival, Ekimogun Festival, Homeland Development, Community Engagement, Nigeria, Modern Cultural Celebrations

INTRODUCTION

African diaspora can be considered one of the most important historical and modern phenomena that condition the African identity, culture, and development. Although the slave trade (15th -19th centuries) caused millions of Africans to lose their homes through forcible means, which resulted in a severe disruption in social, cultural, and family relationships, later, voluntary migrations in the 20th and 21st centuries led to a new relationship between Africans in the diasporas and those back home (Mohan & Zack-Williams, 2002; Okpewho, 1999). These contemporary diasporic societies have emotional, social and economic connections with Africa, and they are becoming more involved in development activities frequently through the expression of their cultures as their channel of interaction (Sheffer, 2004; Arthur, 2010).

Diaspora was a concept that was originally based on Greek terms of Ancient Greece, meaning physical dispersal especially that of the Jewish community, with philosophical, religious and political

implications (Safran, 1991; Mohan and Zack-Williams, 2005). In modern usage, it involves larger aspects of voluntary migration and involuntary migration which is usually linked with long-term ties with a homeland, group identification with a particular ethnicity and cultural heritage (Cohen, 1997; Clifford, 1997). The African diaspora in Africanistic perspective represents not only the past trauma of slavery and colonial exploitation, but also of transnational cooperation, formation and rebuilding of culture (Byfield, 2002; Zeleza, 2008).

These ways have seen the African diasporic engagement take over in several conduits such as political activism, economic remittances, and cultural involvement. The modern cultural festivals are one of them that have been proven to be a viable source of diaspora organized development. The African cultural festivals are not events of celebration only; they are dynamic organizations to maintain their heritage, social unity, and mobilization of resources to carry out collective activities (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006; Getz, 1997). They serve as sites of collective memory and identity formation, and transmission of knowledge between generations, as well as between communities living across time and space (Selase, 2013; Fahn, 2015).

The example of the Ekimogun Cultural Festival of Ondo Kingdom, South-West Nigeria is the illustration of how diasporic communities can use cultural festivals as the tool of developing their homeland. Started in the year 1988 and steered by the Ondo Development Committee (ODC), the festival has developed to become a full-fledged modern cultural celebration which saw the participation of people of all parts of world including in Europe and North America. The festival helps people to express their culture, invest monetarily, and develop infrastructure by fundraising, sharing skills, and mobilizing the community (Awolola, 2025). Interestingly, it has donated the building of health centers, education scholarship, civic centers and micro finance enterprises, which demonstrates the physical developmental effect of the culturally based diaspora projects.

To see the point of intersection of African diaspora and homeland development, it is important to put the two phenomena in the larger context of African history. Diaspora has played a significant role in the rebuilding and unifying of the African identity and linking the communities across continents and this has been highlighted by historical scholarship of African diaspora which started with the 1965 International Congress of African Historians held in Dar-es-Salam, Tanzania (Manning, 2003; Boyce-Davies, 2007). Theorists such as Shepperson (1965) and Palmer (2000) point out that diasporic communities have emotional and cultural ties, solve problems collectively, and have a vision of the development of the homeland despite the spatial distance. These theories are very crucial in offering a critical theoretical basis in which we analyze the contemporary cultural festivals as means of development in such a setting as the Ondo Kingdom where the cultural heritage is both symbolic and material.

The processes by which the diaspora involvement is translated into development of the homeland are complex. Mohan (2002) outlines three dimensions namely: development in, development through, and development by diaspora communities. Among them, development by focuses on direct aid to the home communities which includes financial remittances, infrastructural development, education and cultural maintenance. This principle is manifested in the modern cultural festival that provides a structured and symbolic platform whereby the diasporic individuals can gather resources, their knowledge and expertise to be directed towards communal progress. By organizing festivals like the Ekilomogun, the diasporic Africans use the social networks to mobilize and build civic influence as well as having a sense of responsibility in the development of the homeland (Trager, 2001; Butler, 2000).

Besides, cultural festivals are used as a tool of social unity to cement the unity of people and foster inclusivity. Festivals are events that are marked by ritualized performances, artistic display and societal meetings, which help to pass the values, preserve traditions and enhance intergenerational relationships (Falassi, 1987; Beier, 1956; Goldblatt, 1997). They serve as cultural commodification and economic development channels as well, bringing in non-indigenous performers, visitors, as well as investors, which in turn income streams to fund infrastructural and social projects (G.R. Selase, 2013; Arcodia and Robb, 2000). Both the cultural pride and material progress become cemented as the festivals transform into platforms of sustainable development by incorporating the diaspora in the processes.

In this paper, the Ekimogun Cultural Festival is placed in this theoretical and historical context, and the research is based on the role of diasporic participation in the homeland development. It looks at the historical development of the festival, its organization, economic and social influence and contribution to the establishment of diaspora-homeland relationships. In such a manner, the paper brings out the promise of present-day cultural festivals as developmental tools, the one that provides the solution between the engagement of the diaspora and practical positive changes in the lives of communities.

In conclusion, African diaspora, through its historical knowledge and current trends in immigration have the potential and the desire to pursue development in the homeland. The contemporary cultural festivals constitute an iconic and strategic process whereby diasporic communities manage their resources, strengthen cultural identity and provoke the social-economic change. The case study of the Ekimogun Festival can be used to demonstrate how such events can contribute to sustainable development and help maintain and support African culture.

Literature Review

African diaspora has served as a major focal point of academic research even about how it was formed historically, the way it has influenced communities in its homeland, and the way it has contributed to its cultural development. Traditionally, the diaspora was a consequence of forces causing migration both involuntary and voluntary migration starting with the trans-Atlantic slave trade up to the current-day migration trends. Leaving non-African diaspora scholars like Okpewho (1999) and Mohan & Zack-Williams (2002) focus their attention on African diaspora, Okpewho views African Diaspora as referring to the primarily non-African descendants in the continent who retain certain ties to their homelands, even though they are not currently living there. Such connections are usually reflected culturally, economically and socially.

Diaspora is a concept that is multidimensional by itself. According to Safran (1991), the following are the main criteria; dispersal out of an original homeland, memory retained, myth or vision of the homeland, and the formation of a collective identity. Sheffer (2004) develops this realization by contextualizing the concept of diaspora as a repeated and worldwide occurrence that is not limited to the Jewish past, or any other people who have been displaced out of their countries. The diaspora in the African context has twofold nature, the traumatic experience of slavery and forced migration and the prospect of transnational interaction and homeland building (Clifford, 1997; Cohen, 1997). African diasporic society tends to negotiate between the two by rebuilding identity and transcending dislocations of the past through culture (Arthur, 2010; Byfield, 2002).

The current research has underscored the perspectives of scholarly works whereby the diaspora intervention occurs beyond the economic remittances in terms of cultural and social interventions that affect the development of the homeland. According to Trager (2001), diasporic Africans hold cultural

festivals, community days, and national celebrations which are symbolic and material ways of development. Such meetings give the avenue to mobilize the resources, present heritage, and social cohesion. These are not just ceremonies; they are on purpose. To give an exemplary case, diasporic communities usually set up education programs, health programs and civic projects during these festival seasons, thus generating a phenomenal developmental effect (Mohan, 2002).

Until recently, cultural festivals in Africa have been the reservoirs of communal identity and the means of transmitting culture. According to Arcodia and Whitford (2006), festivals are social spaces of collective memory and capital formation which make disparate participants interact, allowing them to engage socially and economically at the same time. Getz (1997) points out that festivals form an organized form of celebration, learning and mobilization, whereas Goldblatt (1997) points to its ability to enhance a sense of belonging and civic engagement. Ulli Beier (1956) points out the importance of festivals in terms of the exposure of religious and cultural values with the incorporation of artistic performance, rituals, and partaking among the festival participants with the intent of strengthening social unity.

Socio-economic advantages of festivals have been well-recognized. Selase (2013) notes that festivals are stimulating factors of local development because they allow both indigenous and non-indigenous people to participate in them, earning money and enabling joint projects. Communities can invest in infrastructural projects, education and other forms of social interventions through such events often facilitated by diaspora funding. Similarly, Fahn (2015) speaks of maintaining the heritage, developing tourism, and offering them skills development, which is particularly caused by the lack of resources in traditional structures.

Diaspora, culture, and development nexus may be examined within the frames of the concept offered by Mohan (2002) that differentiates among three types of diaspora-led development in, development through, and development by the diaspora. The most applicable is the development by model in which the diasporic communities directly contribute to the development of their home countries by providing financial assistance, technical and cultural interventions. Cultural festivals are a successful example as they are organized, visible, and socially approved events with the result that resources can be mobilized and distributed to improve the community. The statement is supported by Butler (2000), who underscores that the involvement of diasporas in home countries usually entails both selfless intentions and practical plans towards enhancing identity, heritage, and economic prosperity.

A bright example of the way these dynamics work can be found in the case of the Ekimogun Cultural Festival in Ondo Kingdom. The festival was launched in 1988 as the Ondo Development Committee (ODC), and since then it has grown over the years to be a cultural spectacle which draws both the Nigerian and the global diaspora (Awolola, 2025). The trends to this development are common in other African cultural festivals, as traditional holidays have been localized as a means of embracing new modes of participation, media integration and resource mobilization, which have been globalized (Mewett, 1998; South-Australian Tourism Commission, 1997). Ekimogun Festival serves as a location where diasporic Africans can take pride in the culture, active involvement in civic life, contribution to tangible developmental projects scholarships, healthcare and health facilities, microfinance institutions, and media (Awolola, 2025).

In addition, some of the festivals, such as Ekimogun, play a crucial role in the formation of transnational social networks, which reinforce diaspora-homeland relations. Ogbuagbu (2013) highlights the way the diasporic social networks assist in sharing information, economic collaboration, and collective action.

Attendance at the festival allows the diasporic indigenous to strengthen culture identity, as well as to provide material resources and knowledge, which are advantageous to the motherland. Such practices reveal the merging of cultural heritage and community development and emphasize the transformative nature of the culturally based diaspora interactions.

Other issues raised in the literature include the importance that the historical memory and identity play in cultural processes initiated by the diaspora. According to Cohen (1997) and Clifford (1997), the important policies that diasporic communities employ to make identity and continuity include the culture of traditions, festivals and homeland projects that remind them that they belong. The Ekimogun Festival is a good example of this principle, as the rituals, artistic performances, and ceremonial events are in touch with the historical and cultural background of Ondo Kingdom. The festival acts as a symbolic and practical mechanism of maintaining the unity of the community and improving the process of local development because it connects the traditions of the past with modern development work.

More so, the assistance that the process of diaspora integrating in the planning and implementation of festivals gives to governance and institutional capacity amongst the home communities is solidified. An example is the ODC which has worked to ensure that decasporea are engaged in decision-making process, project financing and community planning, making sure that the development in the area is locally acceptable and successful (Awolola, 2025). This model reflects the significance of organized organizational forms of enhancing the developmental effects of cultural festivals, which is consistent with the results of Harneit-Sievers (2006) on the importance of community associations in the diaspora-homeland interaction.

To sum it up, various convergent themes are displayed in the literature: the African diaspora continues to be culturally and socially connected to the home communities; cultural festivals are very important tools in heritage preservation, and social integration; modern festival events are important practices as an instrument of development led by the diaspora. These themes are integrated into the Ekimogun Cultural Festival that offers a real-life example of how the cultural expression, mobilization of the community, and diasporic involvement can be united to facilitate sustainable development. The theoretical and empirical basis of engaging in the analysis of the notion of diaspora in terms of cultural festivals is laid out through this literature review, preparing the ground to the further analysis of the methodology and the analysis of the case studies.

Methodology

This paper assumes the qualitative research design, which is based on the role of the modern cultural festivals as means of development of the homeland by the Africans in the diaspora with the main reference to the Ekimogun Cultural Festival of the Ondo Kingdom in South-West Nigeria. The selection of a qualitative method is not accidental, because it would be possible to investigate in detail social, cultural, and economic relations around the program of development of the festivals. The approach is based on the interpretation of lived experiences, cultures, and interactions within communities over a more statistical or quantitative approach to analysis (Awolola, 2025; Arcodia and Whitford, 2006).

Research Design

The case study used in the study is chosen specifically due to the case study design, that is best applied to analyze the intricate social phenomenon in a natural environment (Yin, 2018 -specialized in relation to the festival studies). The Ekimogun Festival is the special case in point, and it presents an exemplary

example of how the diaspora societies use cultural events to acquire developmental benefits. The case studies permit the level of investigation of processes, interactions, and outcomes which make them best suited to the type of research that tries to make connections between the diaspora engagement and cultural heritage as well as the development of the community (Mohan, 2002; Trager, 2001).

Data Sources

The research is based mainly on secondary data sources that are based on the open-access academic articles, books, and archives that review the African diaspora, cultural festivals, and community development. Key sources include:

- The scientific literature on African diaspora and migration (Sheffer, 2004; Okpewho, 1999; Cohen, 1997; Clifford, 1997; Byfield, 2002).
- The cultural festivals and community development in Africa (Getz, 1997; Goldblatt, 1997; Arcodia and Whitford, 2006; Fahn, 2015; Selase, 2013).
- The source of information regarding Ondo Kingdom and creation of Ekimogun Festival can be found in archives and historical records (Awolola, 2025; Harneit-Sievers, 2006).

These sources will give in-depth information not only about the theoretical framework of the diaspora involvement but also about a practical realization of the proposals based on the development of the festival. Those studies, which are specifically responsible to cultural mobilization, community networks, and contributions of the diaspora to the development of the homeland were emphasized and the analysis is secured to be based on the contextually relevant scholarship.

Data Collection Techniques

Because the research relies on secondary sources, data collection procedures consisted of systematical literature review and documents analysis. This entails:

1. **Identification of relevant sources:** The list of references given identified academic journals, books and archival documents pertaining to the African diaspora, cultural festivals and homeland development.
2. **Extraction of data:** Each source yielded important concepts, evidence, arguments, and findings. Special emphasis was laid on historical narratives, case-studies and examples of diaspora involvement in the activities of cultural and development.
3. **Organization of data:** Data that had been extracted were categorized into themes that included (1), history and idea of African diaspora, (2), socio-cultural values of festivals, (3), contributions of diaspora to home country development, and (4) the Ekimogun Festival as a case study.
4. **Critical evaluation:** Critical review of sources was done to find out their credibility, relevance and applicability. Peer-reviewed or reputable materials that were open-access were also considered to allow academic integrity and reliability of findings (Sheffer, 2004; Awolola, 2025).

Such a strict approach to document analysis allowed the study to conduct powerful conclusions even without primary data gathering, and the findings should be properly based on the existing literature.

Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was used to provide data analysis as a qualitative method of presenting a study that enables not only the identification and analysis of patterns in the text but also reporting them (Braun and Clarke, 2006 - adapted). The data (emerging concepts and insights) were inductively

analyzed to obtain themes, and the research goals (predefined concepts like the diaspora engagement, festival mobilization, and development outcomes) were deductively analyzed to obtain themes.

Thematic analysis involved the following steps:

1. **Familiarization:** Much reading of all the secondary sources to have a comprehensive picture of the situation, history and dynamics of the diaspora as well as cultural festivals.
2. **Coding:** Recurring trends, ideas, and phrases identified relative to the engagement of the diaspora, festivals, and projects of development.
3. **Theme development:** The codes were classified into larger themes, i.e., into diaspora-home connections, economic and infrastructural gains, communal unification and cultural identity strengthening.
4. **Interpretation:** Interpretation of themes was in the light of the research aims, in terms of establishing theoretical constructions against real-life examples, especially the special emphasis on the Ekimogun Festival as a tangible example of a festival-driven development.

Ethical Considerations

Although secondary data was used in this study, ethical considerations were upheld by:

- Proper citing and recognition of all sources applied (APA style referencing).
- Avoiding plagiarism through synthesizing ideas and avoiding the copying of text phrase-by-phrase.
- Being accurate in the way that the researcher uses reputable, open-access sources only so that all the figures and facts may be proven (Awolola, 2025; Sheffer, 2004).

Limitations of Methodology

While secondary research allows for extensive analysis of existing scholarships, it has certain limitations:

1. Lack of primary data the research lacks interviews, surveys, and field observations that would allow gathering firsthand information about participant experiences and perceptions.
2. Dependence on sources of available information: The quality and depth of analysis are determined by the comprehensiveness of the secondary sources. Depression in literature could affect the results.
3. Contextual specificity: Although the Ekimogun Festival represents a representative sample, the results might not be just as applicable to all African diaspora-based festivals and communities.

Even with these shortcomings, the methodology forms a strong structure towards the study of the overlap between diaspora engagement, cultural festivals, or community development. Through the systematic synthesis of historical, theoretical, and empirical materials, the research will be able to make his findings both situational and academically sound.

Justification of the Approach

The identified methodology is consistent with the purpose of the study being the observation of how the cultural festivals trigger the diaspora-led development. A case-study methodology qualitative and befitting well in the instances of the intricate social and cultural action attempting the cultural organization of festivals, diaspora mobilization, and community change (Trager, 2001; Mohan, 2002). The thematic content analysis will also be used in that the insights will be systematically obtained based on the available literature, and therefore a thorough understanding of how festivals such as Ekimogun develop a homeland will be secured.

Conclusively, the methodology is an amalgamation of secondary data analysis, case study design and thematic interpretation to come up with a subtle and elaborated description of the diaspora engagement using cultural festivals. Within the framework of the analysis embedded into historical and the modern context, the paper illustrates the complex role of festivals in strengthening cultural identity, resource mobilization, and tangible developmental measures in African societies.

Findings / Case Study Analysis: Ekimogun Cultural Festival and Diaspora-led Development

The Ekimogun Cultural Festival of Ondo Kingdom is a distinct example of how cultural festivals in modern society will be used as a development tool in the homeland with the involvement of African diaspora groups. The festival was formed by the Ondo Development Committee (ODC) in 1986, and when ODA assumed the festival, it was founded in 1988, and since that time, it characterized cultural preservation, social mobilization, and economic investment between the diasporic communities (Awolola, 2025). The results of the current research indicate that there are a variety of dimensions of the impact of the festival such as social cohesion, economic growth, improving infrastructures, and strengthening cultural identity.

Diaspora Engagement and Cultural Mobilization

One of the major lessons is the degree to which the Ekimogun Festival can serve as a diasporic engagements center. Since its establishment, the festival not only drew the attention of and to the indigenes who displaced to live within Ondo but also the diaspora that was present in Europe, the Americas, and other locations in Nigeria (Awolola, 2025). Hometown associations (including Ondo Pier Club (Houston, USA), Ekimogun Social Club (Georgia, USA), Ekimogun Association of South California and some associations in the UK) are used to establish hometown associations, where diasporic individuals gather to form associations via their capoeira practices. These agencies coordinate contributions, including financial and technical as well as social resources and make sure they are organized, regular and effective (Ogbuagbu, 2013; Harneit-Sievers, 2006).

The festival also creates a cultural walk, thereby, the participants demonstrate the traditional Ondo music, dance, art, and regalia. The festival reinstates collective identity and belonging by sharing them through diasporic communities in performances. This is the same point that Clifford (1997) in his argument suggests that diasporic societies are using cultural events to ensure continuity with their mother countries, to overcome the time and space barriers. Also, this interaction leads to development of transnational social networks, which are very important in the mobilization of resources and knowledge towards developmental efforts (Sheffer, 2004).

Social Cohesion and Community Integration

Ekimogun festival, too, promotes social integration in Ondo kingdom. It is a structured event where the indigenous people and the diaspora members present their developmental priorities and hold debates over how development should take place, as well as give them a chance to consult the community (Trager, 2001). During festival periods, workshops, seminars, and town hall meet-ups are organized and the social, political and economic issues of the day discussed. The fusion of celebrations associated with culture and action combined with civic participation brings about a feeling of shared responsibility and participatory government.

Besides, the festival facilitates intergenerational cohesion. Everyone, young people, elders and the diaspora members take part in the planning and implementation of the festival so that the cultural knowledge, historical accounts and civic virtues can be handed on with the help of the previous generations. That is in accordance with the claim of Ulli Beier (1956) regarding the fact that festivals are also repositories of the culture, which help incorporate communal experiences and communal learning into the collective memory.

Economic Contributions and Resource Mobilization

Ekimogun Festival has a great economic impact. The income obtained through the activities of the festival is strictly invested in projects of community development, proving the usefulness of cultural events in terms of mobilization of resources (Selase, 2013; Fahn, 2015). Projects, which have been funded by Diaspora, in terms of cash and in-kind, include:

- Housing of a multi-million-naira civic center in honor of the late Osemawe, Oba Adesanoye.
- Modern healthcare development to improve the health services locally.
- Granting soft loans to small and medium enterprises in Ondo in the form of a microfinance bank known as Ekimogun Microfinance.
- Creation of Ekimogun FM radio station that will make information disseminate, local entrepreneurship and local culture popularization.

These undertakings represent the notion of development by the diaspora formulated by Mohan (2002), in which transnational communities may be initiating a socio-economic progress of home countries. Non-indigenous people are also coming in large numbers to attend the festival, which increases economic returns by a boosting local businesses, hospitality, and artisan industry (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006; Getz, 1997).

Educational and Human Capital Development

The festival has also improved the aspect of human capital by way of scholarship and skill development programs. Ondo indigenes who have excelled in education also are given academic awards that are mainly funded by diaspora funds. Also, seminars and other workshops conducted during the times of the festivals provide the skills in the management of culture, entrepreneurship, and community leadership (Trager, 2001). These efforts both strengthen the cultural aspect of the festival as a means of sustainable development and emphasize the pragmatic aspects of how the involvement of the diasporas can be converted into practical gains in education and capacity building.

Cultural Preservation and Identity Reinforcement

The other serious discovery is that the festival helps to preserve and rebrand cultural heritage. Having a history of more than 500 years, and displaying the Ekimogun Festival to demonstrate traditional arts, rituals, and folklore, Ondo Kingdom supports the development of communal identity both locally and on a global scale (Awolola, 2025). The aspects of the culture such as cultural exhibitions, musical performances, traditional clothes are all visual and performative parts of the world which help to tie people to their culture of the ancestors. The festival in such a way functions as a living archive where history is sectioned off at the same time keeping up with the modernity of the diaspora and world cultural movements (Goldblatt, 1997; Mewett, 1998).

The participation of the diaspora will help these cultural expressions to be known outside local situations, a fact that will help in creating a favorable global view of the Ondo cultural heritage. This is consistent with the sentiments expressed by Byfield (2002) that the process of building diasporic identities is entangled to the propagation and maintenance of cultural practices that connect the scattered groups of people to a common motherland.

Political Mediation and Governance

Its other contribution in politics was through Ekimogun Festival that has been a major political mediator in Ondo Kingdom, albeit in a subtle manner. The Ondo Development Committee (ODC) through the festival has also helped to conduct negotiations in case of a contentious political situation such as succession battles on the Osemawe throne. The festival provides a neutral platform to negotiate, build consensus and solve conflicts because it involves representatives of the diaspora and local elites (Awolola, 2025; Harneit-Sievers, 2006). This shows how cultural events can fulfill the role of informal governance, which improve stability and institutional trust among communities.

Comparative Insights from Other African Festivals

The results of Ekimogun are in line with the general literature of African cultural festivals. The examples of socio-economic and cultural benefits created by festivals like the Sogli Yam Festival in Ghana shown by Selase (2013) and the spiritual and communal meanings of the Ojude-Oba Festival in Ijebu-Ode demonstrated by Fahn (2015) help to understand the importance of festivals and their positive effects on people. As Arcodia and Whitford (2006) highlight, festivals are centers of forming social capital, which enables the parties to collaborate between the diasporic groups and the local stakeholders. Taken together, all these studies prove the hypothesis that contemporary cultural festivals are multi-faceted instruments of economic, social, cultural, and political growth.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite the achievements it experiences, Ekimogun Festival does have challenges. The continuance of the diaspora activity involves constant alignment, clear funding control and sensitivity to the needs of the community. Besides, cultural commodification may also take place by the modernization of festivals where economic goals prevail over the traditional and symbolical values (Getz, 1997; Mewett, 1998). However, these risks have been lessened with proper planning, organized governing by the ODC, and by making the diaspora associations play an active role so that the festival has not lost its own cultural ground or its developmental effectiveness.

Synthesis

The Ekimogun Festival analysis demonstrates that cultural expression, the involvement of the diaspora, and the development of the community relate in the form of synergy. The festival is not only a cultural affair but a strategic process in which the diasporic Africans can contribute to transformation in their motherland. The concept of social cohesion, economic mobilization, developing human capital, cultural preservation, and political mediation become real consequences of this engagement using festivals. This case shows how the development by diaspora model in the work by Mohan (2002) can be practically applied showing the way in which modern cultural festival puts diaspora contributions into practice in a systematic, effective, and sustainable way.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The results of analysis of the Ekimogun Cultural Festival outline the multidimensionality of the modern cultural festivals as the development tools that African diaspora communities provide. These findings can be discussed in four broad areas, such as the engagement of the diaspora and social capital, economic growth and resource mobilization, preservation of culture and cultural identity, and community governance, as well as political mediation.

Diaspora Engagement and Social Capital

The Ekimogun Festival shows the extent to which the diasporic societies can remain closely connected to the motherland, participating in the cultural activities. These relations echo the words of Clifford (1997) who claims the expression of culture by the diasporas to fill the gaps in space and time. Diaspora members organize festivals, perform and sponsor festivals which creates and strengthens transnational networks of social networks allowing exchange of resources, knowledge, and expertise between the diaspora and the homeland (Sheffer, 2004; Ogbuagbu, 2013).

In addition, inter-community cohesion is encouraged by the festival since diaspora members and the local indogenous people can jointly discuss the developmental priorities and execute the projects. Social capital that has been created during the festival in terms of trust, collaboration, and shared purpose can be related to the framework developed by Arcodia and Whitford (2006) when the authors associate the attendance of a festival with the work of the social network building. It supports the notion that cultural festivals are not entertainment but planning platforms to engage the community and act.

Economic Development and Resource Mobilization

The Ekimogun Festival has shown that cultural festivals can be used as economic development drivers. The festival gathers funds through the contributions of the diaspora, non-indigenous individuals, and the local entrepreneurs and uses them in infrastructural development, medical services, education, and microfinance projects in the communities (Selase, 2013; Fahn, 2015).

Such a strategy fits the conceptualization introduced by Mohan (2002) of a formation of development by diaspora wherein the diaspora community takes an active hand in development projects by participating in the homeland development efforts. Festivals financed by the festival such as the civic center, health facility, microfinance bank and Ekimogun FM among other projects bring out the strategic value of festivals to direct the diaspora resources towards sustainable development projects. These initiatives in addition to improving material wellbeing of the community provide opportunities to develop skills, entrepreneurship, and employment, which leads to socio-economic resilience in the long term (Trager, 2001).

Cultural Identity and Heritage Preservation

One of the primary functions of Ekimogun Festival is to safeguard and rebrand the culture. The festival helps Ondo indigenes to express their music and dance, art, clothing, and the conventional practices that strengthen a sense of identity and continuity with the ancestral tradition (Awolola, 2025; Goldblatt, 1997; Mewett, 1998).

The festival serves as a cultural live archive, through which the participants can share and pass the cultural information across generations. This is in line with the fact that diasporic identity is closely

related to the cultural heritage that Byfield (2002) argues is a channel of preserving the emotional and symbolic association to the homeland. Moreover, as the activities of the festival are spread to the diaspora populations in Europe and the Americas, the Ondo cultures will be more recognized internationally, leading to the negative implications of the Nigerian culture on the world (Awolola, 2025).

Community Governance and Political Mediation

Ekimogun Festival is also a means of informal government and political mediation. ODC takes advantage of the festival to hold talks, settle disputes and ease succession in the Osemawe niger kingship among the traditional leaders (Harneit-Sievers, 2006; Awolola, 2025). This shows that cultural festivals can be used as a tool of political stability where communities can control internal conflicts and promote general inclusion by the diaspora members.

By using participatory planning, workshops, and seminars to be undertaken in the process of the festival, the community determines a collective decision-making process in which developmental projects mirror the collective priorities. This twofold role of cultural festivals as expressive and as instruments of governance and development demonstrates how diverse festivals could become connecting the cultural to governance and development.

Integration of Theory and Practice

Ekimogun Festival can be used to support theoretical frameworks presented by other researchers, like Mohan (2002), Trager (2001) and Sheffer (2004), who were dealing with the importance of the diaspora contribution to the development of the homeland. Although the concept of development by diaspora is explained by Mohan as representing the material and knowledge input of the diasporic communities, the concept is demonstrated through the Ekimogun Festival. On the same note, Trager (2001) emphasizes the role cultural events play in connecting identity, community togetherness and development and this can be seen in the way Ondo indigenes and indigenous in the Diaspora work together to undertake community projects.

The festival can also give a good example of how transnational networks created and maintained through cultural interaction can be effective in reaching local development issues. The Ekimogun Festival actualizes the conceptual relationship between the diaspora activity, cultural heritage, and sustainable development by providing space to express the cultural aspects, social discussion, and economic mobilization (Clifford, 1997; Byfield, 2002).

Conclusion

The research confirms that contemporary cultural festivals are potent tools of homeland development especially when the active participation of the diaspora is involved. The Ekimogun Cultural Festival shows that these events are not symbolic events, but they have socio-economic, cultural, and political realities on the Ondo Kingdom.

Key conclusions include:

1. **Diaspora engagement is central to festival-led development:** The enduring presence of the Ondo indigenes in foreign countries has enabled social capital creation, resource mobilization and political participation.

2. **Economic contributions through festivals are significant:** The festival has contributed to the infrastructure, healthcare, education, and financial services through the funds raised and this indicates that through cultural events, material development can be done.
3. **Cultural preservation strengthens identity and continuity:** The festival guarantees the passing of Ondo culture between generations and diasporic people that reinforce the world recognition and favorable cultural identity.
4. **Festivals serve as informal governance platforms:** Festivals promote political stability and community integration by helping to converse conflicts, bring decisions together, and make decisions.
5. **Integration of theory and practice:** The festival is the perfect illustration of the model of development by diaspora created by Mohan (2002), as the theoretical aspects of diaspora engagement will be transformed into the practice of development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Replication of festival-led development models:** Similar models can be used by other communities in Africa, and they can engage with the diaspora and co-develop their homelands through cultural festivals.
2. **Strengthening governance and transparency:** Put down proper systems of management of resources to maintain the contributions of the diasporas and avoid misappropriation.
3. **Expansion of educational initiatives:** Increase academic trends and capacity building training at the festival times to optimize human resources development.
4. **Promotion of cultural tourism:** Use festivals to draw more tourists to the country and foreign tourists as this will bring more income and intercultural interaction.
5. **Monitoring and evaluation:** Carry out frequent evaluations of the impacts of festivals on socio-economic development to monitor the continued betterment and applicability.

Overall, the Ekimogun Festival shows that culture practices led by diasporas can be successful in stimulating the growth of the homeland. Through cultural celebration coupled with social cohesion, economic mobilization, educational empowerment and political mediation, the festival gives the African communities a viable developmental sample which can be replicated by African communities in their quest towards sustainable development through diasporic involvement. The article highlights the fact that cultural festivals should be viewed as strategic development instruments which will act as quota between tradition and modernity and enhancing the relationship between the diasporic Africans and their states.

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