

Original Research Article

COMMUNITY IDENTITIES AND SOCIOECONOMIC DYNAMICS OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN IJEBU-ODE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is recognised as one of the world's most significant socioeconomic tools, with its impact expanding globally. Harnessing community identities as an element of cultural tourism is crucial for the socioeconomic contributions of cultural tourism in southwest Nigeria, which is essential to understanding its importance. This paper examined the influence of community identities on socioeconomic dynamics of cultural tourism in Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria. However, extant works have appraised cultural tourism from several perspectives. Unexpectedly, the literature search revealed that studies uncovering the importance of community identities in the socioeconomic contributions of cultural tourism are limited. To bridge this gap, this study employed in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) to gather information about the community identities of residents in Ijebu-Ode town, which are essential for achieving the contributions of cultural tourism. Thus, the researchers adopted a narrative method to analyse the data gathered from the key informant interviews and focus group discussions that were transcribed for better understanding. The study's findings indicated that the tools of cultural tourism and community identities should be weaponised to promote the socioeconomic activities of residents and improve their living standards.

Keywords: Community, Community identities, Cultural tourism, Importance, Socioeconomic.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism, as a derivative of tourism, has its basis in the Grand Tour, a form of tourism that policymakers engage in planning and development. The World Tourism Organisation stated that cultural tourism accounted for 37% of global tourism and forecasted its growth rate at 15% annually. Cultural tourism is an important socio-economic development tool for so many communities and nations at large because every place possesses a unique culture that can be developed (Richards, 2018). Cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the tourist's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions of a particular destination (UNWTO, 2017). Tangible cultural attractions encompass all objects that possess visible characteristics that are utilized by the group of people living together in a geographical area (community identities)

such as clothing, food, hairstyles, art, craft and so on while intangible attractions are communities' identities that are imply experiences that are not visible, such as values, beliefs, traditions, ideas and so on (UNWTO, 2017). Thus, tourists are more insightful in their quest for quality and value for purposes which tend to inspire their decision in the choice of different destinations to visit (cultural tourism) in order to learn, discover, experience, and consume different attractions (Ranjbarian & Khaziei, 2015).

The emergence of the idea of community identities is an offshoot of extensive historical development in which different values were attached to inheritances of people of a community, such as historical sites, cultural sites, monuments, arts and crafts, traditions, amongst others. The loss of the aforementioned inheritances led to expressions such as "Exceptional Worldwide Importance" and the understanding that these inheritances belong to the human race (Ikusemiju et al 2025). Thus, this has led to the understanding that community identities are unique and irreplaceable, which is related to the knowledge of promoting and protecting communities' identities (Ikusemiju et al 2025). The concept of community identities is a legacy of physical and intangible characteristics of communities that are inherited and thus offer the links between the past, the present, and the future generations with the use of diverse cultural methodologies (Ikusemiju et al 2025).

1.1 Statement of Problem

Quite several scholars have conducted studies on cultural tourism (McIntosh et al, 2002;

Petroman et al 2013; Nwakaeze – Ogugua 2015; Mousavi et.al, 2016; Olaleye and Abayomi, 2020; Daly et al, 2021; Moric et.al, 2021), but these studies have only determined the types of cultural tourism, the relationship between cultural tourism and cultural identity, and the roles of cultural tourism in the modern tourism industry. Richards (2018) focused on cultural tourism as a tool of economic growth that can be used to achieve economic growth by attracting tourists from outside a host community. Petroman *et al.* (2013) focused on types of cultural tourism. Also, McIntosh *et al.* (2002) examined the assessment of the relationship between tourism and cultural identity and the extent to which authenticity of the culture is preserved. Csapo (2021), in his research work cited by Ikusemiju *et al.* (2025), focused on the position of cultural tourism as one of the contemporary tourism industry's most developing branches of today's worldwide tourism market from both theoretical and practical points of view, and also provided an insight into the tourism segments and attraction structure of cultural tourism. In addition, Mousavi *et al.* (2016), in their research as cited by Ikusemiju *et al* (2025), focused on the different approaches to cultural tourism in identifying those cultural values that are important to tourism. Also, the existing studies focused on the overview of cultural tourism but did not address the necessity for fast-paced development of cultural tourism through community identities, as cultural tourism. There is an obvious gap of studies vis-a-vis community identities and cultural as well as ethnic identities of the people that can contribute significantly to cultural tourism. This study extended research on

the concepts, which were only partially explored in previous research (Lin, Pearson and Cai, 2011; Mousavi *et. al.*, 2016; Falola and Akinyemi (Ed.), 2017; Olaleye and Abayomi, 2020). This study is therefore aimed at investigating the influence of community identities on the socioeconomic dynamics of cultural tourism in Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

Cultural tourism, also known as diaspora tourism or heritage tourism, is a niche of the tourism industry that is geared toward the cultural heritage of a geographical area (Ikusemiju & Osinubi, 2020). It is a type of tourism associated with movement to experience cultural places, monuments, historical sites, museums, and activities that authenticate the events and happenings of the residents of a particular geographical location (Wall & Mathieson, 2016; Ikusemiju & Osinubi, 2020).

Accordingly, cultural tourism has been discovered as a significant tool that possesses progressive economic and social influences that could reinforce the identities of the people and also as a tool that helps social accord and understanding among the residents of a locality (Suleiman, 2020; Ikusemiju & Osinubi, 2020). It is no doubt that Nigeria is blessed with numerous and notable cultural assets for the development of cultural tourism, varying in terms of ranches, monuments, festivals, historical sites, music, cultural documents, etc (Ikusemiju *et al*, 2025). Thus, cultural tourism is not just the utilisation of the cultural assets of the communities in the past but also the use of present-day culture; that is, the

use of community identities of people that are living together in a particular geographical area (Zhang, 2011).

Community identities are described as equality of perception of people who exist together and have a common means of recognition. Community identities are the identities of people on the basis of their birth and sense of belonging to a particular community that is positioned in the kinship and social hierarchy, of which the individuals may not have the choice to influence. That is, community identities are ascriptive, such that they are very difficult to shake off by an individual even if one chooses to disown them; others may continue to identify with them, and an example of such community identities is also known as cultural heritage (Nwakaeze-Ogugua, 2015).

The community identities are physical and non-physical cultural resources of communities that are inherited from the creation. Thus, the community identities give the locale an impression of uniformity, peace, and unity and belonging that allow the community to have better knowledge of the past generations or their forefathers (Ikusemiju *et al*, 2025). Community identities imply both tangible and intangible shared bonds that symbolise the uniqueness and times past of the past generations to present and to the unborn generations (Ikusemiju *et al*, 2025).

In addition, community identities are constituents of tourists' trips that appropriately promote culturally induced attractions or heritage resources that have the potential to attract a considerable number of tourists, which could generate a large sum of tourists' expenditures

(Zeitlin & Burr, 2011). These heritage resources, also known as community identities, are fashioned by man's interaction with the surroundings and have become the basis of cultural identity and national pride, which are today the propeller of cultural tourism (Ezenagu, 2020). Community identities include monuments, arts and crafts, indigenous language, music and musical instruments, foods and drinks, traditional clothing, religious festivals, beliefs, cultural buildings, historical landscapes, literatures, rituals, museums, indigenous sporting activities, and cultural festivals (Baker, 2013; Sullivan, 2016). Hence, this study has its basis in cultural festivals as a form of community identity in the Ijebu-Ode community because cultural festivals, as a derivative of community identities, are events customarily celebrated by communities and usually focus on some uniqueness of such communities, which often serve to accomplish particular collective reasons (Ogbenika, 2020). Also, cultural festivals are a deeply rooted expression of community identities, values and ways of life. They are a series of cultural occurrences that play an indisputable role that brings people together and serve as channels of display of affection and passion that bridge intimacy and acceptance among the residents (Eze, 2021).

Similarly, cultural festivals across the globe, with no exception to the Yoruba ethnic group, serve as a bond of the social world of the Yoruba with the unseen world, as these festivals are grouped and celebrated in three categories. Firstly, some festivals are celebrated for

agricultural purposes and to strengthen the bond of unity among the Yoruba race. Secondly, some festivals are celebrated in memory of historical figures (heroes and heroines) who had achieved or fought notably for the community, and thirdly, some festivals are celebrated based on historical reasons, which are organised in remembrance of a particular occurrence that ensued in the community several years ago (Ogbenika, 2020). For instance, the Ojude-Oba festival in Ijebu-Ode is celebrated through the age-group societies to strengthen the bond of unity among the indigenes, residents, and friends of Ijebu-Ode and to pay homage to Awujale of Ijebu-Ode community (Plate 1). Thus, the Ijebu-Ode community in Ogun State was chosen purposively because it is the only community in the southwest of Nigeria that is home to one of the largest ramparts in West Africa, known as Sungbo Eredo, which was built around 1000 AD, and exhibits the historical and heritage identities of the people of Ijebu (Sonubi, 2012; Asante, 2014; Olarewaju, 2018; Akinyoade, 2018; Adebayo, 2019; Ogbueliaku, 2022). Consequently, the Ijebu-Ode community is among the communities in Yoruba land that have a very unique culture with strong beliefs that are expressed during the celebration of the various cultural festivals annually to showcase the unique features of the community, such as cloth, food, beverage, traditions, heritage, etc (Abdulgafar, 2015). This research has three objectives, namely;

1. Assess the specific community identities in the Ijebu-Ode community and their various categories.

2. Evaluate the features of community identities of the Ijebu-Ode community that influence cultural tourism.

3. Investigate the significance of the community identities of the Ijebu-Ode community and the socioeconomic dynamics of cultural tourism.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 The Study Area

Ijebu-Ode community, on coordinates $6^{\circ} 49' N$ and $3^{\circ} 55' E$, is a town in Ogun State with a rich display of cultural assets of the residents through the annual celebration of the popular Ojude-Oba festival in honour of the King (Punch Newspaper, 2016). It is a town that hosts one of the largest ramparts in West Africa, known as Sungbo Eredo. The economy of Ijebu-Ode is built mainly on agriculture, such as kolanuts and cassava, and is traditionally known for handicrafts such as crown making and cloth weaving. The ruler of the Ijebu-Ode community is known as the Awujale.

3.2 Study context

This study essentially focuses on the Ojude-Oba festival because it is a festival that has been celebrated for some years in paying homage to the kings (Plate 1) and because the festival has become a unifying factor for all religions in the community. Due to the study's approach, the respondents who provided the information were chosen purposefully. Thus, members of the age – grade societies of the Ojude – Oba festival were utilized as the sampling frame for selection of the respondents for the study because investigation revealed that the

members of the Ojude-Oba festival are custodians, leaders, and are most knowledgeable about the community identities of the residents of the Ijebu-Ode community.



Plate 1: Obayori Akile Omo - Oba Men age-group society of Ijebu - Ode while paying homage to the Awujale of Ijebu – Ode during the Ojude - Oba festival, 2022

3.3 Data collection and analysis

Key informants were specifically chosen from community members because they represent different community groups from which fundamental information on community identities can be obtained (Table 1). To gather information on 'who, what, when, why, and how' from respondents, two (2) respondents were selected for the key informant interviews from the community. The researchers adopted a narrative method in the qualitative data analysis in order to bring about a composition of observations presented by the respondents, taking into detail the perception of the cases and different levels of experiences of the respondents (Dudovskiy, 2022; Ikusemiju et al, 2025).

This research work also engaged focus group discussion (FGD), where six (6)

participants were gathered and interviewed in two independent groups. The FGDs were held differently, and they provided opportunities to dissect salient issues related to the personal experience, belief, perception and attitudes of the participants. Hence, the six (6) participants provided insights into the perception of community identities and how they aligned with the socioeconomic contribution of cultural tourism in the community. In choosing the members of the FGD, the socioeconomic attributes of the respondents were considered. Socioeconomic attributes like sex of the respondents, age, educational qualifications, and marital status of participants in qualitative research are important determinants of the quality of the information to be accessed from such an exercise (Ikusemiju *et al*, 2025).

4.0 Findings and Discussions

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents in Ijebu-Ode Community

This section is dedicated to the socioeconomic attributes of the respondents. The two (2) participants for the key informant interviews were both male, married and aged 42 and 43 years. The two interviewees were graduates of higher institutions of learning. Furthermore, in the focus group discussion one, there were six (6) participants, all were male and aged 50 years and above. All the participants were married, and all were graduates of higher institutions of learning. Also, in the focus group discussion two, there were six (6) participants, all were female, all the participants were married, and aged 42 years and 49 years. However, five (5)

of the participants were graduates of higher institutions of learning, while one (1) was a holder of a senior secondary certificate examination (SSCE).

4.2 Categories and specific community identities in the Ijebu-Ode community

A key interviewee clarified his opinion as follows:

(a) Archaeological, cultural and historical identities

The interviewee disclosed that Bilikisu Sungbo Eredo is one of the archaeological, cultural and historical sites in Ijebu-Ode. He explained that the site is important because it is an inheritance of the community and clarified that the site is important to everyone in Ijebu-Ode. He concluded that the site aids cultural tourism in the community.

(b) Culinary identities

The interviewee expressed that the culinary identities of the Ijebu-Ode community include ikokore, eberipo, palm wine, burukutu etc of which he explained that the foods and beverages known to the community were inherited from their forefathers. He explained that the food and beverages are known only to Ijebu-Ode, and their styles of preparation make the foods and beverages unique. In addition, he stated that anyone in the community can prepare the foods, and they can be consumed by anyone. He further explained that the choice of traditional cuisine in the community is an inheritance and such a meal can be consumed anytime. He clarified that ikokore is consumed with eba,

especially cold eba while the food and beverage are neither taboo for tourists to consume nor they are forbidden to be consumed by tourists. He concluded that the foods and beverages aid cultural tourism in the community.

(c) Creative identities

The interviewee observed that creative identities known to Ijebu-Ode include cloth weaving, crown making, blacksmithing etc. He explained that the creative identities were inherited and anyone can be involved in their activities, while he stated that there are participants from other places who have an interest in the activities.

(d) Living identities

The interviewee remarked that the living identities in the community include Ojude-Oba festival, Agemo festival etc. He stated that the living identities are important to the community because they were inherited. He explained further that not everyone is involved in their activities; for example, an intending member of age-grade (regberegbe) must be married, responsible, an entrepreneur or a government worker, while the members of Agemo's family and selected people among the residents of Ijebu-Ode are involved in discharging the activities of the Agemo festival. He concluded that the living identities aid cultural tourism in the community.

Another key interviewee clarified his opinion as follows:

(a) Archaeological, cultural and historical identities

The interviewee remarked that Bilikisu Sungbo Eredo is one of the archaeological, cultural and historical sites in Ijebu-Ode. He explained that the site is important because it is an inheritance of the community and stated that the site is important to everyone in Ijebu-Ode. He concluded that the site aids cultural tourism in the community.

(b) Culinary identities

The interviewee observed that the culinary identities of the Ijebu-Ode community include ikokore, palm wine etc of which he explained that the food and beverage known to the community were inherited from their forefathers. He explained further that the food and beverage are known only to Ijebu-Ode and thus, unique to the community. In addition, he stated that anyone in the community can prepare the foods, and they can be consumed by anyone. He further explained that the choice of traditional cuisine in the community is an inheritance, and such a meal can be consumed anytime. He affirmed that ikokore is consumed with eba while the food and beverage are neither taboo for tourists to consume nor they are forbidden to be consumed by the tourists. He concluded that the foods and beverages aid cultural tourism in the community.

(c) Creative identities

The interviewee observed that creative identities known to Ijebu-Ode include pottery, cloth weaving, blacksmithing etc. He stated that the creative identities were inherited, and anyone can be involved in their activities, while he explained that there are participants from other places who have an interest in the activities.

(d) Living identities

The interviewee remarked that the living identities in the community include the Ojude-Oba festival. He stated that living identities are important to the community because they are inherited. He explained that not everyone is involved in the activities of the Ojude-Oba festival; for example, an intending member of age-grade (regberegbe) must be married, an entrepreneur or a government employee. He concluded that the living identities in Ijebu-Ode aid cultural tourism in the community.

Furthermore, reports from the two focus group discussions in Ijebu-Ode supported the opinions of the participants of the key informant interview.

The reports of the participants in the first group were as follows:

(a) Archaeological, cultural and historical identities

All the participants were of the view that there are archaeological, cultural and historical sites in the Ijebu-Ode community, which include Bilikisu Sungbo Eredo, Palace of Awujale of Ijebu – Ode etc. They observed that the sites are important to everyone in the community because they were inherited from the forefathers and thus, they are historical.

(b) Culinary identities

The participants observed that the culinary identities of the Ijebu-Ode community include ikokore, eberipo, burukutu and palm wine, of which they explained that the food and beverage known to the community were inherited from their forefathers. They explained further that

the food is mainly known only to Ijebu-Ode and thus, unique to the community. In addition, the participants stated that anyone in the community can prepare the foods, and they can be consumed by anyone. They further explained that the choice of traditional cuisine in the community is an inheritance, and such a meal can be consumed anytime. The participants affirmed that ikokore is consumed with eba while the food and beverage are neither taboo for tourists to consume nor they are forbidden to be consumed by the tourists. They concluded that the foods and beverages aid cultural tourism in the community.

(c) Creative identities

The participants remarked that creative identities known to Ijebu-Ode include pottery, cloth weaving, blacksmithing etc. They observed that the creative identities were inherited and that anyone can be involved in the creative activities, while they explained that there are participants from other places who have an interest in the activities.

(d) Living identities

The participants observed that the living identities in the community include the practices of Agemo festival, Ojude-Oba festival etc. They observed that the living identities are important to the community because they are inherited. The participants explained that not everyone is involved in the activities of the Ojude-Oba festival; likewise, in the ritual practice of Agemo festival, all categories of women visiting the town or women of the community are not allowed to witness the festival. They concluded that the living identities in Ijebu-Ode aid cultural tourism in the community.

The reports of the participants in the second group were as follows:

(a) Archaeological, cultural and historical identities

All the participants were of the view that there are archaeological, cultural and historical sites in Ijebu-Ode community, which include Bilikisu Sungbo Eredo, Palace of Awujale of Ijebu – Ode etc. They observed that the sites are important to everyone in the community because they are cultural and historical.

(b) Culinary identities

The participants observed that the culinary identities of the Ijebu-Ode community include ikokore, eberipo and palm wine, of which they explained that the food and beverage known to the community were inherited from their forefathers. They explained further that the food is mainly known only to Ijebu-Ode and thus, unique to the community. In addition, the participants stated that anyone in the community can prepare the foods, and they can be consumed by anyone. They further explained that the choice of traditional cuisine in the community is an inheritance, and such a meal can be consumed anytime. The participants established that ikokore is consumed with eba, while the food and beverage are neither taboo for tourists to consume nor they are forbidden to be consumed by tourists. They concluded that the foods and beverages aid cultural tourism in the community.

(c) Creative identities

The participants observed that creative identities known to Ijebu-Ode include training, tie

and dye, bead weaving, cloth weaving, blacksmithing, garri processing, etc. They observed that the creative identities were inherited and that anyone can be involved in the creative activities, while they explained that there are participants from other places who have an interest in the activities. Thus, the participants observed that creative identities are important to the community because they creative identities enhance economic growth.

(d) Living identities

The participants observed that the living identities in the community include the practices of Agemo festival, Olobinrin-Ojowu, Ojude-Oba festival etc. They observed that the living identities are important to the community because they are inherited. The participants explained that not everyone is involved in the activities of the Ojude-Oba festival while in the ritual practice of the Agemo festival, all categories of women in the town are not allowed to witness the festival. They concluded that the living identities in Ijebu-Ode aid cultural tourism in the community.

Table 1: Categories and specific community identities in Ijebu-Ode community

S/N	Categories of Community Identities	Sub – categories of community identities	Community Identities
1.	Architectural, cultural and Historical Identities	Historical sites, memorial sites, monuments etc.	1. Sungbo Eredo. 2. Bilikisu Sungbo Shrine. 3. Palace of Awujale of Ijebu – Ode. 4. Queen Sheba Palace. 5. Garri Ijebu Market. 6. Ebute Oni Beach. 7. Cathedral Church of Our Saviour. 8. Ijebu – Ode Grammar School.
		Food identities	1. Ikokore (Water Yam Pottage) with eba. 2. Eberipo Alagbado. 3. Eberipo Elewedu. 4. Igbalo with cold pap. 5. Afon.
2.	Culinary Identities	Beverage identities.	1. Palm wine 2. Raffia wine 3. Burukutu (A product of cereal fermentation).
3.	Creative Identities	Local arts and crafts etc.	1. Cloth weaving. 2. Tie and dye. 3. Pottery, Carving, Sculpture. 4. Blacksmithing. 5. Tanneries.
		Galleries.	1. Ijebu Museum 2. Divine Connect Art Gallery 3. TML Art 'O' Kraft 4. Vinn Art World 5. Emiloeye Art Gallery etc.
		Clothing and Dressing.	The pattern of dressing in Ijebu – Ode is not different from that of the rest of the community in Yoruba land and such include Agbada, Kembe, Ipele or Iborun (Shawl), Oloyo, different styles of Head-gear etc.
		Adornment	1. Leather bangles are worn rather than the golden bangles. 2. Cam-wood oil called “Kele” is rubbed by the nursing mothers on their feet up to the ankle. 3. A piece of yellow stone substance called “Erowo” is applied on the face by the locals rather than the common face powder.

	Tradition, Belief and Customs and Festivals etc.
4. Living Identities	1. Ojude Oba festival. 2. Agemo festival. 3. Erina festival. 4. Sere festival. 5. Obelu festival. 6. Osu festival. 7. Irawo festival. 8. Imonisona festival. 9. Irole Oropo festival.
Music and Musical Instruments	Music is an important aspect of people of Ijebu-Ode and it can be achieved to certain degree called music drama. Musical instruments of Ijebu – Ode community include Agere, Aran, Igbin, Bata, Dundun, and Sekere.

4.3 Importance of the Community Identities of Ijebu-Ode

Findings of this study revealed that community identities are a portrayal of the image of the community, and they are unique to the community. The findings further indicated that the community identities are the cultural tourism assets in the community and are important to the development of cultural tourism. These findings are in line with those of Ezenagu (2020), who states that inheritance resources are significant elements of cultural tourism and that these inheritance resources have become tourists' products aimed at achieving the desires of the tourists. These findings are also supported by the earlier research work of Eritrea Ministry of Information (2019), which states that community identities are a shared bond that represents the distinctiveness, chronicle and characteristics of the past generations passed on to the present and to the unborn generations. It further stated that community identities give the locale a sense of homogeneousness, harmony and belonging that allow the community to have better knowledge of their forefathers.

4.4 Features of the Identities of Ijebu-Ode Community that Influence Cultural Tourism

The participants of the key informant interviews revealed that features of the identities of the Ijebu-Ode community include the presence of archaeological and monumental sites that aid cultural tourism. There are people from other places who come to visit these identities that are known to Ijebu–Ode town. Bilikisu Sungbo Eredo, Palace of Awujale of Ijebu – Ode are one of the archaeological, cultural and historical sites in Ijebu - Ode. The Bilikisu Sungbo Eredo and Palace of Awujale of Ijebu–Ode are important because they are inheritances of the community, as the sites are important to everyone in Ijebu-Ode. The historical sites aid cultural tourism in the community (KIs I and II).

Similarly, FGD I outlined these archaeological, cultural and historical sites in the Ijebu–Ode community to include Bilikisu Sungbo Eredo, Palace of Awujale of Ijebu–Ode and so on. It observed that the sites are important to everyone in the community because they were inherited from the forefathers and thus, they are historical. FGD II reaffirmed that these archaeological, cultural and historical sites in

Ijebu–Ode community include Bilikisu Sungbo Eredo, Palace of Awujale of Ijebu–Ode. They established that the sites are important to everyone in the community because they were inherited from the forefathers and thus, they are historical.

Furthermore, practices of the community that enhance cultural tourism include food and beverage, arts and galleries, as well as clothing and dressing. Culinary identities of the Ijebu–Ode community include ikokore, eberipo, palm wine, burukutu, amongst others. The foods and beverages known to the community were inherited from their forefathers. The food and beverages are known only to Ijebu–Ode, and their styles of preparation make the foods and beverages unique. In addition, anyone in the community can prepare the foods, and it can be consumed by anyone. The choice of traditional cuisine in the community is through inheritance, and such a meal can be consumed anytime. “Ikokore” is consumed with ‘eba’, especially cold eba, while the food and beverage are neither taboo for tourists to consume nor forbidden to be consumed by tourists. The foods and beverages are capable of enhancing cultural tourism in the community (KIs I and II).

FGDs I and II reiterated that the culinary identities of the Ijebu–Ode community include ikokore, eberipo, burukutu and palm wine, of which they explained that the food and beverages known to the community were inherited from their forefathers. They explained further that the foods are mainly known only to Ijebu–Ode and thus,

unique to the community. In addition, the participants stated that anyone in the community can prepare the foods and they can be consumed by anyone. They further explained that the choice of traditional cuisine in the community is an inheritance, and such a meal can be consumed anytime. The participants affirmed that ikokore is consumed with eba, while the food and beverage are neither taboo for tourists to consume nor they are forbidden to be consumed by the tourists. They concluded that the foods and beverages aid cultural tourism in the community.

Also, the creative identities are handicrafts that the indigenous people of Ijebu–Ode have been involved in from time immemorial. They have used the handicrafts to make things that they use domestically, and even sell them in order to make money. Creative identities known to the Ijebu–Ode community include cloth weaving, crown making, blacksmithing, and so on. The creative identities were inherited, and anyone can be involved in their activities. The creative identities are also open to participants from other places who have an interest in the activities (KIs I and II).

FGD I highlighted the creative identities known to Ijebu – Ode to include pottery, cloth weaving, and blacksmithing. They confirmed that the creative identities were inherited and that anyone can be involved in the creative activities, while participants from other places who have an interest in the activities. FGD II, on their own, observed that creative identities known to Ijebu–Ode include training, tie and dye, bead weaving,

cloth weaving, blacksmithing, garri processing, etc. They recapped that the creative identities were inherited, and anyone can be involved in the creative activities, as there are participants from other places who have an interest in the activities. One of them even said that creative identities are important to the community because creative identities enhance economic growth.

Furthermore, the tradition and custom practices of the Ijebu-Ode community were equally important in enhancing cultural tourism. The traditions and customs are living identities that serve to attract tourists to the community. The living identities in the Ijebu-Ode community include the Ojude-Oba festival, Agemo festival. The living identities are important to the community because they were inherited. It is not everyone that is involved in their activities; for example, an intending member of the age-grade (regberegbe) must be married, responsible, an entrepreneur or a government worker, while the members of Agemo's family and selected people among the residents of Ijebu-Ode are involved in the discharge of the activities of the Agemo festival. The living identities aid cultural tourism in the community (KIs I and II).

FGD I participants summarised that the living identities in the community include the practices of Agemo festival, the Ojude-Oba festival and so on. They observed that the living identities are important to the community because they are inherited. The participants explained that not everyone is involved in the activities of the Ojude-Oba festival; likewise, in the

ritual practice of Agemo festival, all categories of women visiting the town or women of the community are not allowed to witness the Agemo festival. They concluded that the living identities in Ijebu-Ode aid cultural tourism in the community. FGD II participants, on the other hand, revealed the living identities in the community to include the practices of Agemo festival, Olobinrin-Ojowu, Ojude-Oba festival and so on. They confirmed that the living identities are important to the community because they were inherited. The participants explained that not everyone is involved in the activities of the Ojude-Oba festival and in the ritual practice of Agemo festival; all categories of women in the town are not allowed to witness the Agemo festival. They concluded that the living identities in Ijebu-Ode aid cultural tourism in the community.

The findings of this study have proven that there are numerous community identities in Ijebu-Ode. Thus, the community identities aid the development of cultural tourism in the community. These findings are in conformity with Cultural Heritage Studies (2022), which states that community identities are an inheritance of physical characteristics and intangible characteristics of a community, and that community identities are elements that offer links between the past, present and future with the use of diverse cultural methodology to the present. Similarly, the findings are in line with Ezenagu (2020), which also states that community inheritances are fashioned by man's interaction with the environment and that they have become the foundation of cultural identities and national

pride, which are today drivers of cultural tourists. In addition, the findings are in line with Eritrea Ministry of Information (2019), which equally states that community identities are physical and non-physical cultural assets of communities that are inherited from the forefathers.

4.5 Socioeconomic Contributions of Cultural Tourism in Ijebu-Ode Community

Findings from the key informant interviews revealed that the socioeconomic contributions of cultural tourism in Ijebu-Ode community revealed that cultural tourism enhances a better understanding of both the people and tourists about the beliefs of the community, as it also helps to promote harmony among the residents of the community. It also helps to enhance the social infrastructure in the community, as well as put the community on the global map with respect to tourism. Cultural tourism helps create awareness and develop more understanding among the residents toward cultural tourism. In addition, cultural tourism emphasises the validation and genuineness of cultural values of the community among individuals and groups that lead to tourists' satisfaction and loyalty.

Furthermore, the focus group discussions outlined that cultural tourism in Ijebu-Ode expands collective morals in terms of intellectual, emotional, uniqueness, self-esteem, strength, uniformity, athletic lifestyles, and creative expression. Cultural tourism further enhances destination loyalty, the development of community identity, such as local crafts, food, and

beverage, as well as festivals. Also, in Ijebu-Ode, cultural tourism encourages commercial activities, helps generate job opportunities in the community, and improves the livelihood of the community. In addition, cultural tourism helps to improve the local economy of the community, helps contribute towards regional economic activities, and also helps in creating income for the residents of the community.

Findings of this study revealed that the socioeconomic contributions of cultural tourism in Ijebu-Ode community are line in with Richards (2018), that states that cultural tourism is an important socioeconomic development tool worldwide as there are numerous benefits of cultural tourism such as creation of employments, infrastructure and superstructure development, enhanced cultural exchange between tourists and the populace with no exemption to different communities. The findings are also in tune with the submission of Jayasinghe & Sevanathan (2021), which states that tourism has several unique characteristics that bring a wide collection of products and services that are utilised at the point of production.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Communities' identities are an unavoidable segment of cultural tourism that must be prioritised to help stimulate the socioeconomic status of the people. The communities' identities have come of age, and necessary attention and advancement have not been given by the local, state and federal government in Nigeria towards their advancement. Thus, this study

recommended that if local, state, and federal governments in Nigeria and relevant tourism stakeholders put the necessary strategies in place, its advancement would have numerous socio-economic benefits by influencing the economy of the community both directly and indirectly through multiplier effects.

This study reinforces the importance of community identities, which are a representation of the image of the community as being very important and unique. That is, community identities are the uniformity of inheritances that unite the residents of the community together. These community identities constitute the cultural tourism assets of the community and are important to the development of cultural tourism. Within the context of socioeconomic variables, cultural tourism has been ascertained to support the enhancement of a better understanding of both the residents and tourists about the norms and traditions of the community, as it also helps to foster unity among the residents of the community.

Stemming from an understanding of community norms and tradition as well as being a unifying factor, cultural tourism within the context of socioeconomic contribution also helps to boost social infrastructure in the community, as well as put the community on the global track record of tourism. Cultural tourism aids the awareness and thoughtfulness of the residents toward cultural tourism. In addition, cultural tourism emphasises the confirmation and authenticity of cultural values of the communities among individuals and

groups that lead to tourists' satisfaction and loyalty.

Practical implications

This study indicates that community administrators, local, state, and federal governments should initiate massive and passionate awareness of the importance of advancing communities' identities. If this is done, it will, to a very large extent, help boost cultural tourism.

Strategies for making community identities of the Ijebu-Ode community for the development of cultural tourism should be remodelled and put into operation by local, state, and federal governments in partnership with relevant tourism stakeholders. This should also be advanced to other communities in Nigeria where there are important national cultural assets (community identities) that could be used to attract tourists, particularly from the international communities.

Advancing the community identities of the Ijebu-Ode community through functional structure for enhancing socioeconomic development should be combined with scope development for infrastructural growth, income generation, and job generation.

The results of the study also indicated that cultural tourism in Ijebu-Ode improves communal values in terms of intellectual, emotional, uniqueness, self-esteem, strength, uniformity, athletics' lifestyles and creative-expression. Cultural tourism further enhances destination uniqueness and loyalty. Thus, if

community identities are strengthened, it will further encourage entrepreneurial pursuits, help generate jobs in the community, and improve the livelihood of the community. In addition, strengthening cultural tourism will help to strengthen the local economy of the community and help promote regional economic activities.

Data Availability Statement

The data used in this study are not restricted. Though contacts were made and the intention of the study was communicated before the data were collected.

Conflicts of Interest Statement

There were no potential conflicts of interest reported by the authors.

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