

Reinvention of Ojude-Oba Festival for Tourism and its Impact on the Host Community

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Abstract

This study examines the Ojude-Oba festival in Ogun State, by investigating the activities that characterized the festival from inception to present time, the changes that has occurred and the effect of the changes on the festival and the host community. Purposive sampling method was used to select 4 local policy makers and 2 festival planning committee members and key informant interviews were conducted with them. Systematic sampling method was used to select 400 respondents from the host community and close-ended questionnaire was used to gather data from them. Data were analyzed with the use of content analysis, simple percentages and chi-square. Findings from the study revealed that, Ojude-Oba festival was not touristic in nature at inception but has metamorphosed to a major tourism driver in Ogun State. Revival and incorporation of traditional Ijebu Age-Grade groups (Regbe-Regbe) parade, division of festival activities into Regbe-Regbe and Eleshin (Horse-Riders) contest with monetary reward attached, introduction of dues to participating groups and involvement of corporate bodies for sponsorship and branding were innovation in the Ojude-Oba festival. Majority (60.1%) of the changes discovered were deliberate and have resulted to increased participants' population and also generate income for the host community. Reinventions in the festival have significant ($p = 0.310$) impact on the host community. The study concludes that the Ojude-Oba Festival has went through series of modification and reinvention of the festival activities. However, the changes experienced in the festival overtime has positive influence on the cultural practice. Hence, reinvention of the Ojude-Oba festival has transformed it to an event tourism product that is adding value to its host community.

Keywords: Reinvention, Festival, Tourism, Cultural festival, Innovations

Background of Study

Tourism in Nigeria centers largely on festivals and events, due to the country's ample amount of ethnic groups, but also includes rain forests, savannah, waterfalls, and other natural and man-made attractions (Archibong, 2004). In recent years, festivals and carnivals have become a major attraction to visitors, particularly in Ijebu-Ode, Osogbo, Kebbi, and Calabar every year (UNESCO, 2007). Sociologists, anthropologists and historians have often commented on the tendency of economists to pay inadequate attention to culture in investigating the operation of societies in general and the process of development in particular (Andrew, 2013). However, most researchers are against making money from community owned cultural activities and making it fully tourism oriented because they raise issue of cultural transformation, trivialization and inauthenticity.

Reinvention, according to Merriam Webster Dictionary (merriam-webster.com, 2016), the word 'reinvent' has two simple definition. Firstly, it means "to make major changes or improvement to (something)". Secondly, it means "to present (something) in a different or new way" or "to remake or make over, as in a different form" or "to bring back; revive. It has been reported by Yusuf (2014) that, the Ojude-Oba festival began over one hundred (100) years ago and that, the way and manner in which the Ojude-Oba is being celebrated today is an upgrade of the initial way of celebration at inception which was as a result of reinvention over time. Hence this study, intends to investigate how the Ojude-Oba festival transformed from its initial state at inception to what we have today.

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- i. Investigate how the Ojude-Oba festival was celebrated in the past and at the present time.
- ii. Identify the effects of reinvention of the Ojude-Oba festival on the host community.
- iii. Examine the perception of the local community residents on reinvention of the Ojude-Oba Festival activities.

Hypothesis

H₀: Reinvention of the Ojude-Oba Festival has no significant impact on the host community.

Conceptual Framework

Butler's Model of Tourism Development

Apart from different definitions, there are also some important concepts for the academic study of tourism. One significant contribution has also been made by Butler (1980), who created the Tourism Area Cycle of Evolution (see figure1 below). According to Butler, tourist are dynamic and change continually because of a variety of factors, including the preferences and needs of visitors, the gradual deterioration and possible replacement of physical plant and facilities and the change (or even disappearance) of the original natural and cultural attractions which were responsible for the initial popularity of the area (Butler, 1980).

The Butler's (1980) model of a tourism area cycle of evolution can be adopted to aid the understanding of phases in which a tourism destination may likely pass through from the stage

of discovery of a potential in an attraction to what may likely occur after the attraction has been developed. This can be used to explain the effects of the anticipated stages that the Ojude-Oba festival may be having on the host community as it evolve and development occurs. In application to the Ojude-Oba festival which is an event tourism attraction, it can be deduced that, it is not out of place for an age long festival event to witness some kind of modification and/or reinvention process in order to remain attractive to potential tourist.

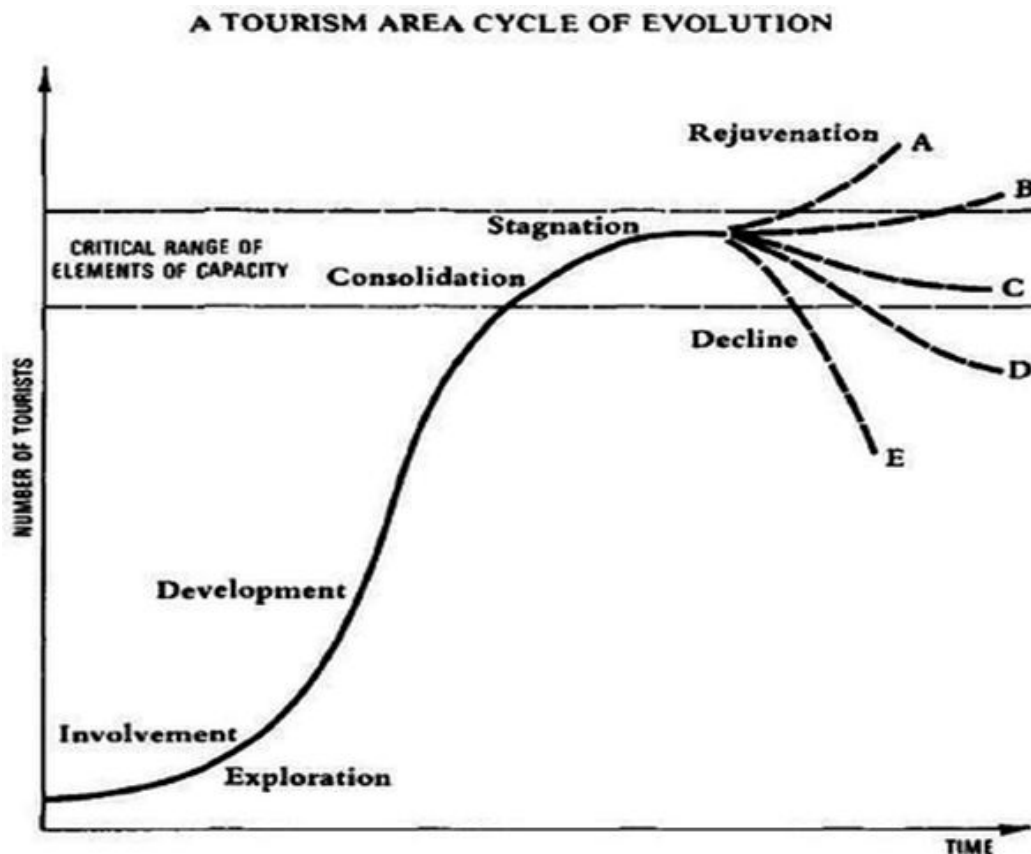


Figure 1: Butler's Model of Tourism Area Lifecycle.

Source: Butler, 1980

Methodology

Qualitative and Quantitative research approach was used to get an in-depth understanding and adequate exposure to activities that characterized the festival. Three editions of the Ojude-Oba festival (in the year 2015, 2016 and 2017) were observed. During the process, questionnaires were administered and interviews conducted for stakeholders to gather relevant primary data for the research. Both descriptive and inferential methods were employed for data analysis through the use of content analysis, simple percentages and chi square.

The population of study comprised of the festival stakeholders in Ijebu-Ode community that are involved in the festivals as indicated in table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of Research Sampling Method Adopted.

S/N	Category of the Respondents	Actual Population	Sample Population	Data Collection Instrument	Sampling Method Used
1	Local Resident in Ijebu-Ode	2,166,598	400	Questionnaire	Systematic Sampling Method
2	Local Policy Makers/ Traditional Chiefs in Ijebu-Ode	38	4	KII	Purposive Sampling Method
3	Ojude-Oba Festival Committee	13	2	KII	Purposive Sampling Method
4	Community Based Social Groups	23	2	FGD	Purposive Sampling Method

Source: Field Survey (2017)

KEY: KII – Key Informant Interview;

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

Results and Discussion

How the Ojude-Oba Festival was Celebrated in the Past

At Inception, *Balogun* (Warlords) families who were mostly Muslim just pay homage to the king two days after the celebration of the *Eid'l-Kabir* (an Islamic religious festival) to show appreciation and probably take various kinds of gift items to the palace. There are about seventeen (17) *Balogun* families in Ijebu-Ode, most of these *Balogun* Families are powerful and wealthy, and so could afford to own one or more horses which was used for transportation and a show of affluence in the olden days (just as we have different kinds of expensive motor vehicles owned by rich people in the society today). *Baloguns* ride their horses in company of their family members, friends and other Muslim faithful to pay homage to the *Awujale* of Ijebuland at his palace “Frontage-Courtyard of the King’s Palace” (Ojude-Oba) (*Pers. Comm.*, 2017). At inception, this exercise was aimed at showing appreciation to the king for his support for the Islamic religion and allowing Muslim believers to practice their religion peacefully in the community. This later on became an annual event (two days after the celebration of the Islamic *Eid'l-Kabir* festival) and in subsequent visit to pay homage to the *Awujale*, *Balogun* families became conscious of branding family names with the use of banners, flags and/or placards to

indicate their family name with the motive of appearing best amongst other Balogun families. During this era, attention is paid to overall family appearance, which include family costume, conduct and population. The *Baloguns* also used their horse to display acrobat before the king just to demonstrate happiness, love, loyalty and support for the reigning monarch (*Pers. Comm.*, 2017).

In recent times, this activities has been modified to become a contest whereby, Balogun families now are conscious of appearing in their best possible outfit and conduct in order to be ranked first in the outing amongst other Balogun families and win prices. The event that was formerly to show appreciation to the king is now a competitive contest where Balogun families now ride horses to pay homage to the king without taking gifts alongside and ultimately visiting the palace without the motive of showing appreciation to the king again rather, contesting in an event in order to emerge as the family with best outing and win cash prices after been graded on parameters ranging from horse decoration, equestrian display, family costume, adherence to rules laid down by the festival planning committee, population of family supporters and presentation by family representatives appointed to step forward directly to the front of the king to bow before the Awujale on behalf of the family (*Pers. Comm.*, 2017). It was also observed that, during the 2015, 2016 and 2017 edition of the festival, the King was found to be rewarding every participating Balogun families with a cash gift in an envelope as they come forward to pay him homage during the festival. Also, the festival is now treated as a package that is been branded by corporate organization for economic benefits. The current major corporate sponsor of the Ojude-Oba Festival is Globacom Telecommunication Company. Other corporate sponsors include: First City Monument Bank (FCMB) PLC, Nigerian Breweries PLC, Rite Foods Limited, Dangote Groups, Julius Berger, Ogun State Government to mention a few (KII, Yusuf, 2017).

The popular Ijebu age grade system (Regbe-regbe) was a societal gathering of Ijebu indigenes of age peers who do things together like a club or cooperative society to assist group members in achieving their respective desired goals and the community at large. At some point in the Ijebu history, the activities of the age grade groups (Regbe-Regbe) faded away and became almost a forgone issue. The reigning monarch, after ascending the throne as the Awujale of Ijebuland, Oba (Dr.) S.K Adetona in his plan to boost socio-economic activities of the Ijebus revived the traditional age grade groups (Regbe-Regbes) by reinventing the groups and then tasked them to be involved in grassroots development of the Ijebu-Community through various programmes amongst which is the Regbe-Regbes featuring in the annual Ojude-Oba festival in order to add glamour to the festival events. Currently there are over twenty traditional age-grade groups of male and female Ijebu indigenes exiting in Ijebuland with membership opened to anybody irrespective of religion, profession or town of origin within Ijebuland (*Pers. Comm.*, 2017). The inclusion of the 'Regbe-regbes' in the Ojude-Oba festival activities led to the Ojude-Oba festival been rebranded to now have two sessions as witnessed today, the "morning session" and "afternoon session" whereby, parade of the Regbe-Regbes is basically the activities used in characterizing the morning session while the afternoon session is characterized by the activities of the equestrian display by the various Balogun Families (*Pers. Com.*, 2017).

Changes That Has Occurred in the Ojude-Oba Festival and Its Effects

In the course of investigating the specific changes that had occurred in the time past before the period of this study, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was organized between the researcher and two prominent social groups in Ijebu-Ode. The researcher made use of the Age-Grade (Regbe-Regbe) clubs whose members are sixty years of age and above. Namely; the “Egbe Bobagbimo Akile Ijebu” and “Egbe Bobakeye Akile Ijebu”. The FGD was conducted on separate days at separate venues. The FGD held at the respective club house (*Ile-Egbe*) of each group. At the end of the interaction session with the groups, the changes that was reported to have occurred is as follows:

The Ojude-Oba Festival was formerly an affair of the *Baloguns* and their family members who go to pay homage to the king at his palace, the re-awakening and restructuring of the traditional age grade groups (*regbe-regbe*) into social clubs and their introduction as major stakeholders in the community to appear and parade at the premises of the palace and pay homage to the king was a major positive turn around in the activities, attendance, glamour and attention given to the festival by all and sundry in the Ijebu-Ode community. Because, this made majority of the community members who relatively would belong to an age-grade group have a sense of belonging to participate in the festival activities and these group also invites friend and associates to celebrate with them in the merry making and festivities which the Ojude-Oba festival is known for. This made the population of the festival attendee to increase significantly and also attracted the attention of various corporate organization to be interested in showcasing their product at the festival through corporate sponsorship (Yusuf, 2017).

Onanuga (2017), also reported that, at inception it was the palace that bears the liabilities of hosting visitors who came to pay homage to the king. Even though, most of this visitors go with gifts of different kinds that they present to the king. As the festival began to become a community affair, the burden of hosting was transferred to the indigenes of the community through committee system. The committee raised funds amidst notable indigenes and well-wishers who donates freely to finance major activities of the festival for many years. But, as the festival grows bigger in its significance, the festival activities become more organized and major participants in the festival activities (such as the regbe-regbes and Balogun families) contributes specific amounts annually in-order to permit and recognize their presence during the festival. With this, the presence and interest of different corporate companies was gained. These companies showed interest in using the festival as a platform to showcase and promote their respective products and services to the people. As this progresses, the idea of branding the festival for corporate sponsorship was mooted by some notable Ijebu indigenes who observed that the Ojude-Oba Festival has become a force to reckon with. About fifteen years ago, a major change also took place as the community signed a contract with one major telecommunication company in Nigeria (Econnect Nigeria) as the Official Corporate Sponsor of the Ojude-Oba Festival. some other companies also emerged having their product approved for official use during the festival (for example, there was a contract with the Nigerian Breweries PLC where Maltina soft drink was signed as the Official Drink of the Ojude-Oba festival for many years). Years later, some other companies emerged as the Official Corporate Sponsor for the Ojude-Oba Festival, example of which include, V-

Mobile Nigeria, MTN Nigeria and Globacom Telecommunication Company which has been the Official Corporate Sponsor for the Ojude-Oba Festival for about a decade now. Also the inclusion of various corporate companies that sponsors and feature in the festival as part of the group of people that now pays homage to the king (examples are, the Globacom Team, FCMB Team, Rite Foods Limited Team, Ogun State Government Team, Market Men and Women Associations in Ijebu-Ode, to mention a few. It is believed that if this corporate entities were not sponsors of the Ojude-Oba Festival, they would not be included amongst those called upon to pay homage to the king. Therefore, we can argue that their role as sponsors of the festival is influencing the norms of the festival by adding this group of sponsors. Aside from the contributions from sponsors, other stakeholders such as the *Regbe-Regbes* also levied themselves so as to meet the financial needs for the event. Yusuf (2017) reiterated that part of the sustainable programme put in place for the Ojude-Oba festival include the revival of the *Regbe-Regbes* and giving it a place in the event.

Another participant at the FGD (Abeeb, 2017) also mentioned that the festival has witnessed changes in its venue. The Ojude-Oba festival was said to begun at the Old Awujale Palace courtyard in the early 19th century, it was later moved to the frontage of the new palace complex in the late 19th century. As population of attendees kept increasing and the festival activities expanding, the community moved to construct another arcade ground as a befitting venue for the festival. The venue was constructed about five year ago in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the king on the throne as the ‘Awujale’ of Ijebuland. The new venue of the Ojude-Oba festival is named after the king and the event as “Oba Adetona Golden Jubilee Centre”. The new venue is located directly opposite the Awujale Palace Complex. Dongo (2017), who also participated in the FGD informed that another significant change is that the festival is now tagged with a theme annually, targeted towards promoting the values of the community or achieving a particular communal goal. This is unlike when the festival started that it was just merry making only. The festival is equally reported to be more organized now than it was at inception (for example, there is an existing planning committee in place, invitation of Special Guest, a well labeled sitting arrangement for participants/attendees at the festival venue, and press conference few days before the festival commences. All these were not in practice at inception, they only evolved as their needs arises. The proper planning in place has also made the festival more attractive to tourist.

Oladokun (2017) informed that another notable changes that has been in practice for a while is that, at inception the paying of homage, party and merry making was limited to the king’s palace, later on horse riders (Balogun families) began to pay homage to the Olisa of Ijebu-Ode (2nd in command to the Awujale) immediately they leave the Awujale’s Palace also at his (Olisa) Palace which is about three streets (close to one kilometer in distance) far away from the Awujale’s palace. Owing to the equestrian display by the horse rider during parade of the Balogun families as the move from their respective home to the Awujale’s palace and then to the Olisa’s palace, people who could not attend the activities at the Awujale palace, wait by the roadside to experience the scenic display of the horse riders as they pass by. As time goes on the party spilled to areas in between the Awujale’s palace and the Olisa’s palace as people

now wait there to entertain themselves and enjoy the festivities as the horse riders parades the streets. In very recent times, about ten to fifteen years ago, the Ojude-Oba Festival events now holds in various venues (both close and open space) far and near the Awujale's palace. This has greatly spread the social, economic and environmental impact of the festival to larger part of the host community.

More so, Agboola (2017) informed that about a decade ago, some other communities within the Ijebu Kingdom outside Ijebu-Ode township now organizes their own community Ojude-Oba Festival, whereby the community people organizes themselves to pay homage to their respective king at their king's palace and then party. Example of such is the Ayepe-Ijebu Ojude-Oba Festival, Oru-Ijebu Ojude-Oba Festival, Ososa Community Ojude-Oba Festival, to mention a few. Also some other communities outside the Ijebu region in Ogun State are also buying into the Ojude-Oba concept, examples are Ojude-Oba Epe Festival and Ojude-Oba Ikorodu Festival in Lagos State. This implies that the concept of Ojude-Oba festival has become a cultural model that other Yoruba communities are buying into. We equally can posit that the Ojude-Oba Festival concept is providing an avenue for people beyond Ijebu-Ode community to socialize and recreate through the festival events.

Table 2 below reveals that majority (78.3%) of the respondents at the Ojude-Oba Festival opined that the changes that occurred in the festival happened gradually to give rise to what it is presently. It was also gathered that lesser percentage of the respondents (42.7%) were of the opinion that changes observed in the festival were sudden. This implies that it must have taken a relatively distant period before significant changes were noticed. Furthermore, greater percentage of the respondents (78.4%) agreed that the changes experienced in the Ojude-Oba Festival were deliberate in order to meet the demand of visitors/tourists. None the less, it was also gathered that 65.1% of the respondents believed that the changes in the Ojude-Oba could have occurred unconsciously as people changes in all spheres of life with time thereby influencing their cultural practice. This may be so because the festival has been in existence for many decades.

Table 2: Changes that has Occurred in the Activities of the Ojude-Oba Festival

Variable	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted mean	Rank
The changes in the way and manner the Ojude-Oba festival is celebrated occurred gradually to give rise to what it is presently.	283 (37.1%)	314 (41.2%)	136 (17.8%)	19 (2.5%)	11 (1.4%)	1.83	6
The changes in the way and manner the Ojude-Oba festival is celebrated occurred suddenly to give rise to what it is presently.	85 (11.2%)	240 (31.5%)	254 (33.3%)	155 (20.3%)	28 (3.7%)	2.74	1
The changes were deliberate to meet the demand of visitors/ tourists	243 (31.9%)	354 (46.5%)	151 (19.8%)	11 (1.4%)	3 (0.4%)	2.07	5
The changes occurred unconsciously as people changes in all sphere of life with time.	170 (23.6%)	299 (41.5%)	181 (25.1%)	57 (7.9%)	15 (1.9%)	2.32	2
The changes has affected the core practice (activities) of the festival	155 (21.7%)	325 (45.5%)	85 (11.9%)	127 (17.8%)	23 (3.2%)	2.32	2

Source: Field Work, 2017.

Perception of the Residents of Ijebu-Ode on the Reinvention and Commodification of Ojude-Oba Festival as Event Tourism

During a key informant interview session Yusuf (2017), stated that within the last 30 years, some things were modified among which include the construction of the new palace, renovation of the old administrative building, the revival and inclusion of “regbe-regbe” age group, and building of the new arcade ground which has affected the socio-dynamism of the Ojude-Oba event. At inception history made it known that the festival plays host to other non-indigenes amongst whom were Muslim clerics and other religious faithful. He also stated that the festival is been compared to other international carnival or festival of great magnitude (e.g Rio festival in Brazil), noting that the king and other concerned community leaders are conscious of un-

strategic modernization and adaption of too much innovation which might make the event lose it value.

Hypothesis Result

H_0 : Reinventions in the Ojude-Oba Festival has no significant impact on the host community.

Table 3.1 below shows crosstab analysis of the perception of respondents on the parameters that provided information on the impact of reinventions in the Ojude-Oba festival on its host community (Ijebu-Ode), while table 3.2 shows result of the Chi-Square tests.

From table 3.2 below, result of the “Pearson Chi-Square” row shows that $\chi^2(1) = 1.031$, $P = 0.310$. Since the p-value (0.310) is greater than the significant level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This shows that there is a significant association between reinventions and the impact of Ojude-Oba festival on the host community. This meant that reinventions in Ojude-Oba festival has significant impact on the host community. As such, the more the reinvention/innovations in the festival, the greater the impact on the host community. This implies that, the more the festival is subjected to reinvention processes, the more the impact on the host community. This is in line with the position of Butler (1980), which explains that for an attraction that has reach stagnation stage to continue to attract tourists, stakeholders may have to consider rejuvenation which is synonymous to reinventions in the case of festivals. Hence, cultural elements may require been modified if they are to be sustainably explored for tourism purpose. Likewise, for any festival to be explored for tourism purposes, the host community should be ready for reinventions (changes) that would likely affect the foundational belief in the cultural festival in order to make such festival sellable to the global tourism market. The sustainable plans in place for the Ojude-Oba festival is related to involvement of community residents and indigenes. This is evident in the involvement community based age-grade groups (*regbe-regbe*) in the Ojude-Oba Festival.

Table 3.1

Crosstab

Count

		Reinventions in the Ojude-Oba Festival		Total
		Disagree	Agree	
Impact on Ijebu-Ode Community	Disagree	303	42	345
	Agree	212	32	244
Total		515	74	589

Table 3.2

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.031 ^a	1	.310		
Continuity Correction ^b	.064	1	.800		
Likelihood Ratio	1.653	1	.199		
Fisher’s Exact Test				.549	.441
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.016	1	.314		
N of Valid Cases	589				

a. 2 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .67.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Conclusion and Recommendation

Findings from the study revealed that, Ojude-Oba festival was not touristic in nature at inception. It went through series of modification and reinvention process that turned out to touristic events. However, the changes experienced in the festival overtime have positive influence on the cultural practice. The study concludes that, reinvention of this cultural festival has transformed it to event tourism product that is adding value to its host community. The study hence, recommends that changes brought by reinventions in cultural festivals targeted at promoting tourism should not be tagged threats to the existence of culture, rather a means of promotion and sustainability of cultural festival.

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