



## **Influence of Social Media in Promoting Nigerian Cultural Heritage: A Study of Osun Osogbo Festival**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** The Osun Osogbo Festival is an important cultural event in Nigeria, celebrated annually to honour the river goddess Osun. In recent years, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting cultural events and engaging younger audiences, particularly Nigerian youths. Understanding the role of social media in influencing festival participation, cultural awareness, and engagement is crucial for its sustainability and growth.

**Objective:** The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of social media in promoting the Osun Osogbo Festival among Nigerian youth, assess the effectiveness of social media platforms in increasing awareness and participation, and explore social media users' perceptions of the cultural significance and relevance of the festival.

**Method:** Adopting descriptive survey methodology, data were collected from 385 respondents aged 18-35 in Osun State. The researcher used a multi-stage sampling procedure, beginning with purposive sampling to select social media users aged 18 to 35. This was followed by simple random sampling to ensure equal selection opportunity, and convenience sampling was applied to finalize the sample of 300 participants based on those who completed the web-based questionnaire.

**Result:** The study found that 86.5% of respondents reported social media as a significant influence on their interest in attending the Osun Osogbo Festival, with Facebook and Instagram emerging as the most effective platforms. Additionally, 93.8% of respondents had attended the festival before, indicating strong familiarity with the event. Visual content such as images and videos were found to be the most engaging types of content. Respondents considered the festival highly significant to Nigerian culture, with 73.2% rating it as very important, especially in terms of cultural heritage, spiritual meaning, and community unity.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that social media plays a crucial role in promoting the Osun Osogbo Festival, particularly among Nigerian youth. Social media platforms significantly influence festival participation and cultural awareness, helping to preserve the festival's cultural and spiritual significance while reinforcing community ties.



**Unique Contribution:** This study extends existing literature by providing specific insights into the role of social media in promoting a traditional cultural event in Nigeria. It highlights how social media platforms can be strategically used to engage younger generations, preserve cultural heritage, and strengthen community identity.

**Key Recommendations:** The study recommends that festival organisers focus on social media marketing through platforms like Facebook and Instagram, collaborate with influencers and cultural ambassadors, create engaging content to maintain youth interest, and monitor online discussions to preserve the festival's authenticity. These strategies will enhance attendance, engagement, and cultural appreciation, ensuring the festival's continued success.

**Keywords:** Cultural Heritage, Festival Promotion, Nigerian Youth, Osun Osogbo Festival, Social Media.

## INTRODUCTION

Social media proliferation has revolutionised how people interact, share information, and preserve cultural heritage. As an indispensable tool for cultural assimilation, social media facilitates the exchange and blending of cultural values, beliefs, and practices between different groups. Effective cultural assimilation is essential in today's globalised world, where multiculturalism and diversity are increasingly prominent (Arijeniwa, 2022).

Cultural festivals, particularly in Africa, play a vital role in preserving cultural heritage and fostering cultural assimilation. The Osun Osogbo festival, celebrated annually in Osogbo land, Nigeria, is a notable example. This festival, dedicated to the goddess Osun, showcases the rich cultural traditions of the Yoruba people and serves as a platform for cultural interaction and learning. Recognised by UNESCO as a global cultural heritage site, the festival holds immense significance for both cultural preservation and community identity. Social media platforms have transformed how people experience and engage with such festivals, offering unprecedented opportunities for cultural promotion and interaction (Nwaoboli, 2022; Egbulefu & Nwaoboli, 2023).

Despite the growing recognition of social media as a tool for cultural promotion, existing studies have often focused on Western cultural trends, urban settings, or other global contexts, with limited attention to its specific impact on indigenous African festivals such as the Osun Osogbo festival. Additionally, much of the existing research explores the general effects of social media on cultural practices or the dominance of Western cultural influences over African traditions (Oyedepo, 2018). This has led to concerns about the erosion of Nigeria's cultural identity and traditions, as Western cultural values increasingly gain prominence in the digital space (Asemah, 2021; Aligwe, Nwankwo, & Nwafor, 2017). However, there is a paucity of literature examining the role of social media in marketing indigenous festivals or exploring audience perceptions of such efforts.

Furthermore, while studies such as those by Nwabueze (2015) have highlighted the growing use of the Internet and social media in interpersonal communication, they have not addressed their specific role in promoting cultural heritage. This gap necessitates further investigation into how



young people engage with social media to experience and promote festivals such as Osun Osogbo, and how this engagement impacts cultural assimilation and heritage preservation.

By focusing on audience perceptions of social media promotion of the Osun Osogbo festival, this study aims to fill this academic lacuna. Unlike previous studies that emphasise global cultural trends or urban cultural practices, this research adopts a localised approach to examine the interplay between social media usage, cultural assimilation, and heritage preservation within the Nigerian context. It seeks to evaluate the efficacy of social media platforms in marketing the Osun Osogbo festival, addressing unexplored aspects of audience engagement, frequency of social media usage, and the impact of such promotions on preserving and promoting indigenous cultural identity.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To examine the level of portrayal of the Osun Osogbo festival on social media
2. To check the level of effectiveness of social media platforms in increasing awarenesses and participation of youth in the Osun Osogbo festival
3. To investigate the perceptions of social media users on the cultural significance and relevance of the Osun Osogbo festival.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Culture**

Oklobdžija (2015), citing Edward Burnett Tylor, defines culture as a comprehensive entity encompassing several aspects such as knowledge, religion, art, morality, law, tradition, and other skills and behaviours that individuals acquire as members of society. Hence, it may be said that culture and communication are interconnected phenomena, indicating that culture is a process of communication and communication is a process of culture. The greater the disparity between high-context and low-context cultures, the more profound the effects on cultural representation in electronic media. Cultural biases influence users' decisions on social network programs (Oklobdžija, 2015).

#### **Social media**

Social media platforms and technology make producing, sharing, and exchanging information, ideas, and material simpler in virtual communities and networks. These online platforms enable user interaction, content creation, communication, and collaboration (Nwaoboli, 2023b). Social media includes websites and software where users may create accounts, share text, photos, videos, and links, and interact with others (Nwaoboli & Asemah, 2023). Famous examples include *Facebook*, *X*, *Instagram*, *LinkedIn*, *YouTube*, and *TikTok*. Social media has changed communication by allowing people to communicate, express themselves, and share information internationally (Nwaoboli & Asemah, 2021). It has tremendously impacted how individuals and companies interact and share content in the digital age. The Internet spawned social networks. As more people utilise the internet and new gadgets are produced, more platforms are created to allow



individuals to connect globally. Besides blogs, social networking services are becoming popular due to their functionality. According to Manovich (2003), social media is a computer-based multimedia format that uses computers to distribute. Computer-enabled electronic communication is used to access social networks.

Oyedepo (2018) defines social networking sites as platforms for substantial family and friend connections. These are websites and other web application services where people create content. Social networks began in the 1990s (Asemah et al., 2022). 1997 Six Degrees.com was the first social media site; in 2004, Classmates.com, Friendster, Myspace, Flickr, and others. All these social media platforms strive to communicate, engage, and amuse users (Asemah et al., 2022). New social media apps led to new types of communication and venues for users to express themselves (Osarumwense, 2014; Ezaka, & Nwafor, (2016). According to Rabia (2015), social media allows individuals, especially young, to share ideas, information, cultural expressions, and use. They join social media to express themselves and feel autonomous and confident. *YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Google Docs, and X* produce, access, and exchange knowledge and skills in social and geographical networks (Ekharefo & Nwaoboli, 2022). Undoubtedly, social media has changed Nigerians' cultural heritage ideals, beliefs, and lifestyles. The Nigerian people's cultural heritage ideas, beliefs, and lifestyles have changed due to social media. One then wonders how much we can help or hurt Nigeria's shifting cultural norms in the future decades. Kumar and Akram (2017) list these as major social media sites.

### **Social media and the promotion of Culture**

Social media has revolutionised communication and information sharing, making disseminating cultural heritage easier and more accessible. Platforms like *Facebook, X, and Instagram* have enabled the creation and sharing of content related to a community's history and culture. This includes photos, videos, and other multimedia content that can be shared globally. Social media has made it possible to distribute cultural heritage to a broader audience, creating awareness about its significance and promoting its conservation (Zaw, 2018).

Social media can promote cultural heritage by increasing awareness about cultural events and initiatives. Sharing information about festivals, exhibitions, and other cultural events can attract a larger audience and promote their cultural heritage (Odoemelam, Nsude, Nwafor, & Ebeze, 2016). Additionally, social media can be used to promote cultural heritage initiatives through fundraising campaigns and advocacy efforts. One advantage of using social media to promote cultural heritage is its ability to engage younger audiences. Social media is popular among younger generations, and by using these platforms, individuals and entities can reach a larger audience of young people. This can foster an appreciation for cultural heritage among younger generations, who are often less connected to their cultural roots. By generating engaging and interactive content, individuals and entities can help promote cultural heritage and encourage younger generations to explore their culture (Onyeakachukwu, 2019; Pontianus et al., 2021). According to Kente, Agbele and Okocha (2023), the future of social media and cultural heritage will continue to evolve as new platforms and technologies emerge. Individuals and entities must stay up-to-date with the latest trends and technologies in social media to effectively promote and preserve cultural heritage. In conclusion, social media plays a significant role in promoting and conserving cultural heritage by generating



and sharing content related to cultural heritage, increasing awareness, promoting cultural events and initiatives, engaging younger audiences, and preserving the history and culture of a community.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Oklobdžija's 2015 study on social media's role in music festival promotion highlighted its importance in modern marketing strategies. The study found that social media provides marketers with valuable customer information and easy access to feedback, enabling them to reach new audiences. However, the study had limitations, such as not examining the impact of social media promotion on cultural significance and authenticity and the audience's perception of promotional efforts.

The study by Zaw (2018) explores the role of social media in intercultural adaptation among international students in China. Through in-depth interviews with 15 students, the research found that social media facilitates cultural connections, cultural learning, and interaction. However, the study did not explore the impact of social media on cultural events' significance and authenticity, suggesting a need for further research to assess its effectiveness.

Orobator and Aiguoarueghian (2020) and Kayode, Suleimanu, and Oyedepo (2018) conducted studies on the Benin Igue Festival and its promotion using social media. Orobator & Aiguoarueghian's study aimed to understand the reasons behind the decline in the festival and recommend measures to revive it. They used a mixed research method, including surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and content analysis. The study found that rapid urbanisation, industrialisation, and expansion of Western education contributed to the decline. The study also revealed that Benin indigenous people who had acquired Western education looked down on the festival, leading to decreased participation.

Kayode, Suleimanu, and Oyedepo's study examined the role of social media in promoting family values in Nigeria and its effect on shaping positive values. They adopted the uses and gratification theory, which suggests that media does not do things for audiences, but rather, the audience decides what to do with the media. Asemah, Ekharrafo, and Olarinan's (2014) study investigated Nigeria's core values and the use of social media to promote cultural values. A similar thing in this review is that the studies found that social media strongly influences Nigerian cultural values, and frequent broadcasts of indigenous programs can encourage the adoption of Nigeria's core values.

## **Theoretical Underpinning**

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), developed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch (1974), posits that audiences actively seek media content to satisfy their cognitive, affective, and social integrative needs. This theory assumes that media use is goal-oriented and motivated, with audiences controlling media selection. Research has shown that audiences use media to fulfil specific needs, such as information seeking, emotional connection, and social interaction (Sichach, 2023). Understanding UGT is crucial for developing effective social media strategies catering to festival attendees' diverse needs. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) posits that audiences actively seek media content to satisfy their cognitive, affective, and social



integrative needs. This theory assumes that media use is goal-oriented and motivated, with audiences controlling media selection. However, critics argue that UGT overlooks social and cultural contexts, media content, and power dynamics (Hossain, 2019). Some critics contend that UGT's focus on individual motivations neglects the influence of cultural and social structures on audience needs (Sichach, 2023).

Henri Tajfel and John Turner, two prominent social psychologists, created the Social Identity Theory (SIT). British social psychologist Tajfel first put out the hypothesis, and Australian social psychologist Turner later improved upon it. Social Identity Theory (SIT) proposes that individuals derive a sense of identity from group membership, influencing self-concept and behaviour. SIT assumes that social groups are essential to self-concept, group membership is a source of pride and self-esteem, and social comparison is a fundamental human motivation. Key propositions include social identity derived from group membership, group membership influencing attitudes and behaviours, and individuals striving for positive social identity (Asemah et al., 2017). However, Harwood (2020) noted that SIT has faced various criticisms. Theoretically, SIT oversimplifies social relationships, neglects contextual considerations, and focuses narrowly on intergroup relations. Methodologically, SIT research often relies on artificial laboratory settings and lacks longitudinal studies. Conceptually, SIT assumes fixed, essential group identities, neglects power dynamics and prioritises group membership over individual differences. Critics argue that SIT's emphasis on social categorisation overlooks the complexity of social interactions (Harwood, 2020).

Concerning the present study, the combination of UGT and SIT offers insightful information for those in charge of organising cultural festivals. Social media usage may impact social identity development and group membership while meeting cognitive, emotional, and social integrative demands. Festival planners may create focused social media strategies that advance cultural awareness, encourage community development, and improve the festival experience by being aware of these notions.

UGT and SIT have essential ramifications for social media and cultural events. Festival planners could use social media platforms to promote community development, create emotional ties via captivating graphics, and give educational material to meet cognitive demands. Social media posts may strengthen social identification and affinity by highlighting cultural heritage and customs. Campaigns using user-generated material may further motivate participants to share their stories, strengthening their sense of community, belonging and social identity. Festival planners may use this information to create engaging social media content that appeals to guests.

## **METHOD**

The study adopted the descriptive survey research technique for its appropriateness in investigating individuals' perspectives and opinions (Asemah et al., 2017). The research population comprised all young individuals in Osun State, Nigeria, aged 18-35, who were considered social media users. According to National Population Estimates, based on the population census conducted in 2006 by the National Population Commission, the total number of people in Osun State as of 2016 was 4,705,589. Hence, the researcher relied on these estimates from the National Bureau of Statistics



(2016). Using the Survey Monkey calculator at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the sample size was determined to be 385.

**Calculate your sample size**

Population Size ⓘ 4,705,589

Confidence Level (%) ⓘ 95

Margin of Error (%) ⓘ 5

**Sample size**

**385**

Doing market research? SurveyMonkey Audience gets you the right survey respondents fast and easy and helps you target them by demographics, consumer behavior, geography, or even designated marketing area.

The researcher used a multi-stage sampling procedure to choose the participants. In the first phase, purposive sampling was applied to determine that individuals classified as social media users (between 18 and 35) were chosen as participants for this research. In the second step, a simple random selection method was employed, ensuring that every young person in Osun State had an equal opportunity to be chosen for the final sample. In the last step, convenience sampling was used, where the first group of respondents who completed the web-based questionnaire were selected to achieve a final sample size of 300.

The data was gathered using an online Likert scale questionnaire, where participants were asked to rate their comments on a scale from 1 (indicating strong disagreement) to 5 (indicating strong agreement). Before distributing the questionnaire, the instrument underwent a content validity assessment by three specialists in research and media studies. Descriptive statistics such as percentage (%), mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), and standard deviation (SD) were used to analyse the results. The mean and standard deviation are regarded as the most robust and frequently used descriptive statistical measures in social science research (Asemah et al., 2017).

## RESULT

### Level of Portrayal of the Osun Osogbo Festival on Social Media.

Table 1: Have you attended the Osun Osogbo festival before seeing it on social media?

	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	361	93.8
No	24	6.2
Total	385	100



Table 1 shows that most respondents (93.8%) have attended the Osun Osogbo festival, while 6.2(%) have not. This implies widespread familiarity with the Osun Osogbo festival among respondents.

Table 2: Did social media influence your interest in attending the festival

	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	233	86.5
No	152	39.5
Total	385	100

Table 2 shows that social media influenced most respondents (86.7%) to attend the festival, while (13.5%) said social media did not influence them to attend. This implies that social media-driven interest can lead to higher attendance and participation in the Osun Oshogbo festival.

### Effectiveness of Social Media Platforms

Table 3. The social media platform that has most effectively engaged respondents with the festival

	Frequency	Percentages
<i>Facebook</i>	112	29.1
<i>Instagram</i>	91	23.6
X	75	19.5
<i>YouTube</i>	52	13.5
<i>TikTok</i>	32	8.4
Others	23	5.9
Total	385	100

Table 2 shows that the social media platform that has most effectively engaged respondents with the Osun Osogbo festival is *Facebook*, with 112 respondents (29.1%). *Instagram* follows closely with 91 respondents (23.6%), while X engages 75 respondents (19.5%). *YouTube* and *TikTok* have lower engagement rates, with 52 respondents (13.5%) and 32 respondents (8.4%) respectively. Additionally, 23 respondents (5.9%) mention other platforms as the most effective. In total, 385 respondents participated in this survey. This implies that given the high social media engagement rates of the Osun Osogbo Festival, festival organisers should prioritise *Facebook* and *Instagram* for promotional content.

Table 4: Influential social media content types

	Frequency	Percentages
Images	120	31.2
Videos	103	26.7
Text-only posts	109	28.3
Interactive content	53	13.8
Total	385	100





Table 4 shows that the most influential content types were Text-only posts (28.3%) and images (31.2%); videos (26.7%) were also compelling, indicating the importance of visual storytelling, Interactive content (13.8%) had a relatively lower influence, but still contributed to the overall impact. This finding implies that engaging images and videos can enhance social media campaigns. While less influential in the findings, interactive content remains valuable for audience engagement.

**Perceptions of social media users on the cultural significance and relevance of the Osun Osogbo festival.**

Table 5: The importance of the Osun Osogbo festival to Nigerian culture

	Frequency	Percentages
Very important	282	73.2
Somewhat important	65	16.9
Not very important	30	7.8
Not at all important	8	2.1
Total	385	100

Table 5 shows that 73.2% of respondents deemed the festival "very important" to Nigerian culture, while 16.9% considered it "somewhat important". In contrast, only 7.8% viewed it as "not very important", and 2.1% believed it was "not at all important". This finding implies the festival's profound cultural relevance, with an overwhelming majority recognising its significance.

Table 6. Values or themes associated with the Osun Osogbo festival

	Frequency	Percentages
Cultural/Traditional heritage	209	54.3
Spiritual significance	105	27.3
Community unity	71	18.4
Total	385	100

Table 6 shows responses to the values or themes associated with the Osun Osogbo festival. Most respondents (54.3%) link the festival to cultural or traditional heritage. This indicates a strong connection between the festival and the preservation of cultural traditions. Spiritual significance is also a prominent theme, with 27.3% of respondents associating the festival with spiritual beliefs and practices. Additionally, 18.4% of respondents view the festival as a symbol of community unity.

**DISCUSSION**

The study revealed that social media significantly influences interest in attending the Osun Osogbo Festival, with 86.5% of respondents attributing their interest to social media platforms. This aligns



with findings from Oklobdžija (2015), which highlight the role of social media in modern marketing and cultural event promotion by providing a platform for audience engagement and feedback. Similarly, Orobator and Aigubarueghian (2020) noted that social media is pivotal in reviving declining cultural events like the Benin Igue Festival, suggesting its transformative power in sustaining cultural practices.

The finding that 93.8% of respondents had attended the festival before further underscores the potential of social media to enhance cultural participation. This supports the argument by Zaw (2018) that social media facilitates cultural connections and interaction. However, unlike Zaw's focus on intercultural adaptation, this study emphasizes social media's role in reinforcing local cultural identity and traditions, particularly among Nigerian youth. The study also extends existing knowledge by demonstrating that social media can serve as a bridge for reconnecting younger generations with their cultural heritage, a concern highlighted by Onyeakachukwu (2019).

The findings revealed that Facebook (29.1%) and Instagram (23.6%) were the most effective platforms for engaging respondents, with visual content like images and videos being particularly impactful. These results align with Manovich's (2003) observation that social media, as a computer-based multimedia format, excels in distributing content across diverse audiences. Furthermore, they corroborate Rabia's (2015) assertion that younger generations use social media to share cultural expressions and gain autonomy.

However, the preference for Facebook and Instagram diverges slightly from findings by Asemah et al. (2022), who noted the rising popularity of platforms like YouTube and TikTok among Nigerian youth. This discrepancy may be attributed to the festival's demographic focus or the type of content shared, suggesting that different platforms resonate with varying audiences. The study also expands on Pontianus et al.'s (2021) work by emphasizing the strategic importance of visual storytelling and influencer partnerships for festival promotion.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings align with the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), as respondents actively sought out engaging visual content to satisfy their informational and emotional needs. Additionally, the findings resonate with the Social Identity Theory (SIT), as engagement with festival-related content reinforced respondents' sense of belonging to a cultural and social group.

The study found that 73.2% of respondents consider the Osun Osogbo Festival "very important" to Nigerian culture, associating it with cultural heritage (54.3%), spiritual significance (27.3%), and community unity (18.4%). These findings are consistent with the observations of Onyeakachukwu (2019) and Zaw (2018), who highlighted the role of social media in promoting cultural awareness and fostering appreciation for cultural heritage.

However, the study also sheds new light on the festival's perceived importance by directly linking social media campaigns to the preservation of traditional values and community cohesion. While previous studies like those by Kayode, Suleimanu, and Oyedepo (2018) focused on the general influence of social media on Nigerian cultural values, this study provides specific insights into how targeted social media campaigns can enhance the cultural relevance of specific festivals.



The strong association with spiritual significance suggests that social media campaigns should emphasize the festival's religious and traditional roots to deepen its appeal. This finding aligns with the argument by Harwood (2020) that group identity and shared values can be reinforced through targeted messaging. Additionally, the emphasis on community unity extends the work of Asemah et al. (2014), which advocates for using social media to promote positive core values, such as communal harmony.

## **CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of this study is that social media significantly impacts the promotion of the Osun Osogbo Festival among Nigerian youth. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram have proven to be powerful tools for enhancing participation, engagement, and cultural awareness. The study shows that social media effectively connects youth with the festival's cultural, spiritual, and communal values, demonstrating its potential to preserve and promote cultural heritage. This conclusion is drawn from findings showing that the majority of respondents were influenced by social media to attend the festival, engage with its content, and appreciate its significance. Social media not only fosters cultural pride but also strengthens community bonds and supports the festival's sustainability. To maximize the benefits of social media, the study recommends that festival organisers: Prioritise social media marketing, collaborate with influencers and ambassadors, and create engaging and interactive content, address cultural preservation

### **Ethical clearance**

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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The study was not funded.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

### **Authors' Contributions.**

OLANREWAJU, Maranatha Morenike conceived the study, including the design, FAJOYE, Ayomide John joined her in collating the data, OLANREWAJU, Maranatha Morenike and ONIGBINDE, Christianah Opeyemi analysed and interpreted the data, while OLANREWAJU, Maranatha Morenike wrote the initial manuscript. SANUSI, Bernice Oluwalanumi edited the manuscript. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

### **Availability of data and materials.**

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.



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