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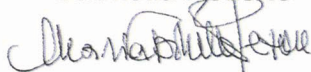
**Cultural Heritage in Nigeria**  
**A Study on Preservation and Potential**  
**for Tourism Development**

S.S.D.: CEAR-11/A (ex ICAR/18)

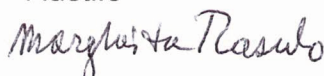
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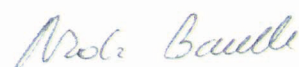
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## ABSTRACT

The study investigates the preservation and tourism potential of Nigeria's tangible cultural heritage with aim to identify pathways towards sustainable development. Through an interdisciplinary approach, the study explored the history, challenges and prospects of cultural heritage preservation and tourism promotion in Nigeria. As a nation blessed with such diverse cultural heritage, it is unimaginable that Nigeria is still at a crossroad of opportunities and challenges in leveraging her cultural assets for tourism development as challenges such as infrastructural decay, poor road network, and management deficiencies still exist at most Nigeria's heritage sites. Consequently, this research embarked on an in-depth exploration of five prominent heritage sites in Nigeria including, National Museum Benin city, Oşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, Sukur Cultural Landscape, Yankari Game Reserve and Ogbunike Cave, to ensure a multi-case study survey. Adopting a qualitative method design data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and open-ended questionnaire surveys from 605 participants including heritage site managers, community leaders, local residents and tourists. The collected data was thematically analyzed and coded on NVivo 15 software for qualitative insights. It was discovered that while Nigeria's cultural heritage assets face challenges on preservation, its utilization for tourism is untapped and holds immense potential thus transformation is possible with strategic investment, heritage policy reforms and professional capacity building through the collaborative efforts of stakeholders. It was concluded that if properly managed and promoted, cultural heritage could become a lucrative asset for Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Cultural heritage, Tourism development, Nigeria, Preservation, Site management.*



## **Declaration**

This is to certify that the doctoral thesis titled “**Cultural Heritage in Nigeria: a Study on Preservation and Potential for Tourism Development**” is an original research work carried out by **Mba, Okechukwu Joshua** under the supervision of **Professor Maria Gabriella Pezone** and **Associate Professor Margherita Rasulo** in partial fulfilment of the requirements to the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History and Transmission of Cultural Heritage at the Università Degli Studi Della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli, Italy.



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## ACRONYMS

ADH	Authorized Heritage Discourse
BCE	Before Common Era
BMI	Benin Museum Interview
CBT	Community-Based Tourism
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
CE	Common Era
CRM	Cultural Resource Management
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FGDO	Focus Group Discussion, Osogbo
FGDS	Focus Group Discussion, Sukur
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
HMT	Heritage Management Theory
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IDIs	In-Depth Interviews
NCMM	National Commission for Museums and Monuments
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPC	National Policy on Culture
OCI	Ogbunike Cave Interview
OSGI	Ọ̀sun-Osogbo Grove Interview
PO	Participant Observation
QS	Questionnaire Survey
SCLI	Sukur Cultural Landscape Interview
SLF	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
TALC	Tourism Area Life Cycle
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
VFR	Visits to Friends and Relatives
YGRI	Yankari Game Reserve Interviews



## **01 - The history of Nigeria and study sites**

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## 1.1 Introduction

Nigeria is a country situated on the west coast of Africa and commonly known as the most populated African nation. Blessed with a rich and diversified cultural heritage, the country's history is as deep and diversified as its culture. From the 9<sup>th</sup> century Nok ancient arts to the 15<sup>th</sup> century Benin Bronze sculptures <sup>[1]</sup> <sup>[2]</sup>, Nigeria speaks through monuments and arts, telling oftentimes stories beyond the confines of textbooks and museums, but of one intermixed with many traditions, beliefs, and crafts. Each cultural artefact in Nigeria is a piece of the country's collective memory, connecting the present to the past. However, in our globalized world today, preserving and promoting especially tangible heritage comes with a lot of challenges [UNESCO]<sup>3</sup>. This is the case for Nigeria, where many heritage sites face obscurity, decay, and a lack of integration into tourism planning <sup>[4]</sup><sup>[5]</sup>.

Cultural heritage, in its essence refers to the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes inherited from past generations. It includes monuments, landscapes, traditions, folklore, languages, knowledge systems, artistic expressions, and spiritual practices [UNESCO]<sup>6</sup>. In Nigeria, this heritage is exceptionally diverse, shaped by centuries of interaction among over 371 ethnic groups with distinct worldviews and cosmologies. This diversity is evident in Nigeria's wealth of tangible heritage assets most notably, the Nok terracotta's, Ife bronzes, Benin ivory carvings, Sukur cultural landscape, Osogbo Grove, Idanre hill, Ikom Monolith among others. Today, the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) of Nigeria recognize 127 national monuments as the country's most prized tangible heritage assets, encompassing monuments, archaeological sites, and museums<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Shaw, T. (1981). The Nok Sculptures of Nigeria. *Scientific American*, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Fleming, S. (1979). Bronze-casting traditions reinforced Benin dynastic legitimacy p.48.

<sup>3</sup> States must adopt legal, scientific, and financial measures to safeguard heritage (UNESCO, 1972, Article 5).

<sup>4</sup> Adetola, B., Olagoke, O., & Ayeni, D. A. (2024). *Tourism Policies and Performance of Nigerian Heritage Sites*.

<sup>5</sup> Traditional festivals and sacred groves attract eco-tourists (Alabi, 1994, pp. 72–75).

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO. (2017). *Safeguarding documentary heritage: A guide to best practices*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000112676>.

<sup>7</sup> NCMM (2025). National Commission for Museums and Monuments. <https://museum.ng/>.

The relevance of cultural heritage to a society cannot be overstated. It offers a sense of identity and belonging, encourages unity in diversity for a multicultural country like Nigeria, and functions as a storehouse of indigenous knowledge and value systems<sup>8</sup>.

Heritage, when properly preserved, not only reflects who a people are but serves as a compass that navigates their future. In societies such as Nigeria where colonialism violated cultural ways of life, preservation of heritage is important for cultural identity, rediscovery of her indigenous roots, and development. But despite its rich diversity and worth, cultural heritage in Nigeria is perpetually marred by challenges. Most tangible heritage sites are degrading because of neglect, urban encroachment, and environmental deterioration<sup>9</sup>. Additionally, intangible heritage forms, including indigenous languages and customary religious practices, are disappearing as the older generation passes away, primarily because of modernization, western education, and religious shifts<sup>10</sup>.

The younger generation, especially are becoming ever more disengaged from their cultural heritage, lured by foreign ideals spread through globalization and news media. As a result, the tourism development potential of Nigeria's cultural heritage is largely untapped<sup>11</sup>. African countries like Morocco, Egypt, South Africa and Ghana have integrated cultural tourism into their national economies, reaping benefits through job creation, foreign exchange, and international cultural diplomacy. In contrast, meanwhile, Nigeria's tourism industry only contributes a fraction to the GDP, while cultural heritage sites are usually poorly conserved, not fully documented, and inaccessibility to both local and foreign tourists<sup>12</sup>.

Although Nigeria is home to some UNESCO World Heritage Sites, such as the Sukur Cultural Landscape in Adamawa and the Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove in Òṣun State, both of which hold great global and local significance, this global designation does not equate to any meaningful cultural heritage and tourist appeal. That being said, the failure of heritage tourism in Nigeria is not a case of lack, but of leadership, policy, and preservation. Weak institutional structures, decentralization of responsibilities within agencies, and poor community involvement deter efficient cultural heritage management<sup>13</sup>. The National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), the government body tasked with the management of heritage, faces severe funding and manpower limitations. As cultural policies often exist only on paper, with implementation plagued by corruption, political interference, and a lack of awareness of the stakeholders involved.

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<sup>8</sup> Indigenous governance structures remain vital for national unity (Shokpeka, 2009, p. 187).

<sup>9</sup> Ogbu, S. U. (2018). Constructing the Role of Storytelling in The Preservation of Indigenous Nigerian Traditions. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 5(1).

<sup>10</sup> Multilingual education policies are urgent for preserving endangered languages (Ugwu, 2020, p. 83)

<sup>11</sup> Adeyemo et al. (2017) advocate for heritage tourism as an economic catalyst, proposing community-based initiatives at sites like Sukur Cultural Landscape to alleviate recession.

<sup>12</sup> Bankole, A. O. (2013). critiques Nigeria's underutilization of cultural assets, citing poor infrastructure and legislative gaps as barriers to leveraging heritage for tourism.

<sup>13</sup> Shyllon, F. (1996). exposes critical flaws in Nigeria's heritage legislation, noting that the 1979 Act lacks enforcement mechanisms and fails to curb illicit trafficking.

Therefore, the backdrop of this discourse necessitates an empirical and critical investigation into Nigeria's heritage preservation systems, especially as they intersect with tourism development. The importance of this study lies in its dual focus to assess the preservation status of select Nigerian heritage sites and to explore their tourism potential. In doing so, this study provides insight that can contribute to Nigeria's national development planning, policy formulation, and cultural heritage revitalization efforts. This research becomes even more urgent in the face of global climate change, cultural homogenization, and the ongoing digital transformation. Without a deliberate and strategic approach to preserving heritage, Nigeria risks losing not just artifacts and traditions, but the spiritual and historical consciousness that binds her people together. Hence, this study seeks to journey into Nigeria's cultural past and present, assessing how heritage sites are being preserved, the gaps that exist in management frameworks, and the untapped tourism potentials that lies within it. Through in-depth analysis, field case studies, and stakeholder engagement, the research sought to advance the discourse on cultural heritage as both a moral responsibility and a national resource.

### **1.1.2 The Historical Development of Cultural Heritage in Nigeria**

Nigeria is in West Africa, with a landmass that covers 923,769 square kilometers and a population of 237 million people which represents 2.87% of the total world population<sup>14</sup>. Cultural heritage in Nigeria is as old as the civilization of its people and has been shaped by multiple ethnic groups and tribes. Thus, Nigeria is home to 371 ethnic groups speaking over 500 languages and a total of 1,150 dialects across these ethnic group, which epitomizes Nigeria as a multicultural and multilingual society, the most in Africa<sup>15</sup>. The Nigerian ethnic groups are categorized into three (3) major groups, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo as well as 369 other minority ethnic groups such as, Edo, Ibibio, Tiv, Nupe, Ijaw, Urhobo, Igala, Efik, Isekiri, Annang, Ogoni, Nkum, Esan, Bassa, Idoma, Gwari and Jukun among others, however the aforementioned 3 major ethnic groups makes up over 51% of the country's population<sup>16</sup>. Nigeria's multiethnic composition over the years has given rise to distinct regional identities and social structures, which are reflected in the following regional profiles. In the northern region of Nigeria lies the Hausa-Fulani tribe who were historically influential in trans-Saharan trade and are predominantly Muslim. The Hausa-Fulani are known for their elaborate emirate empire system of leadership and hierarchical social structure. In the western region of Nigeria is dominated by the Yoruba tribe who are renowned for their vibrant urban centers, spiritual inclination to the rich pantheon of Orisha deities. Globally the Yoruba tribe possess influential artistic traditions in sculpture, textiles, and music. In the Eastern region of Nigeria lies the Igbo

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<sup>14</sup> Nigeria remains Africa's most populous nation (Worldometer, 2025) .

<sup>15</sup> Ojonugwa, S. J., & Sule, S. E. (2019). Multilingualism and national development.

<sup>16</sup> Mustapha, A. R. (2003). Ethnic Minority Groups in Nigeria: Current Situation and Major Problems. p. 3.

tribe with a republican and enterprising spirit and have a strong tradition of decentralized leadership system. The Igbo tribe has a deep cultural emphasis on achievement and community development.

These three above mentioned major ethnic tribes, the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the West, and the Igbo in the East represent the predominant tribes in their respective regions. While numerous minority groups also exist within these regions, these three have historically shaped Nigeria's political, cultural, and social landscape. However, in the Southern part of Nigeria exist many minority ethnic tribes ranging from the riverine Ijaw tribe, Ibibio and Efik tribe, to the ancient Edo tribe of the Benin Kingdom, the Ibibio tribe and the Urhobo tribe of the southern region all contribute their own indispensable cultural values and traditions that ensure Nigeria's heritage landscape remains diverse and interconnected rather than simple or uniform. This demographic and linguistic diversity in Nigeria has several key implications within her cultural heritage setup. First, the multilingual nature of the Nigerian society means that a large portion of the country's cultural heritage is intangible, which is embodied in speech and oral performance rather than in written records. This can be seen the various tribes rich oral epics and poetry, such as the Hausa *rokon waka*, the Yoruba *oriki* (praise poetry), the Fulani cattle-rearing traditional songs, the Igbo *mbari festival art*, the Efik *ekpe masquerade songs*, and other diverse ethnic group oral traditions, drumming patterns and indigenous knowledge systems encoded in proverbs, idioms, folktales, and traditional songs distinctive to each community. Secondly, the demographic diversity implies that each region in Nigeria offers a vast heterogeneity of tangible heritage or material expression, ranging from the different architectural styles of the Hausa tribe, such as woven-ribbed vaults and ornate plasterwork in the Northern Nigeria, to the Yoruba veranda-filled courtyard houses in the Western Nigeria, and the Igbo communal meeting sheds called (*Obi*) in the Eastern Nigeria. This extends to a rich array of arts and crafts, including Yoruba Aso Oke weaving, Benin bronze casting sculptures, Igbo Uri body art, and Kanuri leatherwork. The varied art and archaeological records also prove that complex cultural production within the modern-day Nigeria territory goes back thousands of years. Outstanding examples include Nok terracotta's in southern Kaduna, which date to the first millennium BCE, proving early large-scale ceramic and figurative and complex social settlements. In addition, the Ife and Benin sculptural traditions and royal arts, including naturalistic terracotta and bronze heads of the Oyo empire and ancient Benin kingdom, bear witness to advanced metallurgical cultures of the first millennium CE and onwards. Also, the Igbo-Ukwu bronze and copper works dated approximately around the 9th-10th centuries CE, provide evidence of an indigenous tradition of high-level metalworking and involvement in long-distance exchange networks. These cultural artistic expressions are not only aesthetic achievements in the Nigerian society but the represent primary evidence for past socio-cultural organization, ancient craft specialization, and pre-colonial indigenous artistic tradition that make their preservation, contextual study, and community-centric display essential to understanding Nigeria's cultural past.

**Figure 1:** *Material Expressions Representing Nigeria’s Cultural Past: Nok Terracotta, Benin Bronze (Queen Idia), Ife Brass Sculpture.*



*NOK Culture Terracotta head, (Kanuri Nigeria, Iron Age). Source: Cleveland Museum of Art.*



*Benin Bronze Head of Queen Idia, 16<sup>th</sup> century CE, Edo people, Nigeria*  
**Photo Credit:** *British Museum.*



*Brass Head of a ruler, Ife 14<sup>th</sup> century CE, Yoruba, Nigeria*  
**Photo Credit:** *British*

In spite of this remarkable diverse cultural wealth, the preservation of Nigerian cultural heritage has been arguably threatened over the years by human activities, institutional neglect and poor management amongst other factors<sup>17</sup>. In addition, many artifacts and collections from Nigeria’s significant cultural assets are currently displayed in museums and galleries around the world, often detached from their original contexts. Preservation of cultural heritage materials and heritage sites therefore becomes essential both for safeguarding them as well as transmitting the past ways of life that will continue to inform the contemporary Nigerian society. An understanding of the preservation of Nigeria’s cultural heritage can best be examined within three (3) major historical periods which includes the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods of evolution as discussed in the next section.

### **1.1.2.1 Pre-Colonial Evolution of Nigeria’s Cultural Heritage**

Before the advent of European colonialism, the geographical area now known as Nigeria was a vibrant multicultural society of diverse and sophisticated cultures, whose heritage evolved through everyday processes rather than as static cultural monuments and sacred places. Nevertheless, the development of Nigeria’s cultural heritage spans over 3,500 years old, with the ancient NOK culture, a civilization that existed between (500 BCE–200 CE) representing

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<sup>17</sup> Onyima, B. N. (2016). Nigerian cultural heritage: preservation, challenges and prospects. p.273–292.

the earliest known organized society in Nigeria and providing the country's first evidence of complex human settlement. The Nok people of Nigeria flourished in the iron age and were smelters of iron who developed advanced agricultural tools however they were mostly known for their artworks called *terracotta sculptures* which depicted human and animal figures providing some of the earliest evidence of human artistic expression in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Nok civilization also crafted other artifacts such as iron tools, stone axes and stone ornaments<sup>18</sup>. As time progressed, other civilizations such as the Igbo Ukwu kingdom (800–900 CE), Borno Empire (700–1500 CE), Oyo Empire (1400–1835 CE), the Songhai Empire (1400–1591 CE) and the Benin Kingdom (1200–1900CE) all emerged, each civilization contributing significantly to the development of Nigeria's cultural heritage<sup>19</sup>. Fundamentally, Cultural Heritage in Nigeria manifests itself in different ways, first in tangible form such as, monuments, artifacts, archaeological sites, cultural landscapes, museums, historic towns, artistic traditions as well as in intangible form such as traditional festivals(celebrations), oral traditions (folktales, proverbs and myths), performing arts (music and dance), rituals, languages, traditional knowledge practices (astronomical and herbal knowledge). While both tangible and intangible forms of heritage are vital to understanding Nigeria's cultural identity, this study focuses on tangible heritage whose material expressions physically anchor the collective memory and historical continuity of the country. The focus on tangible forms of heritage in this research is relevant as tangible heritage provides visible and verifiable traces of the past and present of a people's cultural existence. Physical heritage resources such as cultural landscapes, buildings, sacred groves, monuments, archaeological remains, and museum collections all represent material embodiments of history and identity of a society. Therefore, this study's emphasis on tangible heritage offers a tractable and methodologically robust starting point in understanding Nigeria's tangible cultural heritage through a multi case study investigation on examining conservation practices and site management of diverse heritage sites while providing a solid base from which to integrate intangible dimensions in future research.

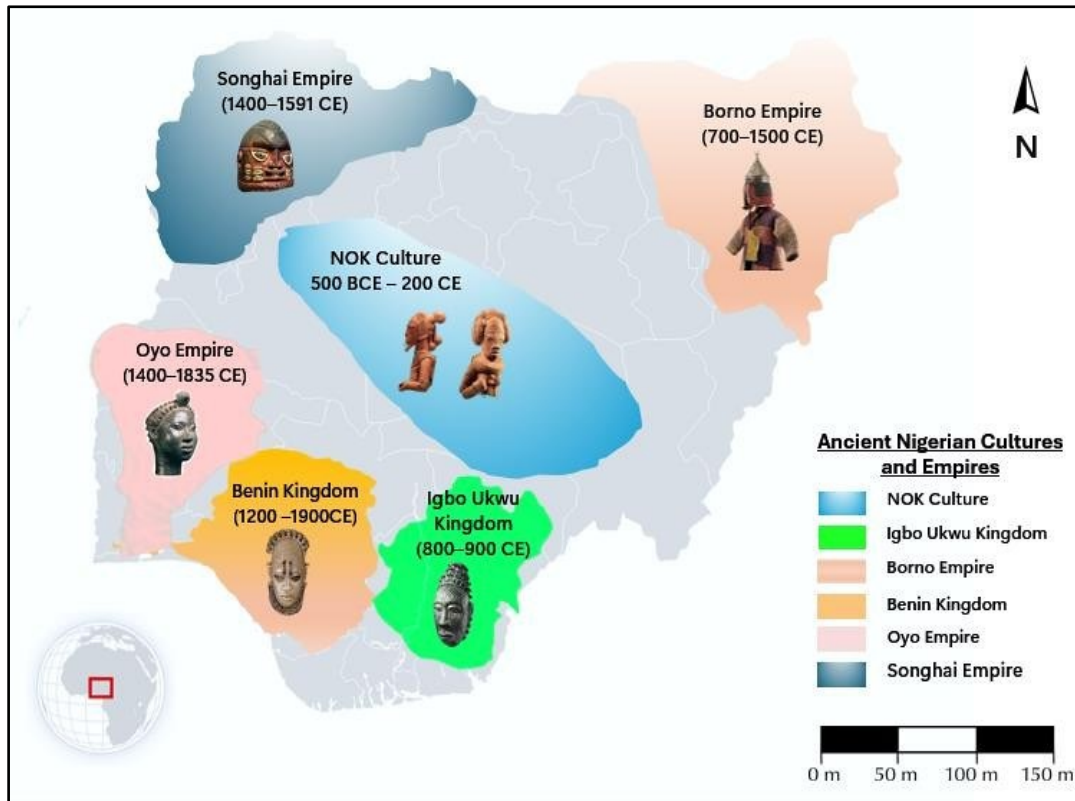
As shown above in *map 1* above, Nigeria's cultural heritage is a product of complex interplay of various indigenous civilizations, who established empires in the past at various eras in the country's history such as, the Yoruba kingdoms with the Ife and Oyo Empires, the Hausa empires through the Nok Culture, Borno and Songhai Empires, the stand alone Benin kingdom and the Igbo acephalous structures of the Igbo Ukwu kingdom as well as later influences from transatlantic trade, colonial rule, and post-colonial nation-building.

Among these past cultural civilizations, the Benin Kingdom 1200CE–1900CE stood out as a highly organized polity who establish advanced governance structure and was renowned for

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<sup>18</sup> Terra-cotta and bronze works exemplify early artistic sophistication (Njoku & Okafor, 2019, p. 2).

<sup>19</sup> Ogundiran, A. O. (2005). *Four Millennia of Cultural History in Nigeria* (ca. 2000 B.C.–A.D. 1900).



**Map 1:** Evolution of Nigeria's Cultural Heritage Across Diverse Ancient Civilizations Between 500 BCE – 1900CE. **Source:** Researchers' Construct from the History of Nigeria, 2025.

their artistry, and military strength. The famous Benin Bronzes, brass and ivory sculptures produced by skilled artisans of the Benin Kingdom, were a reflection of the advanced craftsmanship of the Benin people in artwork and antiquities<sup>20</sup>.

These artifacts, alongside the architectural marvels like the Benin City walls, continue to be central to Nigeria's cultural identity. Further east, the Igbo-Ukwu Kingdom which existed between (800–900 CE) in what is today Anambra State and some Ibo speaking region developed exquisite bronze, copper, and glass arts ranging from elaborate ritual vessels to finely wrought regalia, that attest to a sophisticated indigenous metalworking tradition and complex social organization among the Igbo people<sup>21</sup>. In the southwestern region, the Yoruba tribe developed a rich tradition of visual arts, having established the Oyo Empire (1400–1835 CE), one of the most powerful empires in West Africa. The empire was renowned for its military prowess and its rich cultural artistry, including bronze casting and the creation of remarkable sculptures and terracotta works used in religious and royal ceremonies. These artifacts are seen as a link between the ancient and contemporary cultures of the Yoruba people<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Bondarenko, D. M. (2020). The Benin Kingdom (13th–19th Centuries): Metacommunity as Sociopolitical System (pp. 337).

<sup>21</sup> McIntosh, S. K. (2022). Igbo-Ukwu at 50: A Symposium on Recent Archaeological Research and Analysis. p.369.

<sup>22</sup> Agiri, B. A. (1975). Re-examines Oyo's foundational narratives, emphasizing indigenous urban development and ironworking.

In the Northern part of Nigeria, lies the Hausa city-states, who established many empires including the Borno Empire (700–1500 CE), and the Songhai Empire (1400–1591 CE) who were not only known horsemen, nomadic in nature established strong trade networks and also known to possess remarkable cultural heritage, including their distinctive architecture and craftsmanship in textiles, leatherwork, and metalwork. Kano is one of the oldest and most important Hausa cities. It became known for its city walls, royal palaces, and dye pits that shape regional identity. The evolution of Nigerian cultural heritage therefore reflects the dynamic nature of its people, shaped by the influences of migration, trade, and cultural exchange with neighboring regions. The trans-Saharan trade routes brought Islam to the northern parts of Nigeria as early as the 11th century (1000 CE), profoundly shaping the cultural and religious practices of the Hausa and Fulani people<sup>[23]</sup> <sup>[24]</sup>. In the same way, the spread of Christianity by European missionaries in the colonial period left an indelible stamp on the south and the center, influencing their local traditions, traditional practices, and arts<sup>25</sup>.

### **1.1.2.2 Colonial and Post-Colonial Influences on Nigeria's Cultural Heritage**

The impact of European colonialism, though adding to some developments, however represented a significant disruption in the evolution of Nigeria's cultural heritage. Under colonial times, numerous artifacts were extracted from Nigeria and transported to museums outside the country, like the British Museum in London. The pillage of Nigeria's cultural heritage during this time continues to have its effects, as cultural loss has led to a lost sense of identity and national pride for most Nigerians. These treasures that have been stolen symbolize not only the loss of history but also the longstanding breaking of the cultural continuity of the Nigerian people. The above challenges presented by colonialism and later the take-up of alien values and systems, witnessed Nigeria's cultural heritage lose its previously enjoyed vibrancy and pride. The post-independent era, however, witnessed increased efforts at the conservation of traditional cultural expression, especially in art, music, and dance. Government supported institutions such as the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) were put in place to preserve and manage Nigeria's cultural heritage.

Nigeria has therefore experienced a concerted endeavor to restore and commemorate its cultural heritage as a basis of national identity and the advancement of society. This pledge was best expressed by Otunba Biodun Ajiboye, the director-general of the National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), who asserted that "No nation can develop without first recognizing and institutionalizing its cultural elements"<sup>26</sup>. A sentiment that resonates strongly with the establishment of the Nigerian Academy for Cultural Studies (NACUS).

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<sup>23</sup> Singleton, B. D. (2004). Provides a comprehensive bibliography focusing on the Songhai Empire, covering rulers, scholars, and invaders.

<sup>24</sup> Mohammed, K. (2010). Man, and environment in Borno: A Historical Account.

<sup>25</sup> Nwadiakor, K. (2014). examines the role of Christian missionaries in Southern Nigeria between 1841 and 1960, discussing their impact on civilization and implications for modern Christians.

<sup>26</sup> Otunba Biodun Ajiboye (2025), head of Nigeria's National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO) at The Nations Report, asserts that reviving cultural heritage is central to national identity and societal progress.

Nonetheless, Nigeria's cultural development is still greatly hampered by issues such as poor funding, ineffective preservation, and minimal involvement from the community. Nigeria has a rich and varied heritage and, and a myriad of influences, peoples, and traditions that contribute to the layers of cultural development and transformation. Starting from the ancient Nok civilization to the present varied ethnic groups, the rich Nigerian cultural heritage is a testimony to the multiple influences, crafts, and creative genius of the Nigerian people. Unfortunately, the challenges of safeguarding and promoting this heritage for the enjoyment of generations to come are still yet to be accomplished.

### **1.1.3 The management dimensions to the preservation of Nigeria's cultural heritage**

The conservation of Nigeria's cultural heritage entails maneuvering her vibrant interplay of cultural evolutions, multicultural traditions, and disturbed cultural wealth therefore calls for a multidimensional management strategy. This calls for resolution of historical legacies, current challenges and future sustainability. Over the year Nigeria's cultural heritage preservation and management have offered both tremendous opportunities and challenges, especially in the area of tourism development. However, institutional mismanagement and fragmented preservation strategies of tangible heritage marked by weak frameworks have gradually eroded preservation efforts as the opportunities it presents to boost the country's societal growth through tourism is still largely unutilized.

While heritage sites like the Sukur Cultural Landscape, Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and the ancient walls of Benin amongst other hold immense heritage value as tourist attractions, poor infrastructure, inadequate funding, and lack of community-centric planning have left these cultural assets underutilized or degraded<sup>27</sup>. Since the colonial era, the idea of conserving Nigerian cultural heritage has undergone substantial changes. For example, Nigerian cultural artifacts were routinely looted by colonial powers, especially the British, who took items of significant historical, artistic, and religious value to Europe. In addition to destroying Nigeria's material cultural assets, this looting left the Nigerian people with a fragmented cultural identity<sup>28</sup>.

To restore this distorted national identity and legacy, the Nigeria government establish the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) in 1979, marking the official start of efforts to preserve Nigeria's cultural legacy. This organization has devoted its efforts ever since to safeguarding the nation's intangible heritage, artifacts, and cultural sites<sup>29</sup>. Subsequently, in 1988 saw the establishment of the National Policy on Culture (NPC), a

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<sup>27</sup> Onyima, B. N. (2016). documents heritage endangerment from internal neglect.

<sup>28</sup> Folorunso, C. A., & Folorunso, O. F. (2024). Colonialism and Cultural Objects. Oxford University Press.

<sup>29</sup> Nomishan, T. S., & Sani, A. S. (2023). Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection and Nigeria's Heritage. Legislation. Santander Art and Culture Law Review. <https://doi.org/10.4467/2450050xsnr.23.032.18652>.

governmental cultural policy agency which aims to preserve the customs and cultures of Nigeria's numerous ethnic groups, has also been crucial in directing efforts toward cultural heritage preservation.

Regardless of these attempts, preservation of Nigeria's cultural heritage continues to experience challenges, most of which stem from colonial exploitation and the resultant neglect. There are policies in place, though not very explicit, but safeguarding these monuments has often been prioritized above employing tourism in promoting society's growth. In spite of Nigeria's advances in recording and safeguarding its cultural heritage with the establishment of the above-mentioned heritage management bodies like the NCMM and NPC, a lack of coordination among several stakeholders and management persons ensures that the management system is inefficient because of the poor application of preservation policies. Consequently, even though housing some of Africa's most cultural and historically significant landmarks, such as the Ogbunike Cave, UNESCO-listed Sukur Cultural Landscape and Òsun-Osoybo Grove, the absence of cohesive strategic frameworks leaves the potential of these sites as supposed engines of societal growth largely untapped.

These cultural sites, as much as they symbolize Nigeria's rich and developing heritage, is still underdeveloped resource in a country where tourism can otherwise spur societal development. Exacerbating these challenges, dilapidated roads, unreliable transportation networks, and inadequate tourist facilities, limit the access to most of the heritage sites, discouraging both domestic and foreign visitors. Even where interest exists, poor infrastructure undermines preservation efforts as many artifacts and heritage sites are at risk of deterioration due to a lack of modern conservation equipment. For instance, inadequate storage conditions in most Nigerian museums frequently worsen the deterioration of significant collections, perpetuating a cycle of neglect<sup>30</sup>. In this sense, the long-term viability of Nigeria's cultural sites will depend on the creation of cultural tourism strategies and unified policy execution.

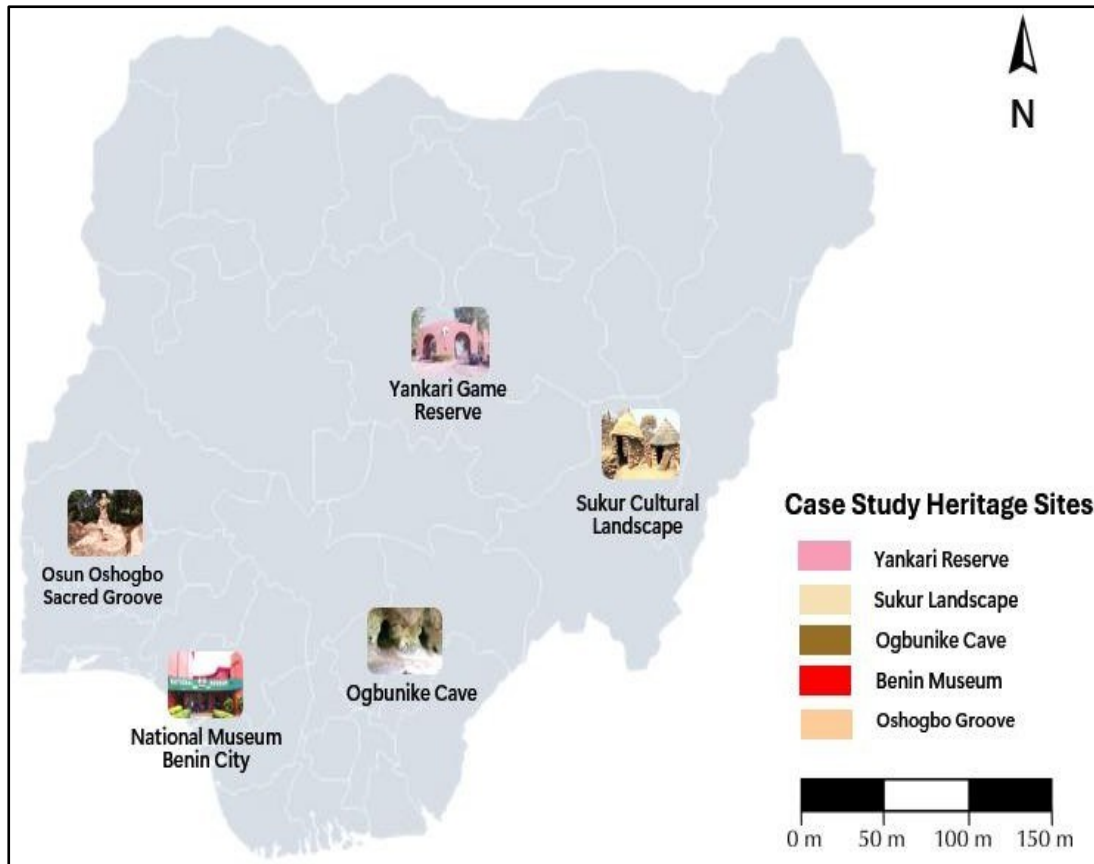
## **1.2 Background Information on the Case Study Heritage Sites**

This section provides an overview of the five (5) selected case study heritage sites. The research's case study locations have been carefully chosen to offer a comprehensive and representative picture of Nigeria's cultural landscape spanning, a museum, a sacred grove, a cultural landscape, a wildlife reserve, and geological formation (cave). A fair assessment of Nigeria's varied cultural, historical, and natural heritage is ensured by the dispersion of these selected heritage sites throughout the nation's various geographical regions. In addition to having great cultural significance, these sites have a lot of room to grow as a tourist destination. Thus, each case study will highlight the various heritage site's origins, outstanding features, management framework, and current status as a base for conservation, research, and sustainable

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<sup>30</sup> Onyima, B. N. (2016). Nigerian cultural heritage: preservation, challenges and prospects. *OGIRISI: A New Journal of African Studies*, 12(1), 273–292.

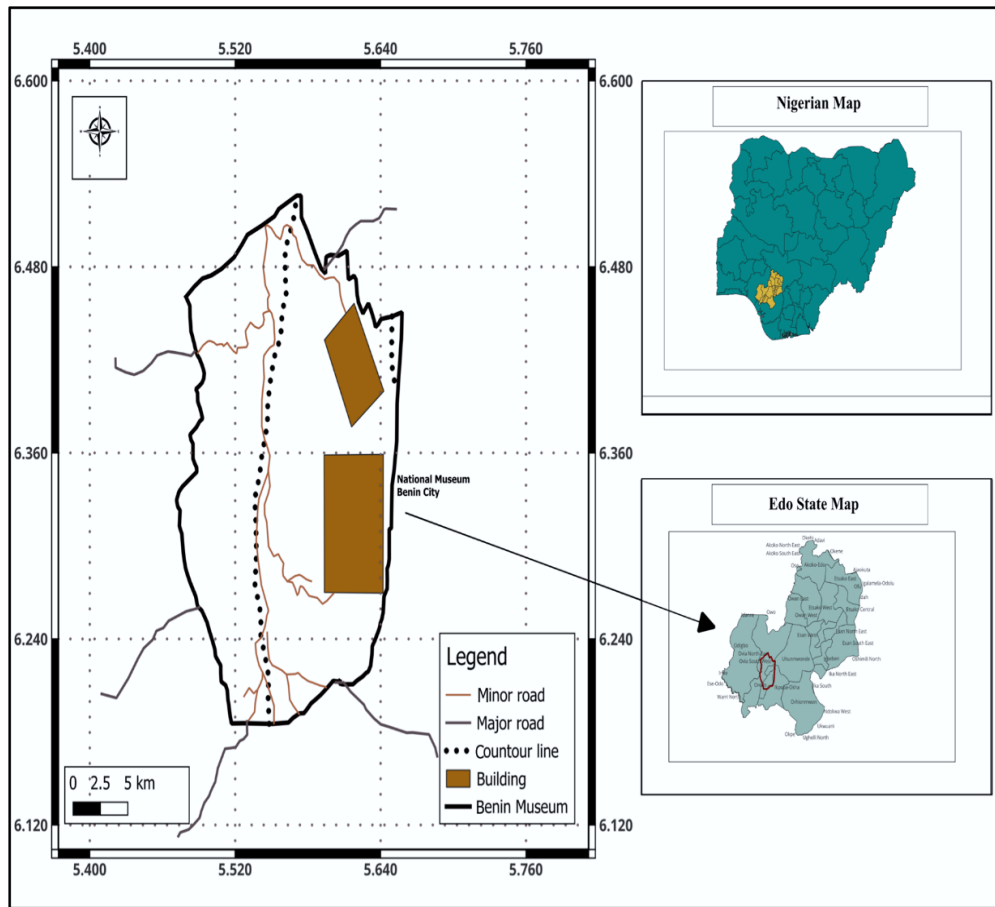
tourism.



**Map 2:** Map of Nigeria, Showcasing the Five (5) Case Study Heritage Sites. **Source:** Researchers' Construct from Heritage Sites Observation, 2025.

### 1.2.1 National Museum Benin City

The National Museum Benin City is situated in Edo State Nigeria ( $6.336^{\circ}$  N,  $5.625^{\circ}$ E), located on King's Square, the museum neighbors the palace of the Oba of Benin the direct descendant of the kings who once ruled the ancient Benin kingdom in Nigeria. Established in 1973 under the supervision of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), the National Museum Benin City serves as a premier repository for artifacts from the historic Great Benin Kingdom and wider southern Nigerian cultures. Its catalogue includes bronze plaques and sculptures, ivory carvings, metalworking, and terracotta arts that chart the political, spiritual, and artistic achievements of the ancient Edo people of Nigeria. The importance of the museum is beyond its collection of artifacts as it plays a vital role in preserving the history of the Benin Kingdom, once a major empire in West Africa, and was known for its highly organized political system and refined artistry. The Benin Kingdom flourished between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the Oba (king) serving as the supreme authority.



**Map 3:** *Spatial depiction of the core area of the National Museum Benin City, Nigeria.*

Here at the ancient kingdom, art was deeply intertwined with governance as bronze plaques and sculptures were commissioned to depict historical events, royal lineage, and religious practices. However, this rich heritage suffered a severe blow during the British expedition of 1897, when colonial forces looted thousands of Benin Bronzes and other cultural treasures, many of these looted cultural artifacts were exported to European museums such as the British Museum and the Ethnological Museum of Berlin amongst others<sup>31</sup>. Today, the National Museum Benin City plays a critical role in reclaiming and preserving the cultural identity of the Benin and Nigerian people. And serves as an institution for educating Nigerians and

<sup>31</sup> Klemm and Zucker (2020), *The 1897 British Punitive Expedition*, details how the theft of Benin Bronzes was carried out by colonial forces at the ancient Benin kingdom.



**Figure 2:** *External view and entrance to the National Museum Benin City, Nigeria.*  
**Source:** *Author.*

international visitors about the historical significance of the ancient Benin kingdom and its contributions to Nigeria cultural civilization.

At the National Museum Benin City today are three (3) purposefully arranged exhibition halls that showcases Benin and Nigeria’s cultural history. The ground-floor called the “*Oba Akenzua Gallery*” focuses on displaying Benin Kingdom’s royal past with highlights such as the 16th-century Queen Idia ivory head, Ida War weapons, bronze plaques, and other bronze sculptures. The first floor of the museum called the “*Regional Ethnographic Gallery*” presents the material cultures of neighboring ethnic groups such as (Delta, Igbo, Ibibio and others) through terracotta artworks, pottery, traditional textiles and masks organized from different ethnic groups to showcase Nigeria’s diversity. The third exhibition hall at the top floor of the museum called “*Unity Gallery*” emphasizes national cohesion with ancient Nok terracotta’s, cross-cultural crafts from Hausa leatherwork, Yoruba carvings and Kanuri metalwork to deliberately showcase the country’s shared heritage. Beyond the exhibition galleries, the museum oversees research and conservation laboratories tasked with preventive maintenance and restoration of metal, wood, and ceramic objects.

Despite the challenges the museum faces, such as funding and dated facilities, the issues are consistent with challenges across Nigeria's museum industry. Outdated shelving, lighting, and conservation efforts, as well as insufficient visitor amenities, all point to the maintenance issues on several fronts. These issues suffer the museum's ability to showcase and protect the cultural heritage and assets and highlight the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria. Such issues are part of the ongoing and public heritage debates on the "museums as monuments." Ezenagu, 2023<sup>32</sup>.

Personal observations during the researcher's fieldwork at Museum Benin City, highlighted the museum's information gap with the general public. The local community's lack of interest in the museum, and their lack of knowledge about their own history, demonstrated during the questionnaire surveys, illustrated to the researcher the limited information the residents had about the museum. Such disengagement in retrospect hinders the museum's ability to foster a shared sense of cultural identity and undermine local stewardship fragmenting the collective cultural narrative it aims to preserve. Moreover, financial constraints emerged repeatedly during the research interviews with museum staff. Many highlighted how limited budgets have curtailed professional development, leaving staff without access to current training in museological best practices. Although the museum occasionally allocates funds for conservation, these funding has been insufficient in supporting needed staff training, technological integration within the museum, and long-term preservation and maintenance initiatives.



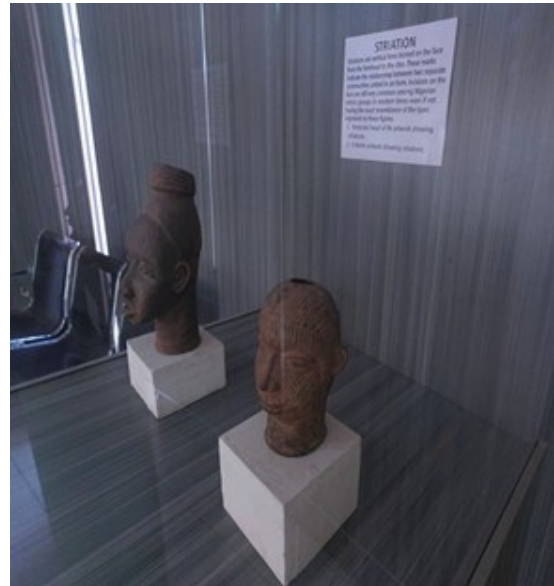
**Figure 3:** *The internal gallery views of the National Museum Benin City.*

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<sup>32</sup> per Ezenagu (2023). Critique of Nigeria's static cultural presentation in the case of museums.



**Figure 4:** The 16th-century Queen Idia ivory head sculpture.



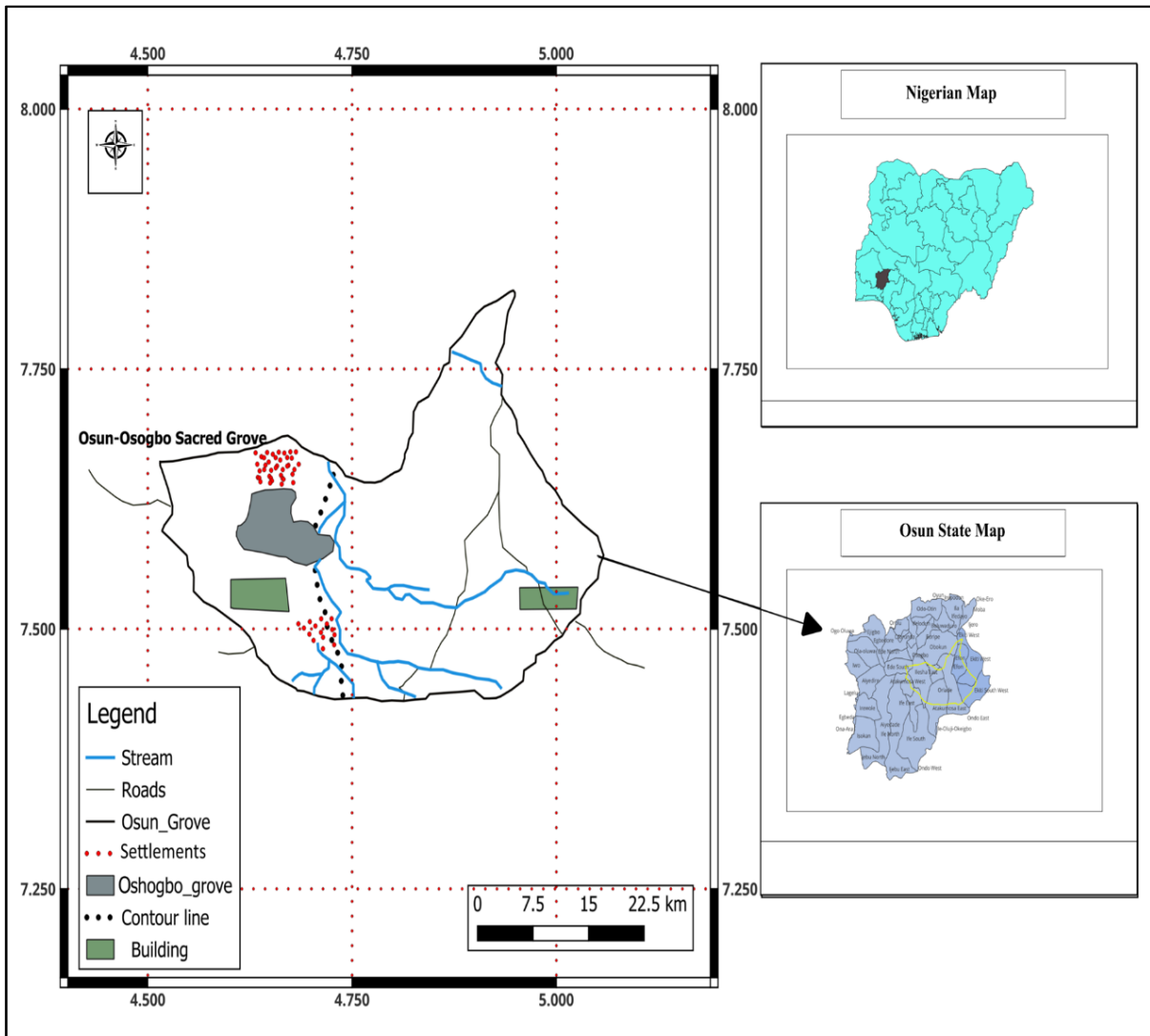
**Figure 5:** Pair of portrait terracotta sculptures at the museum.

## 1.2.2 Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove

The Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove is a sacred forest on the outskirts of Osogbo, Òṣun State, Nigeria (7°45'20"N, 4°33'08"E) and one of the country's most revered heritage site with UNESCO World Heritage Inscription in 2005. Spanning 75 hectares of undisturbed forest land along the winding Òṣun River, the sacred grove was established over 400 years ago in the 16th century, it originated from a pact between the river goddess Òṣun (deity of fertility, healing, and beauty) and the then king of Osogbo people *Oba Gbadewolu Larooye*. According to Yoruba mythology, the goddess Òṣun appeared after Osogbo migrants led by the hunter *Olutimehin* settled at the sacred grove to escape famine, demanding the grove's protection in exchange for prosperity. Over time the grove became a central place of spiritual worship for the Osogbo people, its shrines, sculptures and traditional Yoruba artworks serving as focal points of communal religious life.

Today the Òṣun Osogbo Sacred Grove houses more than 200 art sculptures crafted from concrete, iron, and mud, depicting the past events of the ancient people of Osogbo and thus embodying a distinctive fusion of spirituality, culture and natural beauty, a living heritage site where religious rituals have been performed for centuries. These sculptural expressions include (shrines, relief walls, gates, deity figures and prominent traditional figures). In addition, the grove has become an essential place for preserving Yoruba culture and offers enormous potential for ecotourism for tourists interested in African cultural customs and those looking for spiritual experiences. Each year in month of august, the Osogbo sacred grove hosts the annual Òṣun-Osogbo festival, a colorful memorial celebration of the river goddess Òṣun featuring

ritual offerings, processions, music and dance, which renews local religious life and affirms the grove's identity as a living sanctuary and a major cultural tourism destination.



**Map 4:** Geospatial representation of the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, Nigeria.

**Source:** Researchers' Construct from the History of Nigeria, 2025.



**Figure 6:** *Art sculpture depicting river goddess Ọsun Olomoyoyo (deity of fertility).*



**Figure 7:** *Sacred sculptures and artworks within the Ọsun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, Nigeria.*



**Figure 8:** *The chameleon gate and entrance to Ìyá Mọ̀òpó statue at the Osogbo grove.*



**Figure 9:** *Art sculpture of Ìyá Mọ̀òpó (Goddess of women's craft) at the Osogbo grove.*



**Figure 10:** *Statue of traditional drummers and masquerade trail at the Osogbo Grove, Nigeria.*

In the early 1950s, the Osogbo sacred grove faced desecration, shrines were abandoned, and illegal hunting and farming at the once undisturbed forest eroded its sanctity. However, an intervention for the grove's revival began when Susanne Wenger (1915–2009)<sup>33</sup>, an Austrian artist and Yorùbá high priestess later named *Adunni Olorisha*, partnered with the then Osogbo king *Ataoja* to form the New Sacred Art Movement. Susanne Wenger then further collaborated with local sculptors and artists including *Adebisi Akanji*, *Sàngódàrè Ajàlá*, and *Buraimoh Gbadamosi* to create more monumental sculptures that blended Yorùbá cosmology with modernist art styles. Although the new sacred art movement successfully restored the Osogbo sacred grove's spiritual and artistic vitality and brought it international attention, that very revival alongside increased visitation and new sculptural interventions expanded the heritage site's physical and public profile, creating fresh pressures on preservation, management, tourism development and documentation of the grove.

Nonetheless, subsequent reviews have flagged deficiencies in conservation and management planning, funding shortfalls, and a lack of comprehensive digital documentation, all of which threaten the integrity of the sculptures and groves' infrastructural development. The conservation of Osogbo sacred grove with its over 200 sculptures and artworks remains a pressing issue, as highlighted on the exploratory survey on the maintenance of the sacred grove by Oseghale, Omisore, and Taiwo (2014). The study noted that factors such as exposure to weather elements, heavy rainfall, climatic and environmental factors causes deterioration,

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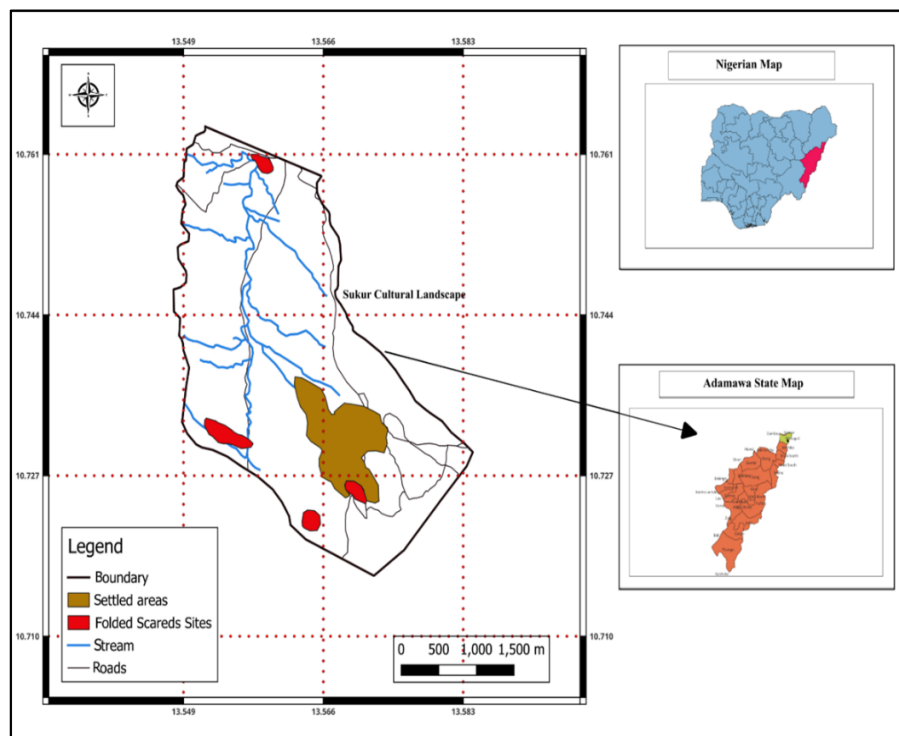
<sup>33</sup> Susanne Wenger Foundation (2011) credits Susanne Wenger for reviving the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove.

fading and weakening of the materials used in making the groves art sculptures and this is consequent of the groves environment which is a thick rainforest area (pp.13-14)<sup>34</sup>. During this study’s field survey, site managers and the Grove staff’s that were interviewed noted that the surrounding vast rainforest makes it nearly impossible to mark a clear boundary around the Òṣun-Osogbo grove, which results in unchecked encroachment, animal poaching, and vandalism of the grove’s sculptural artworks and thus, without effective monitoring especially at night, the fragile sculptures remain highly vulnerable to vandalism, damage or theft.

Ultimately, addressing these vulnerabilities at the Osogbo grove will entail installation of preservative infrastructures, particularly weather resistant fencing as well as the deployment of modern security technologies, such as CCTV cameras with night vision capability will all help in protecting the Grove environment against both human and environmental threats.

### 1.2.3 Sukur Cultural Landscape

Sukur Cultural Landscape is an ancient African vernacular settlement community located in Adamawa State, Nigeria (10°44'26"N 13°34'19"E) close to the country’s border with Cameroon. Inscribed in 1999 as Nigeria first UNESCO World Heritage site, the cultural landscape settlement sits in a hilltop plateau at 1,045 meters elevation with an estimated 2,000 hectares of arid land, harboring 13 clustered communities with 27 clans under the village king



**Map 5:** Cartographic representation of Sukur Cultural Landscape, Nigeria. *Source:* Researchers’ Construct from the History of Nigeria, 2025.

<sup>34</sup> the Osun-Osogbo conservation survey (Oseghale et al., 2014).

known as the Hidi. The Sukur settlement dates back to 16th century under the *Dur dynasty*, establishing Sukur as a regional iron production hub with evidence of iron smelting technology from the iron age with remnants of iron smelting furnaces and blacksmith homesteads<sup>35</sup>. The landscape showcases the Sukur people's ingenuity and architectural prowess through terraced fields, a palace, and an intricate architectural system of stone walls and pathways. Management of the Landscape is shared between the Traditional Council of the Hidi (chief) and the local government authorities.

Over centuries the Sukur people evolved from an iron production and trading center into a resilient agro-pastoral community whose traditional land-use systems of terraced settlements and communal worship places have been continuously preserved by the locals, producing a cultural landscape where technique, belief and simple social structures are visible on the ground. Sukur Cultural Landscapes' unique heritage value lies in its long-standing fusion of ancient architecture and community resilience, where the Hidi's palace complex, sacredly inscribed terraced fields, the village settlement pattern, and archaeological evidence of ironworking together embody the ingenuity, spirituality, and resilience of the Sukur people's cultural traditions



**Figure 11:** *Comprehensive view capturing the expanse of the Sukur Cultural Landscape.*

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<sup>35</sup> Eyisi and Okonkwo (2019) portray the Sukur kingdom as a mountain community shaped by ancient ironworking, p.2



**Figure 12:** *Hidi's palace complex, showing dry-stone masonry and enclosed courtyards.*



**Figure 13:** *Weathered dry-stone fences and house walls, Sukur Cultural Landscape.*



**Figure 14:** *Remains of 17<sup>th</sup> century iron-smelting furnace (evidence of metallurgical activity).*



**Figure 15:** *Vernacular stone huts exemplifying ancient African architecture within the Sukur Cultural Landscape.*

Sukur cultural landscape overtime has continued to not only embody the political authority established by the 16<sup>th</sup> century Dur dynasty with the Hidi as the community head but have also served as a living archive of indigenous knowledge and cultural identity to the sukur people<sup>36</sup>. The blend of indigenous traditional spaces such as the iron smelting furnaces, ritual grounds, agricultural terraces, and ancient drystone settlements demonstrate how the cultural landscape have become a living heritage site. Although the landscapes intact dry-stone architecture and ritual features such as sacred trees marking clan boundaries continue to function in community ceremonies, yet tourist visitor access is constrained by rugged terrain and limited interpretative services.

Designated as a National Monument under Nigerian law in accordance with the NCMM Act (2004)<sup>37</sup>, management of Sukur cultural landscape is shared between the Traditional Council of the Hidi (chief) and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM). Notwithstanding her rich 16<sup>th</sup> century cultural past, the present day Sukur cultural site, which was once celebrated for her preservation of some of the oldest ancient African vernacular architectures comprising of stone placement traditional dwellings, terraced fields and paved pathways, now faces severe on-site challenges that threaten both the community's way of life and the integrity of the UNESCO-recognized cultural landscape. Isolated atop the Mandara hills, most Sukur families remain mired in poverty as they depend on agriculture and local trade for survival, with limited access to quality education, healthcare, and clean water<sup>38</sup>.

These socio-economic hardships leave the Sukur community with little resources, time, and capacity to care for their extensive stone terraces, pathways, sacred dwellings and historic vernacular heritage artefacts. With their daily survival a major priority over the labor-intensive demands of heritage preservation, the site's defining features are gradually deteriorating undermining the very foundations of the heritage site. In addition, the heritage site's remote location and limited security have enabled devastating insurgent attacks at the site by armed groups exemplified by Boko Haram's December 2014 attack that damaged the Hidi's Palace and other sacred areas of the cultural landscape thereby jeopardizing both resident safety and sites structural integrity<sup>39</sup>, thus necessitating urgent interventions will empower the Sukur people to safeguard their heritage while building resilient livelihoods that sustain, rather than undermine, their living cultural landscape.

### **1.2.4 Yankari Game Reserve**

Yankari Game located in Bauchi State, north-eastern Nigeria (9°45'16"N, 10°30'37"E) is one of the largest wildlife reserves in Africa. Spanning 2,254 km<sup>2</sup> of savanna woodland, the

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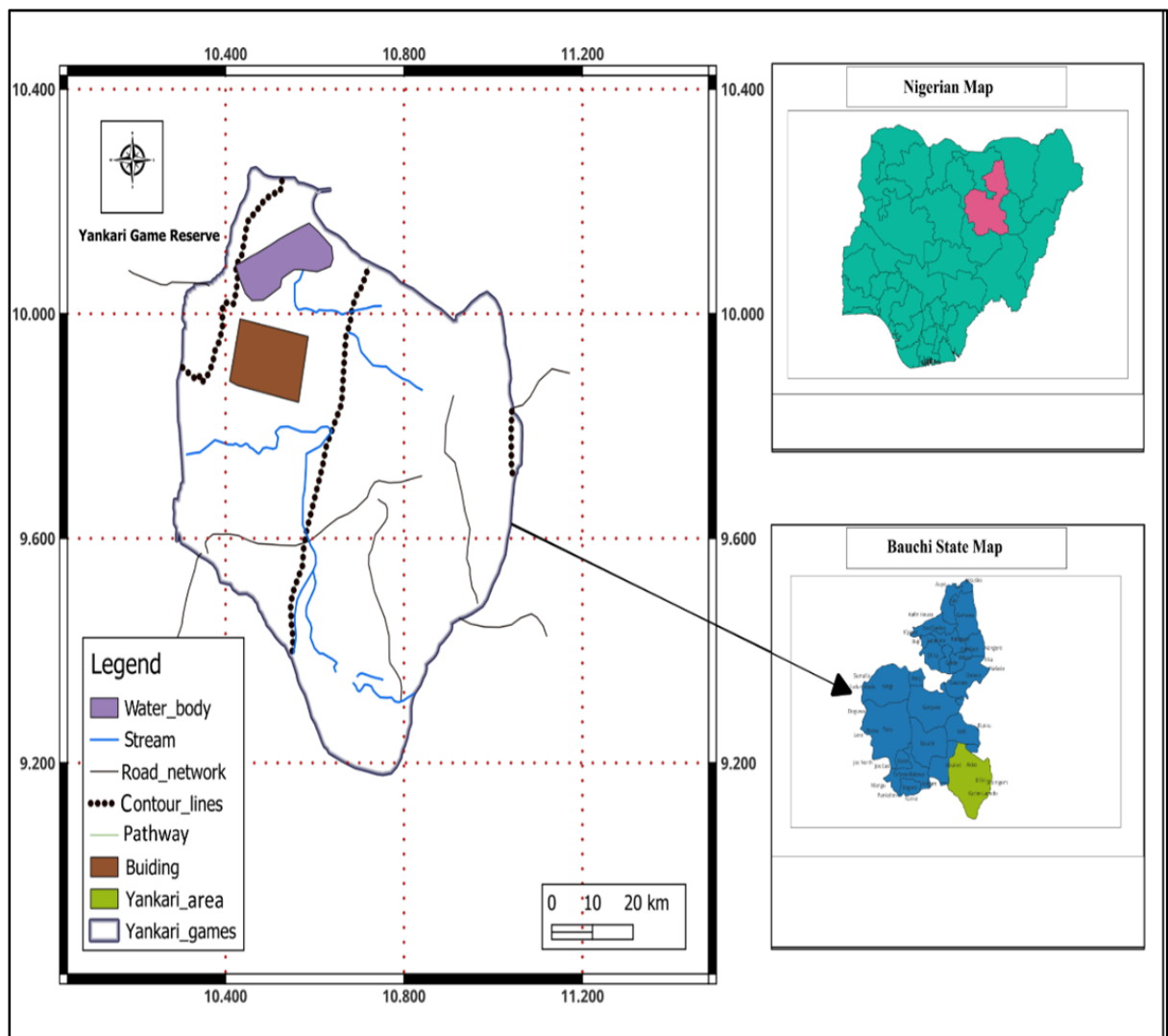
<sup>36</sup> National Commission for Museums and Monuments Act, Cap. N19 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004, s. 3(1)(b). <https://placng.org/lawsofnigeria/laws/N19.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> UNESCO. Sukur Cultural Landscape. World Heritage List, 1999. Retrieved February 25, 2025, from

<sup>38</sup> Tagowa (2010) assessment on sustainable development for impoverished communities in Sukur.

<sup>39</sup> Boko Haram targeted minorities through systematic violence (Minority Rights Group International, 2016).

reserve's ecosystem and biodiversity support over 50 species of mammals and 350 species of birds, which includes one of West Africa's last viable lion populations, buffalos, antelopes, warthogs, monkeys, elephants and a large number of bird species. Established as a game reserve in 1956 and upgraded to national park status in 1991. Yankari Game Reserve is dedicated pristine wilderness for protecting Nigeria's natural heritage and advancing her ecotourism. Beyond its living wildlife, Yankari also conserves important cultural and archaeological features in the region.



**Map 6:** Spatial depiction of the core area of Yankari Game Reserve, Nigeria.  
**Source:** Researchers' construct using QGIS mapping software, 2025.

Past studies have documented evidence of ancient iron-smelting sites (notably Ampara and Delimiri), carved sandstone cisterns and cave sites that attest to long-standing human activity and early metallurgical technology in the Yankari region<sup>40</sup>.

Archaeological research argues the iron melting remains are crucial for diversifying the reserve's heritage tourism offerings. Since its creation Yankari game reserve has evolved from a pre-colonial wildlife preservation area into Nigeria's best known wildlife reserve and a cornerstone of regional ecotourism in northern Nigeria. Management of the wildlife reserve has passed between regional and federal authorities with the reserve was run by national park authorities after 1991, but governance responsibility was returned to Bauchi State government in the early and later on the reserve endured a co-management set up and anti-poaching partnerships to stabilize protection and rebuild ranger capacity<sup>41</sup>. These changes reflect both the ecological importance of Yankari game reserve and the complex governance challenges that accompany large protected heritage areas in Nigeria.



**Figure 16:** *Entrance gate to Yankari Game Reserve, Bauchi State, Nigeria.*

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<sup>40</sup> D. A. Aremu, "Preservation of Ampara and Delimiri Ironworking Sites: Toward the Promotion of Nigeria's Cultural Heritage," *African Archaeological Review* 16, no. 4 (1999): 199–210.

<sup>41</sup> Nachamada (2015). Report on fragmented governance at Yankari Game Reserve. p. 12.



**Figure 17:** *Herd of African elephants drinking at Dukke Wells, Yankari Game Reserve.*  
**Photo Credit:** *Yankari Game Reserve Archives.*



**Figure 18:** *The colorful Wikki Warm Spring with steady 31°C year-round temperature at Yankari Game Reserve.*



**Figure 19:** Interior of the Yankari wildlife museum, exhibiting mounted animal specimen and preserved skins used for interpretation and research.



**Figure 20:** Olive baboons nursing their infants at Yankari, reflecting the reserve's rich biodiversity.  
**Photo Credit:** Yankari Game Reserve Archives.

Yankari captures Nigeria wildlife and biodiverse beauty and is an essential component of Nigeria's tourism infrastructure. However, while the reserve offers lodging, guided wildlife tours, and the Wikki Warm Springs, with its management transferred from Nigeria's National Parks Service to the State Government in 2006, challenges persist in anti-poaching enforcement, security challenges, habitat degradation from surrounding agricultural encroachment, and underdeveloped visitor infrastructure. Nachamada in his 2015 survey powered by the Wildlife Conservation Society of Nigeria stressed that since its governance handover from the federal authorities the State government, Yankari game Reserves' protection has been "neglected and under-funded" as challenges such as understaffing and limited funding meant fewer reserve rangers and outdated surveillance, so anti-poaching patrols are ineffective. In effect, the very infrastructure needed to protect wildlife has not kept pace with Yankari's ecological or tourism roles<sup>42</sup>.

Although, Yankari game reserve embodies Nigeria's wildlife and biodiverse heritage and plays a crucial role in the country's cultural heritage and tourism infrastructure. Past empirical evidence indicates that the challenges mentioned above have led to significant conservation issues, for example, the weak anti-poaching enforcement at the reserve has resulted to alarming population declines in wildlife species, notably African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) and one of West Africa's last viable lion populations (*Panthera leo*), directly attributed to inadequate patrol coverage, insufficient ranger workforce, and lack of modern surveillance equipment" according to the wildlife survey by Habu and Fadzly<sup>43</sup>. Consequently, the broader security instability in Northeastern Nigeria have also deterred both conservation and tourism activities within the wildlife reserve area.

Compounding these threats are the underdeveloped visitor infrastructure, where inconsistent maintenance of roads, lodges, and interpretive facilities degrades the tourist experience as well as ecological degradation of the reserve due to climatic factors and human encroachment which demonstrably undermine the reserve's ecological integrity and long-term viability. Looking ahead, addressing these challenges is essential to restoring the reserve's ecological balance and strengthen its role as a biodiverse conservation stronghold in Nigeria and whilst also integrating comprehensive tourism development plan to ensure its sustainable future<sup>44</sup>.

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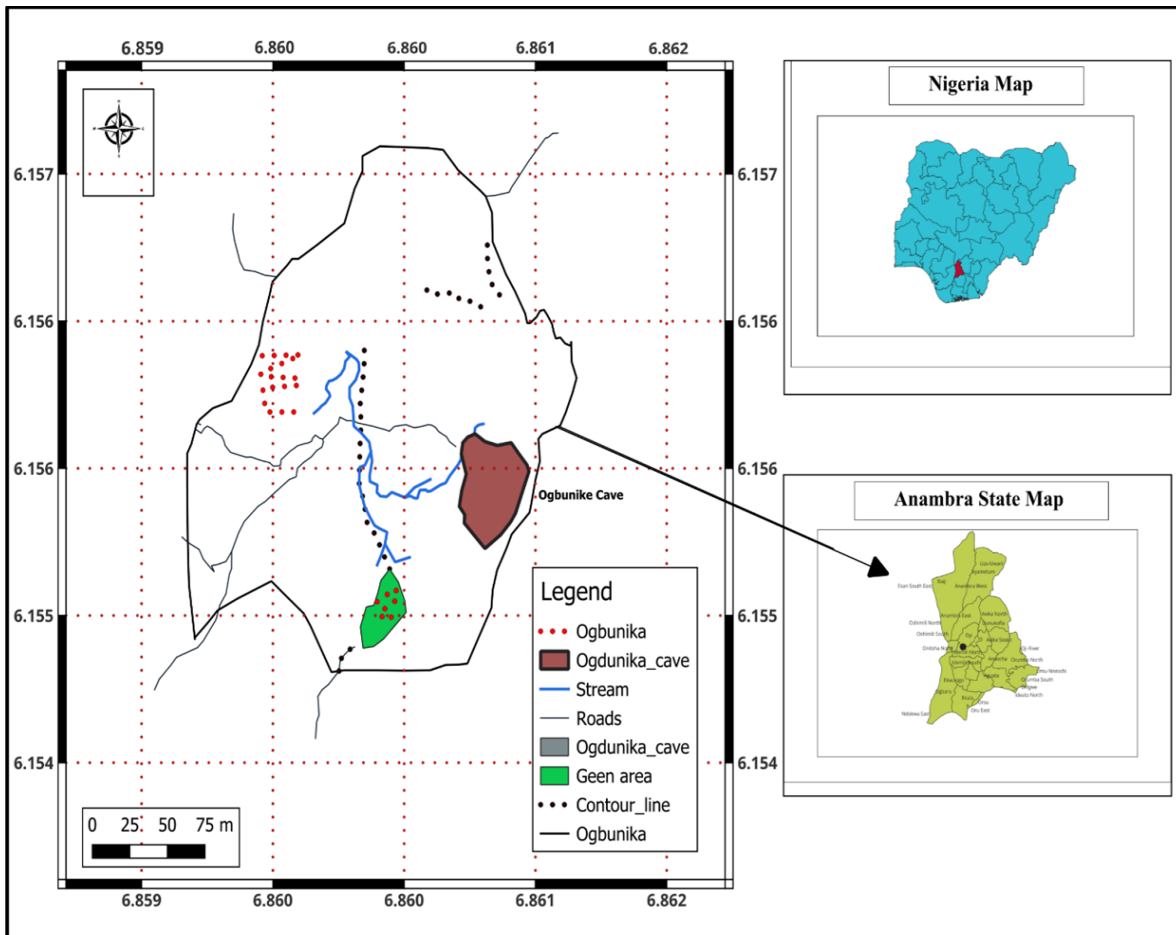
<sup>42</sup> Nachamada (2015). Report on fragmented governance at Yankari Game Reserve. p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> Habu and Fadzly's wildlife survey report on mitigation strategies endorsed by farmers amid declining wildlife populations around Yankari Game Reserve (2024, p. 819),

<sup>44</sup> Ukah, C., & Ejaro, S. P. (2019). The Socioeconomic Impacts of Boko Haram Activities on the Host Community of Yankari Game Reserve, Bauchi State, Nigeria. 5(1), 37–44.  
<https://doi.org/10.21467/AJSS.5.1.37-44>.

## 1.2.5 Ogbunike Cave

Ogbunike Cave is located in Anambra State, southeastern Nigeria (approx. 6.179° N, 6.859° E). Situated within a tropical rain forest, the ancient Cave system occupies roughly 20 hectares arid land, and is accessed via a long flight of steps that descends into the valley featuring a network of over 10 interconnected tunnels leading to the main chamber and consists of a big open chamber at the entrance about 5m high, 10m wide and 30m long, with a lengthy walkway of about 317 steps. The people of Ogbunike revere the cave as a sacred sanctuary for spiritual practices and a refuge place during historic conflicts for centuries dating to the 16th century. The Cave is formed from limestone and is home to a variety of fauna including bats, deer, porcupines, antelopes and various bird species. Designated in the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List site in 2007, the Ogbunike cave's features stalactites, underground streams and water channels make it a valuable natural heritage resource.



**Map 7:** Geospatial depiction of the core area of Ogbunike Cave, Nigeria. Source: Researchers' Construct from the History of Nigeria, 2025.

The cultural relevance of Ogbunike Cave goes beyond its physical attributes, as it represents the living traditions and historical consciousness of an African heritage. This living significance is displayed each year during the “Ime Ogbe” festival in November, when processions, music and dance renew the cave’s spiritual role and communal memory. Also, the New Yam Festival (Iri Ji) which is annually celebrated between August and September and involves making offerings to the gods and ancestors is done within the cave context<sup>45</sup>. Additionally, the cave overtime has been revered as a sacred place of refuge for the Igbo people during periods of conflict, such as the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970)<sup>46</sup>. In Ogbunike cave, the network of interconnected tunnels, chambers, and streams, alongside ritual spaces such as shrines and sacred groves, further demonstrates how the cave has evolved into a living cultural heritage site that fuses natural wonder with everyday cultural practices of the people.



**Figure 21:** *Overview of Ogbunike Cave’s double tunnel caverns and downstream discharge.*

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<sup>45</sup> According to Nnewi City (2013), Ogbunike Town maintains the sacred cave traditions, including observances tied to the New Yam Festival. <https://nnewicity.com/ogbunike-town-anambra-state-history-heritage-and-the-sacred-caves/>.

<sup>46</sup> Ugwu, et’al (2022). Harnessing major tourist sites: A case study of Ogbunike Cave.



**Figure 22:** Interior view of intricate rock formations within the Ogbunike cave.



**Figure 23:** Exterior view of a single tunnel exit portal at Ogbunike Cave, showing the rock-threshold and downstream channel.

Nonetheless, despite this ancient importance as a site of culture refuge, worship, and word-of-mouth tradition, today's Ogbunike Cave is beset by urgent challenges that erode both its cultural significance and its ecological health. Increasing urbanization and disjointed management compromise the caves structural integrity and forest reserve surrounding it. On urbanization, urban growth around Ogbunike town poses an environmental hazard to the cave's integrity. Strategic positioning of Ogbunike caves along the Onitsha-Enugu Expressway has hastened developmental pressures with attendant opportunities and challenges in the conservation area. Though enhanced access has grown tourism, it has also ushered in infrastructural demands threatening the cave's fragile ecosystem. Also, the construction of a 317-step pathway to the cave entrance by the Anambra State Government in the 1990s, while improving accessibility, represents one of many anthropogenic modifications that have altered the natural drainage patterns and potentially increased erosion around the site. During the onsite survey at the cave, the researcher identified persistent issues of fragmented management from relevant bodies assigned with the coordination of responsibilities at the cave. This bureaucratic fragmentation expressed on site at the location included lack of on-site heritage managers, insufficient maintenance of visitor facilities and limited application of conservation monitoring protocols necessary to protect the cave's delicate ecological balance. Scholarly work on Nigerian heritage and tourism development by Gbadegesin (2014) also illustrates further the manner in which such managerial deficiencies reflect deeper institutional issues with Nigeria's cultural heritage strategy, among them inadequate budgetary allocations, a lack of specialized training for heritage staff, and the lack of robust enforcement of protective measures even for properties of this national importance<sup>47</sup>.

Thus, aside from the problems of fragmented management, there is a substantive lack of technical capability for geological conservation as Cave formations are sensitive to professional handling to conserve, especially in managing hydrological patterns, controlling biological condition, and stabilizing vulnerable formations. In the absence of these technical capabilities, unprofessional activities at the cave tend to create more harm than good. The absence of an integrated monitoring system to monitor changes in the environmental conditions, structural integrity, and impacts of visitors in the Ogbunike cave implies that deterioration may advance undetected to catastrophic proportions. These repeated failures of heritage management is a testament that only concerted management, adequate finance, and rigorous policy adherence will ensure Nigeria's cultural heritage assets.

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<sup>47</sup> Gbadegesin, J. T., & Osaghale, G. (2014). Management Challenges of Cultural Property in Nigeria. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure* Vol. 3 (1) p.1-18.

### 1.3 Criteria and rationale for choosing case study sites

The reason that prompted the choice and selection of the five (5) heritage sites singled out in this study (National Museum Benin City; Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove; Sukur Cultural Landscape; Yankari Game Reserve; Ogbunike Cave) was on the basis of their historical, cultural, and environmental importance. For this study, we first outlined each heritage site's characteristics using UNESCO's World Heritage Operational Guidelines (paragraph 78)<sup>48</sup>, This included instances of the need for management of heritage assets in relation to the concepts of authenticity, integrity, and importance. We then proceeded to evaluate each site in relation to the conditions of cultural integrity, environmental management, and community development for the UNESCO Sustainable Tourism Programme<sup>49</sup>. Finally, we drew our five (5) case study sites from the National Commission for Museums and Monuments' (NCMM).

**Figure 24:** Photo Illustration of the Selected Case Study Heritage sites



**1.) National Museum Benin City**  
*Benin Kingdom bronzes, ivories, and terracotta's Museum*



**2.) Osun–Osogbo Sacred Grove**  
*Forest shrine with over 200 Art Sculptures and the River Osun*



**3.) Sukur Cultural Landscape**  
*Hilltop stone-built palaces reflecting African*



**4.) Yankari Game Reserve**  
*West Africa's largest Ecotourism and Wildlife Reserve*



**5.) Ogbunike Cave**  
*Network of 10 Interconnected cave systems and*

<sup>48</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Committee. (2019). Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (WHC.19/01). Paris: UNESCO World Heritage Centre. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines>

<sup>49</sup> The UNESCO Sustainable Tourism Programme criteria (2017) guided assessment of cultural integrity, environmental stewardship, and community benefit-sharing at each site.

Nigeria's official heritage registry, leveraging its core functions of conservation mandates, standardized administration, and community engagement to ensure that each selected site not only embodies regional, historical and cultural significance but also offer genuine potential to drive responsible tourism<sup>50</sup>. Having outlined the abovementioned criteria and metrics that were used in the identification and selection of case study heritage sites for this study which anchors of heritage sites potential for sustainable tourism development as well as their cultural, historical, and environmental significance. Hence, we discuss further the factors outlined in greater detail below:

1. **Heritage Value (National / International):** Selected heritage sites must possess demonstrable heritage value (e.g., UNESCO inscription, national monument designation, or widely recognized natural/artistic importance). This ensures the study addresses places that are central to Nigeria's heritage discourse.
2. **Variation of heritage type and scale:** The case study sites must include different kinds of heritage (museum collections, sacred grove/sculptural landscape, living cultural landscape, large wildlife reserve, natural cave system) to capture variation in conservation needs, management practices, and stakeholder constellations.
3. **Cultural and Historical Significance:** Significant aspects of Nigeria's cultural and historical identity are represented by the heritage sites selected. For example, the Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove is a living manifestation of the religious and cultural practices of the Yoruba tribes, while the National Museum Benin City showcases the historical treasures of the 12th century Benin Kingdom.
4. **Potential for Tourism:** All of the sites have a high potential for tourism, either via spiritual tourism (Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove), cultural tourism (Sukur Cultural Landscape), or ecotourism (Yankari Game Reserve). The chosen sites therefore are great prospects for the research of sustainable tourism development in Nigeria due to their capacity for attracting both domestic and international tourists.
5. **Geographical Distribution:** In order to achieve a balance of geographical and cultural diversity and representation, the selected heritage sites reflect different regions of Nigeria as locations were selected from the North, West, East and Southern region of the country. Due to this spread, the research is in a position to provide an overview of the different regional opportunities and challenges involved in the development of tourism and preservation of heritage.

6. **Present Preservation and Management Status:** The 5 chosen cultural heritage sites in this study have different preservation statuses, providing a range of case studies to assess the effectiveness of modern management and preservation methods. These sites capture the varied approaches to the management of heritage in Nigeria, from the more prominent sites such as the Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Yankari Game reserve to those that require more management, such as the Sukur Cultural Landscape and the Ogbunike cave.

### 1.3.1 Alignment of Selection Criteria with Research Objectives

- i. The research seeks to identify structural drivers of heritage management and tourism development to help generate policy-relevant recommendations. Criteria (1), (4), and (6) ensure cases are sufficiently important and problem-rich to draw meaningful conclusions.
- ii. By selecting a range of heritage types, criteria (2), (5), and management models (criterion 6), the study can trace how institutional form, funding, and technical capacity shape conservation outcomes and tourism growth of cultural heritage sites.
- iii. Including cultural practices and historical significance (criterion 3) supports an investigation of intangible values, local knowledge, and the socio-political dimensions of stewardship critical for sustainable interventions.

## 1.4 Geographic and Cultural representation

Nigeria cultural heritage sites span across the country's six (6) regional zones which includes the North central, Northeast, Northwest and the Southeast, Southwest and South-southern regions, which captures the country's vast environmental diversity from savannah plains and sacred groves to mountain landscapes and cave systems which reflect the nation's rich cultural mosaic with 371 different ethnic groups and over 500 languages. Examples such as, Ogbunike Cave in the east, Sukur Cultural Landscape and Yankari Game Reserve in the north, and the National Museum Benin City and Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove in the south all represent this diversity. The case studies selected benefits from this geo-spatial distribution and reach. It makes it possible to include different perspectives from major Nigerian cultural groups: the Hausa-Fulani from the north, the Yoruba from the southwest, and the Igbo from the southeast, as well as the smaller, but equally significant, ethnic groups, such as the Edo, Nupe, Tiv, and Ibibio. Consequently, it demonstrates the impact of the diverse regional aspects of the country on the conservation of the heritage and the possible sustainable tourism it could attract.

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<sup>50</sup> National Commission for Museums and Monuments. (2025). Functions of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments. Abuja, Nigeria. Retrieved March 4, 2025, from <https://museum.ng/functions-of-nmmm/>.

### **1.4.1 Site Distribution and Regional Balance**

1. National Museum Benin City (South South): The case study site showcases Edo tribes' artistic heritage, bridging Yoruba tribe and Igbo tribe through its collection of bronzes and ivory sculptures.
2. Òṣun–Osogbo Sacred Grove (South-West): The site embodies Yoruba spiritual and artistic traditions in a remnant untouched rainforest.
3. Sukur Cultural Landscape (North-East): The site represents Mandara Mountain agrarian and iron-working culture among the Hidi people of Sukur.
4. Yankari Game Reserve (North Central): This case study site displays the savannah biodiversity and eco-tourism potential in the Bauchi region of the north.
5. Ogbunike Caves (South-East): The site highlights Igbo tribe spiritual practices and geological heritage.

Thus, the research deals with the peculiar cultural environments, challenges, and possibilities of preserving heritage within the vast areas of Nigeria due to its territorial dispersion. A complete image of Nigeria's rich cultural landscape is also presented by the fact that every site has a unique aspect of the nation's heritage, such as historical, religious, environmental, and architectural features, hence this complete representation and method is very important in developing policies that are culturally receptive to the various regions as well as regionally flexible policies that can assist in realizing sustainable heritage tourism nationwide.

### **1.5 Significance of Nigeria's Cultural Heritage Landscape**

Nigeria's landscape of cultural heritage is an essential resource for the country's future as well as a reflection of its past. It should include monuments, archaeological remains, and historic cities as well as the natural heritage of groves and caves, and even reserves. This heritage and festivals, oral traditions, rituals, crafts, and knowledge systems should be 'as a living dynamic part' to be embraced and valued. The dynamic part reflects the actual and complex current socio-political arrangements of Nigeria and governance. The heritage speaks to the socio-political order of the country, as well as, cross-border relationships Nigeria has with some other countries.

Socially and culturally, heritage sites and cultural traditions preserve and memorialize the past and testify to collective identity. King palaces, sacred groves, shrines, terraced settlements and museum collections tell the stories of the past civilizations and the political authority, spiritual belief, craft specialization, and migration of people that those civilizations anchored. Today, in multicultural Nigeria, cultural heritage is an asset in inter-ethnic encounters that can

simultaneously inspire pride and, in some instances, contention. This, in turn, influences how various groups and communities negotiate and navigate differences and belonging.

From the perspective of value development, Nigeria cultural heritage is an unexploited asset that offers potential for growth for sustainable development. Range of activities in cultural tourism, for example, going to museums, participating in festivals, and engaging in ecotourism in cultural landscapes and nature reserves, can provide income for communities and diversify local livelihoods, thus stimulating micro-entrepreneurial ventures such as tour operating, guiding, craft making, hospitality, and local tourism infrastructure. When heritage tourism is developed and managed properly, it expands the economic benefits and social heritage site boundaries to the adjacent communities. It is also beneficial to communities to actively engage in heritage preservation of their culturally canonical ecologies and traditional crafts that may otherwise, for all intents and purposes, be forgotten. Nigeria's cultural sites are invaluable living educational resources for education and knowledge preservation. They provide firsthand insights for inter- and multidisciplinary inquiries spanning history, archaeology, ecology, anthropology, and conservation science. They offer experiential learning opportunities for students and trainees in museology, conservation, and cultural management.

From the diplomatic stance on the global front, Nigeria's cultural heritage aspects are part of global cultural diplomacy. Nigeria boasts notable rich cultural pieces like the 12th-century Benin and Ife bronze heads, and we also have World Heritage sites like the Òṣun-Osogbo sacred grove and the Sukur cultural landscape. They have engendered academic interest, global collaboration, and cross-cultural interaction that place the country on the global map. Nigeria is one of the country's leading the global conversation on historical injustice, museum ethics, and the stewardship of collections. This is due to the global discourse on the repatriation of cultural objects, like the Benin bronzes, that were taken from Nigeria.

Finally, the moral attributes embedded in the cultural heritage landscape of Nigeria serves to maintain the unity of its intricate cultural artistry, expressions, and memories. This culturally, developmentally, educatively, and diplomatically landscape is time and ethically demanding, which calls for integrative policies of heritage conservations with community livelihood, skills, and equitable citizenship. This study aims to identify practical strategies to improve the management of Nigerian cultural heritage sites to preserve their importance and potent their relevance to Nigeria's culture and tourism. It will focus on the rational management and governance systems, the community-adopted policies, novel community's conservation partnerships, innovative financing approaches such as heritage endowments and PPPs, digital documentation and monitoring, and the diversification of eco-sustainable tourism.

## 1.6 Chapter Overview

This research dissertation is organized into five (5) main chapters, each of which is written to lead progressively to an in-depth appreciation of Nigeria's cultural heritage conservation and its tourism potential.

1. **Chapter One:** Describes the historical and contextual background of the study. It traces Nigeria's cultural heritage development from pre-colonial past up to colonial interruptions of original Nigerian cultures to the post-independence time and adjustment into a new nation. The chapter identifies the intervention of governance and applicable institutions who assisted in defining the country's cultural heritage preservation practices over time. It also introduces the five (5) chosen Nigerian case study heritage sites that include, National Museum Benin City, Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, Sukur Cultural Landscape, Yankari Game Reserve, and Ogbunike Cave, and provides their cultural and geographic representation and why they were chosen for this study survey. This chapter places the study scope in Nigeria's cultural heritage context and describes its national importance.
2. **Chapter Two:** Outlines the state of the art and conceptual foundations on which the study was established. It critically reviewed available and relevant literatures on tourism and cultural heritage conservation in Nigeria and as well provided a worldwide context, it also identified enduring indigenous knowledge and practice gaps. The chapter mapped out the guiding research problem, objectives, and questions, and anchored the study on the functionalism theory and heritage management theory (HMT) which gave theoretical depth and alignment to the research. It also introduces the conceptual review by adopting the John Fletcher's 1989 input-output analysis model, thus mapping the relationships among actors, institutions, and heritage management cycles to position the study within wider academic discourse.
3. **Chapter Three:** Introduces the methodological approach which adopted a qualitative research design, the study employed three data collection techniques such as semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and open-ended questionnaire surveys across the five case-study heritage sites in Nigeria to understand the heritage sites management challenges through assessing both institutional and public perspectives. This chapter details the sample design having surveyed (605 participants) and the data collection instruments used were also highlighted. Analysis was conducted with the help of coding and thematic procedures by employing NVivo software and blending Braun & Clarke's six-step thematic analysis model. Ethical issues, triangulation techniques, and researcher reflexivity are also explained in chapter three for ensuring credibility, transparency, and research rigor.

4. **Chapter Four:** Highlights the empirical findings and analysis. It begins with an overview of the collected dataset and explained the NVivo coding procedures, before unpacking the full research results. The findings are presented in two layers first, thematic patterns that emerged across all five (5) surveyed heritage sites, such as site management, community engagement, funding gaps, and visitor experiences. Second are the site-specific analyses that reveal the unique and shared challenges of each cultural heritage site. The comparative evaluation discusses the similarities and differences across the heritage sites, while the cross-case analysis situates the findings steeped in the theories and debates of sustainable tourism. The chapter four closes by discussing critically on management strategies, community participation, and emergent insights into heritage preservation dynamics especially in the Nigerian context.
  
5. **Chapter Five:** This final chapter contains the study's conclusions, findings, and recommendations. More specifically, it synthesizes the study's main findings while also commenting on their relevance pertaining to the practical, policy, and theoretical applications. Lastly, it establishes the study's original contributions to functionalism and theories of heritage management. More importantly, it discusses the focus on the actionable cultural heritage management strategies in Nigeria. Evidence-based recommendations are proposed for government agencies, local custodians, and communities to adopt to, focusing on policy reform, capacity building, and sustainable financing. The study's limitations are also acknowledged in this chapter, alongside methodological reflections and lessons learned. Finally, the chapter five outlines' directions for future research and provides a forward-looking conclusion that envisions Nigeria's cultural heritage sector as both a driver of cultural identity preservation and a pillar to catalyze sustainable tourism development.

## **02 - State of Art**

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## 2.1 Review of Related Literature

No area of human endeavor is virgin. In other words, there is no area that has not been examined or investigated before now, hence this study is built on existing literature. Consequently, this review of related literature is based on the objectives and research questions raised below in this chapter as a guide to the contractions of this study. Furthermore, it is to use the existing literature to ascertain the extent it will help the researcher make conclusions and recommendations which will serve as the studies contribution to knowledge. The preservation of cultural heritage sites and their role in tourism development have been a subject of scholarly interest across various disciplines, including history, cultural studies, environmental management, and tourism research. Heritage sites function as material connections to a country's history, its stories, cultural beliefs, and age-old ways of doing things.

These sites, from monuments, museums, ancient cities and holy forests, have huge historical, cultural, and social importance in Nigeria. Nevertheless, along with contributing to the development of the nation and to the growth of the tourism industry, many of these locations are abandoned, poorly managed, inadequately maintained, and face modernization pressures. This literature review covers the scholarly discussions concerning the balance between the value of preservation and the value of tourism, sustainable management, and the role community participation and stakeholders play for the integrated sustainable tourism development of Nigeria's cultural heritage sites. My systematic literature review will outline the conceptual and theoretical frameworks for preserving heritage sites and tourism development, the interrelationship and preservation value of the sites, and tourism development value.

To these ends, the documentation of literature seeks to amalgamate and theorize functionalism with heritage management to establish the link between the dynamics of social integration and management with the conservation of cultural heritage and its governance. Namely literature identifies heritage management domains of inter-agency governance, heritage impact assessment, and capacity building for livelihood alignment with conservation and eco-tourism as empirical measures of heritage management. This review will outline the conceptualization of various scholars about the study of cultural heritage, the role and impact of government, legislation, and technology on conservations, and the laws and policies.

Through bringing together extant research, this review will find areas of research gaps and provide a starting point for understanding how effective management approaches can maximize Nigeria's rich heritage in terms of sustainability and tourism opportunities.

## 2.2 Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's cultural heritage, spanning centuries of historical, social, and artistic traditions, is an invaluable asset capable of driving cultural tourism and societal development<sup>51</sup>. However, regardless of this rich cultural history, its effective preservation, management, and promotion for tourism remain significantly challenged by insufficient preservation efforts, poor accessibility to heritage sites, and inadequate tourism infrastructure. Italy's success in leveraging its cultural heritage to boost its tourism sector and national economy offers a compelling model<sup>52</sup> that Nigeria could emulate. This achievement has prompted the researcher to investigate Nigeria's cultural heritage preservation and development to ascertain whether similar success could be achieved in Nigeria a nation endowed with diverse cultural heritage assets that remain underutilized for tourism development with gaps in coordinated management and strategic investment further hindering sustainable tourism and cultural preservation.

Consequently, Nigeria's cultural heritage, including its rich history, diverse traditions, and iconic heritage sites, holds immense potential for fostering tourism and sustainable development. However, the country's tangible cultural heritage remains significantly underutilized and often neglected. This is partly due to a perceived lack of adventurous spirit among Nigerians. For instance, a Nigerian encountering a mountain might react with caution, exclaiming, "Oh, look at this monster!" and choosing to keep a distance, unlike an Italian who might approach with curiosity, exclaiming similarly but with a willingness to explore further.

This difference highlights a broader issue, while survival remains a priority for Nigerians, there's often less emphasis on adventurous exploration that could enhance cultural preservation and development. Unlike Italians, who balance survival with a proactive pursuit of adventure and happiness, Nigerians may inadvertently contribute to "the neglect of their cultural heritage". This historical neglect is evident in insufficient preservation efforts, limited community involvement, and inadequate maintenance of heritage infrastructures<sup>53</sup>. Existing research on Nigeria's cultural heritage has largely focused on individual cultural events or intangible aspects of heritage, leaving gaps in understanding how the preservation of tangible heritage sites can drive sustainable tourism sustainable societal development<sup>54</sup>. Hence, there is little empirical evidence on how coordinated management practices at these sites can enhance their

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<sup>51</sup> Bankole, A. O. (2013). Harnessing cultural heritage for tourism development in Nigeria: issues and prospects. p.3

<sup>52</sup> Galli, Antonio. (2024). Effect of Cultural Heritage on Tourism Development in Italy. p.58

<sup>53</sup> Cultural heritage erosion is exacerbated by community disengagement and state failure to enforce preservation laws (Onyima, 2016, pp. 287–288)

<sup>54</sup> Benson, E. I. (2014). Cultural Tourism and Sustainability in Nigeria. Mediterranean

conservation and tourism potential<sup>55</sup>.

Additionally, the absence of strategic government support, trained staff, and managed site coordination is a significant aggravation of the issue of keeping such heritage properties well preserved and marketed. Circumstances of infrastructure and accessibility compound the reduction of such sites' chances to draw both local and foreign tourists. Therefore, the issue that this study aims to solve is to examine the shortfall of cultural heritage conservation and development in Nigeria to make it more appealing for tourism through an examination of its past. By considering these problems and analyzing opportunities for sustainable tourism development, as in the success experienced by other nations, the research aims to promote a more active approach towards reviving Nigeria's heritage preservation strategy.

## 2.3 Research Objectives

This research seeks to assess the potential of Nigeria's heritage sites for tourism, conservation, and management; determine the challenges to their sustainability; and explore how to enhance their protection and promotion for the development of sustainable tourism.

The research particularly seeks to:

- I. Evaluate effective strategies for the preservation, management, and promotion of Nigeria's heritage sites to enhance tourism development.
- II. Investigate the key challenges that hinder tourism growth at Nigeria's heritage sites and their impact on conservation efforts.
- III. Analyze the current condition of selected heritage sites and assess the effectiveness of existing management practices.
- IV. Examine the role of community participation and stakeholder collaboration in enhancing heritage site conservation and promoting sustainable tourism.

## 2.4 Research Questions

The following inquiries will serve as the basis for this study:

- (a) What are the most effective strategies for preserving, managing, and promoting Nigeria's heritage sites to enhance tourism development?
- (b) What are the major challenges hindering tourism growth at Nigeria's heritage sites, and how do they impact conservation efforts?
- (c) What is the current state of selected heritage sites, and how effective are the existing management practices?

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<sup>55</sup> Madandola, M., & Boussaa, D. (2023). Cultural heritage tourism as a catalyst for sustainable development; the case of old Oyo town in Nigeria. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 29(1–2), 21–38.

- (d) How can community participation and stakeholder collaboration contribute to improved conservation and the promotion of sustainable tourism at heritage sites?

## 2.5 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework serves as the foundation for understanding the key concepts and relationships explored in a study. Hence, theory is to a scholar what radar is to a pilot or what a compass is to a sailor, it gives direction for safe landing. According to Fred N. Kerlinger 1973, theory is a systematic formulation that attempts to explain reality within a discipline<sup>56</sup>. It provides a structured way to understand complex phenomena by offering explanations and predictions about relationships between variables. In research such as this, theory guides a researcher to make findings, state the problems, make conclusions and proffer suggestions. The preservation, management, and promotion of Nigeria's cultural heritage sites are complex processes that require insights from multiple theoretical perspectives. Therefore, in this study the functionalism and heritage management theory has been adopted to explain issues of cultural heritage especially the history, management and development of cultural heritage sites in Nigeria.

### 2.5.1 Functionalism Theory

In exploring the complexities of cultural heritage preservation and tourism development, many theories and paradigms exist that offer insights into these dynamics. Amongst them are Modernization Theory, Cultural Capital Theory and Environmental Theory amongst others, each providing distinct perspectives on how societies interact with their cultural and natural environments. Nonetheless, at its essence, this research is underpinned or backed by Functionalism Theory for its emphasis on cultural heritage as a crucial, tangible expression of a nation's identity and history. Functionalism gives a paradigm to synchronize cultural heritage preservation with tourism development. This theoretical framework maintains that the conservation of physical heritage like monuments, artifacts, and historic sites is not just an act of preservation but a crucial strategy for maintaining community identity and facilitating societal development through social activities like tourism<sup>57</sup>.

Functionalism, developed by Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942), examines how cultures fulfill human needs<sup>58</sup>. Functionalism as a theoretical framework was developed to understand social structures and institutions by focusing on their functional roles within society. The theory is based on the premise that all aspects of a society, institution, roles, norms, etc. serve a purpose

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<sup>56</sup> Kerlinger's definition (1973, as cited in Stichler, 2008) From concept to reality and from model to theory.

<sup>57</sup> Müller, M. (1998). Cultural heritage protection: legitimacy, property, and functionalism. *Physical heritage sustains collective memory and socioeconomic vitality* (pp. 398–402).

<sup>58</sup> Cultures evolve to satisfy universal human requirements (Holdsworth & Klimczuk, 2013)

and all are indispensable for the long-term survival of a society<sup>59</sup>. Functionalism thus is the contribution that a system, structure or society makes towards the maintenance of the whole. The theory suggests that each part of a society contributes to its stability and functioning, akin to how organs play different roles and function in a body to maintain efficiency and well-being.

In relation to this study, Functionalism argues that cultural heritage cannot be isolated from the societal context in which it exists. In the context of cultural heritage preservation and tourism development in Nigeria, Functionalism provides a lens that analyzes the practical roles of cultural heritage sites. It emphasizes that these sites are not just repositories of history and culture but also serve functional purposes within the framework of a society<sup>60</sup>. Apart from the socio-cultural value, this theory addresses the value of heritage preservation for the sustaining of a community's identity, socio-cultural development through tourism, and integration of balanced management approaches. Taking a closer look at its societal function, cultural heritage is highly esteemed according to the functionalism theory for its social processes of acculturation and socialization testify to the value of heritage. For instance, Chinese traditional villages have been protected and constructed to satisfy the multi-faceted requirements of living environment, tourism, and historical culture<sup>61</sup>.

While focusing on cultural identity, proponents of Functionalist theory view cultural heritage as the key mechanism to construct identities. This is best illustrated in the safeguarding of historical and cultural heritage sites in urban centers such as Kazan, where a tradition of multiculturalism has existed for centuries. With a focus on Functionalist, the research hopes to examine how Nigeria can utilize its diverse cultural heritage to attain conservation objectives and tourism development advantages, and in this manner, ensure that the heritage sites' legacy is prolonged for generations to come. From the above, it can be inferred that the Functionalism theory as applied to cultural heritage and tourism development offers a theoretical perspective which explains the history and effect of preservation of heritage on a society and developmental prospects.

In the context of Nigeria's cultural heritage history and sites, functionalist theory provides an explanation for their central role in creating national unity and identity due to the multicultural and multiethnic composition of Nigerian society. Through the conservation and development of places like the National Museum in Benin City, Òṣun Osogbo Sacred Grove, Sukur Cultural Landscape, Yankari Game Reserve, and Ogbunike Cave among others, Nigeria can maximize their capabilities to draw visitors, provide income, and basically grasp cultural heritage as an impetus in ensuring unity in diversity.

Functionalism believes that there should be a balance between preserving cultural heritage and its development for tourism. This is possible by making sure that activities of

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Castro, J. E. (2009). Functionalism (including Structural Functionalism) (pp. 277–282). Newcastle University.

<sup>61</sup> Li, Qin & Lv, Shuangning & Chen, Zonghao & Cui. (2024). Traditional Villages' Cultural Tourism Spatial Quality Evaluation.

tourism are sensitive to the historical and cultural value of the heritage sites, as well as contributing social advantages to the local communities. It stresses the pragmatic advantages of heritage conservation, believing that properly maintained and well-managed cultural resources can act as an impetus to societal development in the local communities. This theory helps support the idea that heritage conservation activities protect old stories while also encouraging tourism-related sustainable growth potential<sup>62</sup>.

Moreover, the functionalist theory emphasizes the importance of strategic management and planning in enhancing the tourism potential of cultural heritage sites. Through community and stakeholder inclusion, the functionalist approach aims to ensure that heritage conservation, in addition to fulfilling tourist demands, attends to the socio-cultural needs of the local community<sup>63</sup>. Therefore, the functionalist theory recognizes the dual role of cultural heritage in Nigeria as a store of history and identity, and a catalyst for socio-economic growth through tourism.

This orientation informs the research in determining ways to improve preservation, management, and promotion of Nigeria's cultural heritage places so as to optimize their functional potential for historical consciousness and sustainable development. Beyond Functionalism Theory which primarily considers the history and existence of cultural heritage sites as a crucial and tangible embodiment of Nigeria's identity, there is another approach which emphasizes stakeholder engagement or commitment as an inevitable factor to achieve cultural heritage goals. The essence is, for cultural heritage sites to serve the purposes for their existence, they have to be harnessed, and to harness lies within the preview of management hence the "Heritage Management Theory"

## 2.5.2 Heritage Management Theory (HMT)

Heritage Management Theory (HMT) is a theoretical framework that traces its earliest origins to the Swedish Royal Proclamation of 1666 a crucial piece of management legislation that protected cultural heritage, particularly historical sites and artifacts, within the Kingdom of Sweden<sup>64</sup>, and marked the beginning of archaeological heritage management and has evolved overtime through the contributions of multiple scholars such as Erica and Randall "*Values-based heritage management framework*"<sup>65</sup>, Thurley Simon (2005) "*Heritage Cycle*

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<sup>62</sup> Sihombing, I. H. H., Suastini, N. M., & Puja, I. B. P. (2024). Sustainable Cultural Tourism in the Era of Sustainable Development. *International Journal of Sustainable Competitiveness on Tourism*, 3(02), 100–115.

<sup>63</sup> Local cooperatives improve site maintenance and visitor engagement (Krajnović & Gortan-Carlin, 2017, p. 802).

<sup>64</sup> Adlercreutz, Thomas (2017) The royal placat of 1666. Briefly about background and further importance. In: historical perspective of heritage legislation. Balance between laws and values. International conference October 12, 2016.

<sup>65</sup> Avrami, E., Macdonald, S., Mason, R., & Myers, D. (Eds.). (2019). *Values in heritage management: Emerging approaches and research directions*.

*Framework*"<sup>66</sup>, and institutional contributions like the UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention<sup>67</sup>, all contributing as building blocks to the theory.

The Heritage Management Theory (HMT) views heritage custodianship as complex organizational systems rather than a simple act of conservation. The theory insists that every aspect of heritage management from policy frameworks to local conservation practices must be integrated into a pragmatic management cycle that follows a systematic framework through (assessment → planning → implementation → monitoring → and → evaluation)<sup>68</sup>. In this way, the Heritage Management Theory "operationalizes" the broader social functions earlier (highlighted by the Functionalism theory) by specifying how to align heritage resources in order to achieve preservation and tourism management goals simultaneously.

Central to the Heritage Management Theory is "stakeholder engagement" and its governance framework. The stakeholder engagement process is executed by first identifying all relevant actors, like government and non-governmental agencies, local communities, NGOs, and traditional custodians, then clarifying their roles within a multi-level governance framework. Committees are then established to ensure regular consultation, conflict resolution, and shared decision making. In the Nigerian context, for example, the application of the Heritage Management Theory entails a national level Heritage Management Council headed by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) the country's heritage management body, with the assigned function to establish accreditation guidelines and structure heritage projects. At the local level, a Heritage Management Committee involving (the heritage managers, local custodians and traditional heads) will then review site specific management projects and plans, allocates needed funds, and coordinates site management practices. Then at the heritage site level, the case study heritage sites such as National Museum Benin City, Òşun Osogbo Sacred Grove, Sukur Cultural Landscape, Yankari Game Reserve, and Ogbunike Caves, will establish a site management board comprising representatives from the NCMM, local community stakeholders, traditional chiefs' tourism operators, and conservation specialists.

These board members will thus hold subsequent meetings for operational activities to address concerns and propose revisions. By embedding Functionalism's emphasis on heritage's social roles into structured governance, Heritage Management Theory ensures that each stakeholder "subsystem" actively contributes to preserving the heritage sites authenticity and integrity thus maximizing communal benefits. "Strategic planning and Policy integration" constitute the next pillar of the Heritage Management Theory (HMT). Site specific management plans articulate clear objectives, actions, timelines, and performance indicators through Strategic planning and Policy integration.

For example, at the Òşun Osogbo Sacred Grove, objectives might include limiting foot

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<sup>66</sup> The Heritage Cycle transforms preservation from static "mothballing" into dynamic reuse (Thurley, 2005).

<sup>67</sup> The World Heritage Convention. (UNESCO, 1972, Article 29).

<sup>68</sup> Operational Guidelines for Implementing the World Heritage Convention. (UNESCO, 2002, para. 169, 179).

traffic during the Òṣun-Osogbo festival celebrated at the Grove to protect sensitive trails, producing bilingual interpretive panels to honor both historical narratives. Performance indicators could track the scared grove-health indices, visitor satisfaction scores, and local employment increases. The outlined management plans align with the Òṣun State Heritage and Tourism development policies on Cultural Impact Assessments for any new infrastructure within a defined buffer zone<sup>69</sup>, while the objectives at the National Museum Benin City will interlock with Edo State's culture and tourism policy which aims to foster partnerships with local bronze-smith markers, thereby preserving intangible skills and enriching tourism offering<sup>70</sup>. This entails Functionalism's social functions abstract are turned into measurable objectives embedded in policy, HMT ensures that heritage's identity-reinforcing and communal benefits are systematically pursued.

Another component of the Heritage Management Theory (HMT) is "Risk management and Adaptive interventions" which highlights on continuous threat assessments both environmental (e.g., erosion monitoring in Sukur Cultural Landscape or water infiltration in Ogbunike Cave) and anthropogenic threats (e.g., vandalism patrols by vigilante team at the above mentioned heritage sites and buffer-zone enforcement against unauthorized development) are complemented by mitigation measures such as emergency response initiatives.

Moreover, the Heritage Management Theory thereby builds on feedback actions by monitoring indicators like tourists carrying capacity thresholds of heritage sites, community satisfaction surveys to give insight for stakeholder deliberations, and structural integrity scores for rapid conservation responses. Moreover, yearly adaptive reviews at sites like Òṣun Osogbo Sacred Grove also enable adjustments to visitor fees, reallocation of community funds and revised maintenance schedules based on monitoring data. These adaptive mechanisms ensure that heritage sites continue serving their social functions and community support by maintaining equilibrium in the face of changing conditions.

Lastly, the Heritage Management Theory (HMT) stresses that "sustainable use and community benefits" requires that tourism and revenue generating activities maximize socio-cultural benefits such as job creation, skills transfer, and revenue sharing while reducing negative impacts like overcrowding or commodification of heritage through mass tourism. This can be applied at the Yankari Game Reserve where a considerate percentage of ticket sales should fund local youth patrols who serve as vigilante safari rangers team the protect the reserves biodiversity and other community projects whilst same can be likewise applicable at Ogbunike Cave, as half of guided-tour proceeds should be able to enhance women's handicraft cooperative whose artisans produce souvenirs and rent tents to visitors and researchers alike. By incorporating Functionalism's perception of heritage as a driver of social and cultural

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<sup>69</sup> Osun State Government. (2025). Buffer zones integrate ecological protection with cultural protocols "Conservation Mandates" section Retrieved May 4, 2025.

<sup>70</sup> Edo State Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Diaspora Affairs. (n.d.). Ministry Of Art, Culture, Tourism and Diaspora Affairs: Home. Retrieved June 4, 2025, from <https://mactda.edostate.gov.ng/>.

vibrancy in these mechanisms for sustainable use, the triangulation with the Heritage Management Theory guarantees that heritage sites social functions persist perpetually instead of fizzling out as extraneous funding diminishes.

In combining Heritage Management Theory (HMT) and Functionalist theory, we observe that HMT is the management framework for Functionalism's "why." Functionalism argues that heritage is significant since it maintains identity, generates cohesion, and supports socio-economic growth through tourism. While HMT dictates "how" to craft governance management frameworks, distribute resources, establish capacity, control risk, and distribute benefits so that those social functions are indeed achieved in practice.

In Nigeria where cultural heritage destinations such as the National Museum Benin City, Òṣun Osogbo Sacred Grove and Yankari Game Reserve among others have to serve at the same time as symbols to communities, tourist sites, and developmental economic resources, Heritage Management Theory guarantees that stakeholder functions are coordinated well, strategic plans convert Functionalist objectives into budgets and KPIs, diversified fund sources maintain operations, adaptive feedback loops maintain system balance, and community benefits are monitored and cycled back. Therefore, Heritage Management Theory actualizes Functionalism theory's requirement by turning theoretical understanding of the social functions of cultural heritage into practical, durable, and sustainable management results.

Nevertheless, to ensure a theoretical consistency between the foundations laid in this section and the "*interpretive frameworks*" later applied in the empirical analysis and discussion, the study further incorporated complementary theoretical perspectives that extend beyond the functionalist and managerial lens. Examples are, Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) which provides a critical framework for understanding how power relations, and dominant narratives shape heritage interpretation and governance in Nigeria. Likewise, the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model supports a developmental reading of how heritage destinations evolve, face pressures, and require adaptive management across different stages of tourism growth. Finally, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) offers an analytical structure for examining how heritage sites contribute to community assets, capabilities, and resilience. Integrating these critical (AHD) and developmental (TALC/SLF) perspectives alongside Functionalism and Heritage Management Theory allowed the study to analyze heritage sites not only as functional social systems but also as contested, evolving, and livelihood-shaping spaces ensuring coherence between the theoretical framework, methodology, and the interpretive models used in the chapter four of this research.

**Table 1:** *Comparison of Functionalism Theory and Heritage Management Theory*

Aspect	Functionalism Theory	Heritage Management Theory (HMT)
<b>Origin</b>	Developed by Bronislaw Malinowski (early 20th century)	Rooted in Sweden’s Royal Proclamation (1666), developed through multiple scholars and institutional conventions.
<b>Core Focus</b>	Functionalist theory explains the social functions of heritage in preserving identity, cohesion, and stability	While Heritage Management theory focuses on the structured management of cultural heritage resources through governance, planning, and evaluation
<b>Key Assumption</b>	Every cultural resource serves as a vital component in the survival and cohesion of the society.	Effective heritage outcomes depend on integrated management cycles and stakeholder involvement.
<b>Application in Heritage</b>	Heritage is a tool for socialization, cultural continuity, and collective memory	Operationalizes conservation strategies, policies, and risk management for sustainable heritage use
<b>Contribution to Study</b>	Explains why cultural heritage matters to a society	Provides a roadmap for how heritage goals can be achieved through planning and stakeholder collaboration
<b>Example</b>	Preserving Sukur’s Hidi palace maintains community identity	Creating site-specific management goals ensures conservation and economic benefit
<b>Strategic Emphasis</b>	Cultural heritage preservation and societal function	Governance structures, stakeholder roles, policy integration, and adaptive strategies

## 2.6 Conceptual Framework

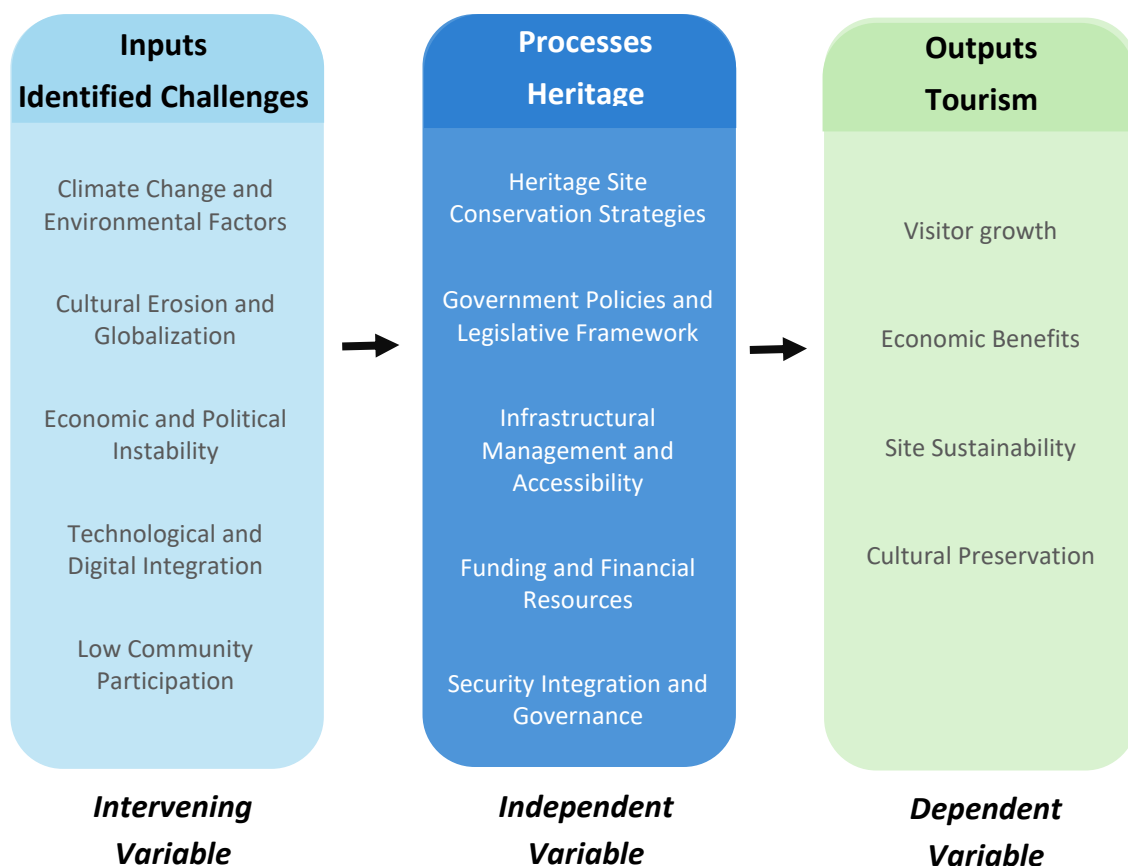
Early theoretical literature provides a foundational understanding of the principal ideas and interrelations on which this study rests. A multitude of factors affect the determination of tourism potential sustainability, accessibility, and attractiveness of a site. Therefore, the net value system of intact heritage tourism case presented, in which major threats and opportunities are denoted, focuses the conceptual stream to Nigeria. This accounts for the system of inputs, actors, processes, and outputs in heritage tourism. This study focuses on the challenges of maximal advancement in the sector and reminds the value of heritage tourism, sustainable tourism, and the collaboration of the stakeholders, with processes in the sector remaining unfinished.

Hence, the conceptual literature forms the basis of a framework for this study. Here, a common thread runs through the theoretical preservation and promotion of the various strands and heritage tourism case study in Nigeria. This is evident through the theory where the framework starts with the “intervening variable” on the left of the theoretical chart. This highlights the inputs or identified challenges such as climate change, global and local political and economic instability, lack of technological advancement, erosion of local culture, and

globalization as challenges with fundamental influence on a cultural heritage site. Then at the middle of the framework chart indicates the "independent variable" that emphasize the (*management processes*) required to convert the specified challenges like heritage site conservation measures, government policies, legislative structure, infrastructural management, fund, community participation and public participation.

These independent variables can be labeled as the heritage management processes that feed into the intervening variable and represent the strategic actions needed to address the challenges identified. Finally, on the right side of the framework chart is the "*dependent variable*" which showcases the (*outcomes*) through Tourism Development at the Heritage Sites, with results like visitor growth, economic benefits, site sustainability, and cultural preservation. The dependent variable thus encapsulates the goals and results of the conceptual framework serving as a comprehensive measure of the success and impact of heritage management strategies implemented within the framework.

### Input–Process–Output (IPO) Model for Heritage Tourism Development



**Figure 25:** *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

The diagram above applies John Fletcher's 1989 IPO input-output analysis model on tourism development to illustrate the conceptual framework for heritage tourism development in Nigeria<sup>71</sup>. It shows how identified challenges inputs (*intervening variables*) are addressed through heritage management processes (*independent variables*), leading to tourism development outcomes (*dependent variables*). The conceptual framework aims to assess heritage sites as a system where these management processes transform identified challenges into thriving heritage tourism outcomes. Nigeria's cultural heritage tourism system as expressed using the conceptual framework can be seen as an interconnected system of three major factors which showcases both the functionalist theory goals (social functions and heritage identity) and heritage management theory (planning, participation and evaluation).

It highlights how Nigeria's key actors like the government bodies at federal, state, local levels, traditional custodians, private sector and NGOs should interact with the heritage sites and heritage resources through governance tiers and management cycles to implement conservation strategies. First, the IPO input box encapsulates contextual challenge and drawing on Fletcher's position that accurate input identification is essential for gauging the scale of the problem and the direction of interventions, the model ensures that no critical barrier whether cultural erosion, poor infrastructure, weak policies, or disengaged local communities are overlooked. The central process stage comprises heritage management processes, by utilizing the iterative management cycle of assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation aims to respond directly to the contextual challenges. Drawing from the Fletcher's IPO vantage point, these processes are the transformational machinery that change challenges into opportunities.

Lastly, the output stage presents tourism development results and through the application of sustainability indicators confirm that the heritage sites continue to be strong under environmental and social pressures so that traditions and identities are fostered rather than depleted. Managers get feedback to improve inputs and processes in the subsequent cycle by measuring these outputs. This feedback loop aligns with the principles of adaptive assessment as stated by the Heritage Management Theory. Since the outputs influence subsequent assessments, which in return shapes policies, reallocates funding, and community initiatives in acknowledgement of the positive trends, these initiatives have a real influence on the planning and execution of heritage tourism activities. In this instance, the conceptual framing embodies the integration of theory with practice, which posits that the strategic planning of heritage site assessment feedback into policy, projects, and management are all crucial in ensuring that even the most underused heritage assets can become drivers of cultural development and social development.

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<sup>71</sup> Fletcher, J.E. (1989) Input-Output Analysis and Tourism Impact Studies. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 16, p.515.

### 2.6.1 Contextual Challenges (Intervening Variables)

The ground level of this conceptual model is constructed around the identification of the critical contextual challenges, which are the factors inhibiting the effective conservation and sustainable development of Nigeria's cultural heritage sites at present. These challenges identified are theorized as inputs, which are the Intervening Variables and consist of aspects such as environmental, social, political, and institutional conditions affecting cultural heritage sites and need strategic intervention.

One of the most urgent threats is climate change, which has direct risks for cultural heritage sites in the form of increased flooding, erosion, and extreme weather events. This is because a majority of Nigerian heritage sites like Yankari Game Reserve, Ogbunike Cave, Sukur Cultural Landscape, and Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, which account for 80% of case study sites in this study, are in rural environments. These environmental forces endanger both their cultural worth, physical integrity and long-term preservation of heritage structures, landscapes and sites. Another challenge is cultural erosion and globalization, which further increase the susceptibility of Nigerian cultural heritage since traditional knowledge systems, languages, and rituals gradually deteriorate under the effects of global cultural homogenization and modernity<sup>72</sup>. These environmental pressures threaten both their physical integrity, cultural value and long-term sustainability of heritage sites, landscapes and structures. Cultural erosion and globalization are another challenge that further intensify the vulnerability of Nigerian cultural heritage, as traditional knowledge systems, languages, and rituals face gradual decline under the influence of modernity and global cultural homogenization<sup>73</sup>.

Economic and political instability are other institutional limitations that constrict the proper management of the heritage sites. Issues such as inadequate budgetary allocations, erratic tourism policies, and unstable political climate tend to leave heritage sites poorly funded and unmanaged. A great number of sites lack proper management plans or protected status, thus vulnerable to encroachment, insecurity, neglect, or exploitation<sup>74</sup>. Limited basic technological integration in form of lack of digital heritage archiving, basic historical record keeping, non-existence of monitoring systems, and no interpretive technologies also undermine the ability of Nigerian heritage institutions to preserve, showcase and promote cultural assets effectively<sup>75</sup>.

In a more digitized global environment, the absence of technological integration separates Nigerian heritage from the majority of global networks of heritage and tourism. A second problem is the shortage of government policy and enforcement, conditions such as poor

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<sup>72</sup> Tagowa, W. N. (2010). Rural tourism as a factor of sustainable development: a case study of Sukur World Heritage Site in Adamawa State, Northeastern Nigeria. p.680

<sup>73</sup> Nwegbu, M. U., Eze, C. C., & Asogwa, B. E. (2011). Globalization of Cultural Heritage: Issues, Impacts, and Inevitable Challenges for Nigeria. Library Philosophy and Practice. p.2

<sup>74</sup> Heritage sites in politically unstable regions lack management plans and security (Yap & Saha, 2013).

<sup>75</sup> Absence of digital archiving and monitoring systems undermines conservation efficacy, The Need for Innovative Techniques (Okpalanozie & Adetunji, 2021)

legislative policy implementation, obsolete cultural policies, and ineffective interagency interactions have contributed to loopholes in regulatory frameworks that threaten heritage preservation. National institutions such as the NCMM in Nigeria do exist but are undermined by weak or inadequately implemented policy structures.

Finally, low community involvement in the processes of heritage management is a significant challenge. In most parts of Nigeria, local communities are still not engaged in heritage governance, either because of ignorance, poor consultation and engagement, or lack of benefits rewarding mechanisms. This disconnect not only reduces local stewardship but also limits the sustainability of conservation initiatives through the grassroots<sup>76</sup>.

## 2.6.2 Actors and Governance Tiers

The governance and actions taken by actors in managing cultural heritage sites can significantly influence their preservation either positively or negatively<sup>77</sup>. Effective governance often leads to good preservation of heritage sites, as well as promote sustainable development, while poor governance can lead to neglect, degradation, and loss of cultural value. The conceptual framework of this study recognizes the importance of these governance tiers and categorizes them into multi-level stakeholders as central actors who hold governance responsibilities of heritage sites. For example, Nigeria's National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) the country's heritage governance body at the federal, state and local governments levels set policies, fund programs and enforce laws<sup>78</sup>.

Traditional custodians like kings, chiefs, clan councils and the local communities' stakeholders hold cultural knowledge and manage local sites. While the private sector agencies like NGOs provide investment and technical support. These actors appear in the conceptual framework's process chart (e.g. Government Policies, Community Engagement and Local Participation) and are implicitly understood as stakeholders at each level. At the federal level, the NCMM are expected to implement UNESCO's World Heritage Convention and federal tourism policies. At state and local levels, tourism agencies and heritage organizations will hence adopt the outlined policies and manage each heritage site regionally. For instance, the Sukur Cultural Landscape which is Nigeria's first World Heritage Site is co-managed by NCMM and the Adamawa State government. Sukur's traditional leadership is provided by an indigenous custodian the Hidi (village chief) and his council, these custodians then govern local cultural practices at the heritage site<sup>79</sup>. The Sukur case study exemplifies dual-tier framework

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<sup>76</sup> Aleru, J. O., & Adekola, K. (2016). Perspectives on heritage, local community, and archaeological engagements in parts of Northern Yorubaland, Nigeria. 195–217.

<sup>77</sup> "Certain Aspects of Governance in Cultural Heritage Areas: The Case of Three Archaeological Sites in Serbia," 2023

<sup>78</sup> Makuvaza & Chiwaura (2014) critique NCMM's structural fragmentation, African heritage agencies struggle with vertical governance misalignment (pp. 48–49)

<sup>79</sup> Afamefuna, E. P., & Okonkwo, E. E. (2019). documents Sukur's dual-tier governance, Local custodians enforce seasonal site closures aligned with agricultural cycles p. 2136.

which local actors into the governance process ensure a direct decision-making process at the heritage site and fosters a genuine sense of local participation and ownership thus improving compliance with conservation measures at the site which is a model that should be encouraged across various cultural heritage sites in Nigeria to strengthen social stewardship and indigenous participation.

The framework therefore shows a pathway connecting these levels e.g. federal level representatives, to state boards administer sites, and down to the grassroots local communities who directly implement the governance process as the last level stakeholders and actors, also applicable at the other case study heritage sites. Thus, it stresses that even though governance is integrated from the highs of the national level and laws (e.g. NCMM Act) the effectiveness of these governances is when applied hand-in-hand through the local customary norms consent so that conservation strategies respect local culture, as Arjjumend and Beaulieu-Boon note, “Attributes of governance functions inside a customary institution are of paramount importance from conservation angles” (p. 6)<sup>80</sup>.

### **2.6.3 Heritage Management Cycle (Independent Variables)**

Highlighting the independent variable through the Heritage management which represents the processes needed to address the identified challenges in the framework follows a recurrent process of assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. First, the heritage sites are assessed to understand their current state and identify emerging challenges and threats. Then conservation or tourism strategies are outlined through heritage management plans, policies, and master plans. Next, these strategies are implemented through infrastructure works, marketing campaigns, and technology integration. This management cycle mirrors the UNESCO operational guidance on World Heritage management and sustainable tourism planning<sup>81</sup>.

Adopting this cycle as the standard operational model can transform abstract policy goals into concrete, repeatable actions for the heritage organizations mirroring global best-practice. For example, the application of the framework can be implemented on the future plans at heritage sites close to rural areas like Òşun Osogbo Sacred Grove, Sukur Cultural Landscape, Yankari Game Reserve, and Ogbunike Cave could formally build fire-risk assessment and environmental impact surveys models. Also, heritage sites like Sukur’s could schedule annual reviews of road-access improvements and emerging sites across Nigeria could institutionalize digital archive audits and community-feedback workshops as part of their management cycle process.

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<sup>80</sup> Arjjumend, H., & Beaulieu-Boon, H. (2018). Arjjumend & Beaulieu-Boon (2018) argue that customary institutions are "paramount" for conservation success. p. 6.

<sup>81</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Committee. (2019). Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Corrective measures for at-risk sites require integrated strategy (para. 179)

Overall, the framework turns theory into concrete application as it calls for direct planning (heritage impact assessments, disaster plans, master plans) and feedback evaluation (surveys, tourism metrics). For example, the heritage impact assessments submitted for Òṣun-Osogbo's new pavilion were done in line with the management plan, and a draft disaster risk plan is being finalized<sup>82</sup>. In practice, this means managers must assess each site's needs, plan site-specific maintenance policies, allocate needed budgets, build roads and centers, digitize collections, ensure security enhancement, then re-evaluate visitor and preservation outcomes, as a logical sequence addressing under-utilization through structured management.

#### **2.6.4 Practical Conservation Strategies**

At the heart of the framework lies a strategic focus on Practical Conservation Strategies, representing the actionable efforts needed to maintain the heritage management outcomes highlighted in the last section. These strategies are grounded in achieving site-specific realities to ensure that they are adaptable to Nigeria's diverse cultural landscapes. They include a range of interventions such as site assessments, heritage zoning, physical conservation works, visitor infrastructure development and digital documentation. Each of the intervention outlined will play an important role in addressing physical site deterioration, improving day to day site functionality, and visitor experience. Some of the steps that can be adopted as a conservation strategy for most of Nigerian heritage sites according to the research by (Mela & Cao, 2023) involves conducting detailed site assessments like archaeological surveys, environmental impact studies, and risk analyses<sup>83</sup>.

The evaluations help identify urgent threats (e.g., climate impact, erosion, structural decay, vandalism) and inform the development of strategic conservation responses. In many Nigerian sites, such as Yankari Game reserve, Osogbo Grove or Sukur Cultural Landscape, the lack of updated site assessment master plans has historically hindered consistent site development<sup>84</sup>. Hence, creating or updating these plans is a strategic priority. Therefore, the practical conservation strategies operationalize the heritage management cycle through tangible, step-by-step actions. By combining various site assessment strategies to address the core issues identified in the input layer of the conceptual framework.

#### **2.6.5 Functional Roles and Outcomes (Dependent Variables)**

The dependent variables in this conceptual framework represent the tangible outcomes

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<sup>82</sup> Oseghale, G. E., Omisore, E. O., & Taiwo, J. (2014). Exploratory survey on the maintenance of Osun-Osogbo sacred grove, Nigeria. 67% of scheduled maintenance was deferred due to funding reallocations. p.8

<sup>83</sup> Mela, I., & Cao, Y. (2023). The Impact of Rainfall on The Conservation of Traditional Nigerian Heritage Buildings: A Case Study of the Museum of Traditional Nigerian Architecture (MOTNA), Jos.

<sup>84</sup> Adewumi, A. (2022). critiques Nigeria's regulatory fragmentation, where outdated master plans (e.g., Yankari's 1998 plan and Osogbo Plan) lack integration with modern climate resilience standards.

through which the effectiveness of heritage management processes can be judged. Framed by the functionalist view that cultural heritage resources must serve both social identity and development roles, these outcomes reflect how well the applied processes transform the identified challenges into sustainable benefits. For example, at Sukur cultural landscape, maintaining the living functions of Sukur's Hidi (King's) palace and communal terraces helps preserve the community's cultural identity. This community preservation, in turn, forms an attraction for tourism development, where guided tours showcasing these living spaces boost visitors interest and helps sales of local crafts and thus generate vital income for this remote area.

Moreover, at Osogbo Grove similar outcomes could be realized where festivals such as the Òṣun-Osogbo Festival can be better promoted and in turn promote traditional heritage and visitor interest at the Osogbo Sacred Grove while stimulating her local economy. Furthermore, at heritage sites like the Benin City's museums, outcomes would attract higher attendance and reinvigorated appreciation of ancient Benin kingdoms culture with the museum's artefacts. At Yankari Game Reserve, enhanced interpretive professional services for the biodiverse environment will attract more wildlife tourists whose spending supports local guides, hospitality, and community projects. Also, Ogbunike Cave where proactive maintenance and culturally informed tour guides at the cave will boost visitation thus reinforcing respect for ancestral traditions.

The framework thus views outcomes such as visitor arrivals and site viability as success indicators. Through a Nigerian wide analysis, this synergy that cultural tourism 'stimulates infrastructure and socioeconomic development at the heritage sites' is confirmed. Combined, the outcomes confirm that the heritage sites experiencing both developmental and cultural conservation objectives align with the framework's functionalist orientation.

## **2.7 Empirical Studies**

Empirical research on Nigeria's tangible cultural heritage and its tourism potential have consistently revealed a landscape of untapped opportunities coupled with institutional limitation. Across the case studies explored which include museums, sacred groves, cultural landscapes, wildlife reserves, and cave complexes, single case study sites of previous work have reported both the socio-cultural advantages of heritage-tourism in Nigeria and the ongoing difficulties of infrastructure deterioration, managerial fragmentation, and community disengagement. Therefore, through examining the 5 case study sites of the study this empirical review seeks to synthesizes recent, data-driven findings alongside broader national analysis and cross-site theoretical reviews to illuminate where past studies have succeeded, where it falls short, and how this study's approach will bridge the identified gaps.

Critically looking through one of the case study sites of this research, recent empirical investigations on the National Museum, Benin City, reveal some promise as well as persistent

limitations of heritage-tourism synergies in Nigeria museums. Austine Emifoniye in his study on Benin city museum management highlighted severe infrastructure gaps with evidence of obsolete exhibition facilities and a lack of community engagement which erodes the museum's capacity to function as either a preservation hub or an educational resource<sup>85</sup>. Onuoha expands this critique in his study on redefining Nigerian museums, to the national level, demonstrating that many of Nigeria's "national" museums suffer from the same chronic underfunding, staffing shortages and maintenance deficits across Nigeria's museum network, deficits that are evident at the national museum Benin City<sup>86</sup>. Similar patterns of under-managed infrastructure and untapped heritage resource potential plague the Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove. An exploratory survey by Oseghale and Taiwo documented institutional maintenance failures at the Osogbo grove, such as overgrown pathways, clogged drainage channels at the Òṣun River, and inadequate funds for sculpture preservation<sup>87</sup>. Some of these deficiencies directly enable threats of erosion as observed by Aina and Abiola-Oke in their study on ecotourism assessment at the Osogbo grove, which revealed that the annual Òṣun festival results in visitor overcrowding thus accelerating trail erosion within the grove<sup>88</sup>.

Moreover, participant surveys from the study also highlighted visitors decrying the absence of formal tour guidance during the Òṣun festival. Folaranmi Babalola in his study on the individual knowledge conservation at the Osogbo grove showed that indigenous conservation practices such as ritual repainting of art sculptures at the grove have never been formally integrated into the Grove management plans, undermining its ecological and cultural resilience<sup>89</sup>. Thus, affirming same management challenges as seen in many Nigerian heritage sites earlier aforementioned.

At Sukur Cultural Landscape, Oladimeji and Umaru recent study highlighted the landscapes' persistent funding and infrastructural deficits, describing how the once-vibrant dry-stone terraces and palace complex now suffer from crumbling walls, deteriorating pathways, and scarce maintenance budgets that limit both conservation of cultural materials and visitor's easy access<sup>90</sup>. Echoing this, Tagowa critiquing that Sukur's 1999 UNESCO inscription had yet translated into reliable infrastructure investment, effectively relegating the site to a "sleeping beauty" status that remains under-resourced in spite of its global recognition as Nigeria's first world heritage site<sup>91</sup>. Compounding these challenges, Tagowa further revealed

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<sup>85</sup> Emifoniye cited the Benin museums' infrastructural gaps with evidence of obsolete exhibition facilities (p. 392-394).

<sup>86</sup> Many of Nigeria's "national" museums suffer from the chronic underfunding, staffing shortages reflecting systemic neglect across Nigeria's museum network (Onuoha, 2019, p. 112).

<sup>87</sup> Poor management and inadequate funds for sculpture preservation at the Oshogbo grove (Oseghale, et'al 2014, p. 15).

<sup>88</sup> Ecotourism challenges measurably intensify erosion within the Grove (Aina & Abiola-Oke, 2019, p. 120).

<sup>89</sup> Folaranmi Babalola's (2014) study on individual knowledge conservation at the Oshogbo grove. p.3.

<sup>90</sup> Oladimeji and Umaru (2024) linked crumbling terraces and fractured pathways at Sukur landscape to "chronic funding and infrastructural neglect".

<sup>91</sup> per Tagowa's critique on post inscription investment (2010), UNESCO recognition alone has failed to translate into durable support, leaving Sukur a 'sleeping beauty.'

that poor road networks leading to the Sukur cultural landscape coupled with limited involvement of local communities as visitors tour guides discourage tourists from exploring the rural heritage site, thereby hindering tourism growth within the area and eroding satisfaction among both residents and tourists.

This pattern holds true on a broader scale, as an ethnographic study by Wagetii et al, demonstrated that across Adamawa State cultural and ecotourism sites alike, struggle from deficient transport links and community disengagement consistently thereby thwarting development potential and tourism growth within the region<sup>92</sup>. Therefore, to overcome these identified interlocking barriers, a multi-pronged strategy is imperative, one that channels UNESCO and government funds into critical road upgrades, establishes revenue-sharing agreements to incentivize community custodianship of the heritage sites within the region, and formally integrates indigenous maintenance practices into site-management plans thereby transforming Sukur from an under-leveraged heritage relic into a sustainable pilgrimage of cultural and economic vitality.

Continuing the empirical review of our fourth case-study site, the Yankari Game Reserve which is known as one of West Africa's largest wildlife reserves, nonetheless grapples with chronic management shortfalls and acute security threats. Metilelu et al, modelling study examined animal poaching activities at the reserve renowned for hosting the largest elephant herds in Africa, the study using both linear and non-linear regressions highlighted that the distance covered by the rangers (anti-poachers) is significantly related to the number of poachers arrested, the study then indicated threats of elephant extinction by a human through poaching activities and recommended government intervention<sup>93</sup>.

Adding to the discourse, Habu et al, further reported that 45 % of resident households within the Yankari Game Reserve rely on its wildlife resources, with poaching incidents surging 200 % after management transferred to state authorities in 2006, an alarming indicator of fragmented managerial system and weakened enforcement on security at the reserve toppled with animal poaching problems<sup>94</sup>.

Conversely, Ogbunike Cave too, illustrates the recurring theme of infrastructural and managerial fragmentation. Regardless of the caves' inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage Tentative List and the evident authenticity and integrity of its limestone chambers, it suffers from limited tourist attraction and low visitor numbers. According to the study conducted by Ejikeme Joy persistent ecological degradation, collapsed walkways, unregulated water flow and

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<sup>92</sup> Wagetii et al. (2024) ethnographic review on challenges faced by cultural and ecotourism sites in Adamawa State. p.2.

<sup>93</sup> Metilelu et al. (2022) highlights the critical impact of ranger patrols on reducing poaching at Yankari Game Reserve.

<sup>94</sup> Habu et al. (2025) report a 200% increase in poaching at Yankari Game Reserve following governance fragmentation. (p. 380)

chronic maintenance shortfalls compounded by a fragmented management with no dedicated on-site personnel or manager to oversee conservation or guide interpretation within the Cave thus tourists who visit the heritage site receive very poor reception<sup>95</sup>.

Such management shortcomings not only undermine visitor safety but highlight the imperative for an exclusive, on-site management framework to protect both the Cave's integrity and its tourist appeal. Despite the existence of heritage preservation legislation, enforcement poses a critical challenge in Nigeria. A research conducted by Samuel and Chimeziem evaluated policy adherence by managers of heritage sites and concluded that corruption, insufficient political will, and competing interests between tourism development and conservation are typically responsible for impeding successful policy implementation. According to their study, most heritage sites experience encroachment, vandalism, and lack of maintenance as a result of weak enforcement of the laws already in place.

Gbadegesin and Osaghale's analysis on "*Management challenges of cultural property in Nigeria*" exposes the institutional breakdown in Nigeria's cultural heritage sector, overlapping bureaucracies and role fragmentation among government agencies, traditional institutions, and local communities leave valuable cultural assets without clear custodianship<sup>96</sup>. This fragmentation can be seen across the reviewed five (5) case study heritage sites in this empirical literature. At the National Museum in Benin City, curators struggle to secure restoration funds because they lack a single point of contact, oscillating between the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) and the government so essential conservation projects are repeatedly delayed. In Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, responsibility for trail upkeep and educational programming is divided among UNESCO, the state tourism board, and the traditional council, leading to chronic maintenance backlogs.

Sukur Cultural Landscape faces a similar void as the management body overseeing visitor logistics, interpretation, and infrastructure repairs is not fully financially backed thus community groups and local stakeholders routinely shift blame when funding or permits are needed. In Yankari Game Reserve, the hand-off between federal park authorities, state wildlife services, and the community councils create enforcement blind spots that animal poachers and intruders' exploit. While at Ogbunike Cave, the lack of a focused management authority ensures that safety inspections, signage maintenance, and scientific monitoring simply do not occur. It is thus essential to establish clearly stated stakeholder functions, integrated funding mechanisms, and institutionalized community co-management, which are critical for rejuvenating Nigeria's heritage tourism ecosystem.

Learnings from Italy's heritage-tourism success, Galli's analysis reports that Italy's unified heritage-tourism system attracted millions of tourists and accumulated hundreds of billions of yearly revenue by utilizing unified conservation-tourism systems, concerted governance and

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<sup>95</sup> Ejikeme (2021) discusses ongoing ecological degradation and management challenges at Ogbunike Cave, which adversely affect visitor experience and conservation efforts. (p. 17)

<sup>96</sup> Gbadegesin and Osaghale's (2014) analysis on "Management challenges of cultural property in Nigeria" exposes systemic fragmentation in custodianship (p. 8)

management <sup>97</sup>, a model directly opposing Nigeria's structural fragmentation, poor financing, and diluted accountability revealed across the five (5) case study sites, this study fills the vital gap in integrated risk assessment by using a triangulated NVivo-facilitated thematic analysis to consolidate these fragmented problems (bureaucratic overlap, role confusion, funding insufficiency, and community exclusion) into practical solutions based on clear mandates, aggregated financing, and institutionalized co-management, finally confirming that Nigeria's heritage tourism renewal, as uncovered by this empirical review, is conditional upon interlacing productive policy, coordinated practice, and empowered community engagement to balance heritage conservation with livelier tourism growth.

To wrap up, this empirical review of Nigeria's cultural heritage and tourism development shows that integration of strong policy frameworks, community initiatives, and rigorous evaluative metrics will drive successful preservation. Prior research has shown that heritage site neglect, infrastructural decay, and stunted tourism development result from inadequate resourcing, uncoordinated management, and minimal local involvement. Unfulfilled aspirations around skills, infrastructure, and cross-disciplinary collaboration perpetuate preservation neglect, and the visitor experience suffers. As articulated, intersectoral policy, practice, and community integration, along with comprehensive risk management, are essential for Nigeria to convert its cultural heritage into tourism.

## **2.8 Operational Definition of Terms**

As Nigeria continues to concentrate on the growth of its tourism sector, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the interconnectedness of the two, relevant definitional clarity of these concepts will help ensure coherence. These terms form the point of departure for discussing the opportunities and challenges of managing historical sites for eco-friendly travel.

### **1. Historical Sites**

Heritage sites are places that are significant to a nation or community due to their historical, cultural, or natural significance. Nigeria's rich cultural and historical past are evident in these ancient monuments, archaeological sites, sacred groves, traditional landscapes, and monuments. Some of the heritage sites in Nigeria include the Sukur Cultural Landscape, the Kano City Walls, and the Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove.

### **2. Cultural Heritage**

Traditions, customs, artifacts, and sites transmitted from generation to generation are known as cultural heritage. Both intangible heritage, such as languages, music, and

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<sup>97</sup> Italy's model demonstrates how coordinated governance overcomes systemic fragmentation (Galli, 2024, p. 58).

festivals, and tangible heritage, such as buildings and art, are included. Nigeria's numerous ethnic communities, traditions, and sites are all representations of its abundant cultural heritage.

### **3. Preservation**

Conservation is the practice of preserving and upholding cultural heritage to avoid decay, damage, or loss. This may involve restoring old buildings, recording oral customs, and preserving artifacts in museums. Conservation aids in making sure that future generations will be able to enjoy and learn from Nigeria's rich heritage.

### **4. Tourism**

Tourism is the travel of individuals to various locations for pleasure, discovery, or study. Heritage tourism involves traveling to sites of culture and history to study the past. Heritage tourism in Nigeria appeals to people in such locations as the Ogbunike Caves, the Benin Moats, and the Argungu Fishing Festival.

### **5. Sustainable Tourism**

Sustainable tourism is a means of tourism management such that it does not damage the environment or heritage. It makes sure that tourism serves the interests of the local communities as well as ensures that heritage places are conserved for posterity. This comprises sustainable visitor management, conservation practices, and tourism development versus heritage protection policies.

### **6. Conservation**

Conservation preserves and maintains cultural heritage while allowing its continued use. It includes restoring old buildings, managing sites sustainably, and raising public awareness. Conservation keeps historic places intact and meaningful over time.

### **7. Cultural Resource Management (CRM)**

Cultural Resource Management is the professional care of heritage. It covers recording, research, preservation, and enforcing policies. Good CRM helps heritage support education, tourism, and national identity.

### **8. Stakeholder Engagement**

Stakeholder engagement means involving many groups in decisions about heritage and tourism. This includes government bodies, local people, historians, investors, and tourists. They must cooperate for effective management and promotion.

## **9. Legislative Framework for Heritage Management**

A legislative framework is the set of laws and policies that protect and regulate heritage sites. It defines conservation rules, who is responsible, and how sites can be used for tourism. Strong legal protection prevents damage or exploitation.

### **2.9 Significance of the Study**

This study is important because it identifies deficiencies in Nigeria's tourism and cultural heritage and proposes pragmatic ways for Nigeria to improve the management, preservation, and sustainable use of its tourism geared cultural heritage for national growth. The heritage case study sites represented in this study captures the multicultural aspects of the country's different peoples and showcases Nigeria's historical, cultural, and architectural heritage. This study examines those issues and proposes practical solutions, thus giving policymakers, heritage managers, tourism actors, and local residents valuable ways to attain socio economic rewards through cultural heritage preservation in Nigeria.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge and literature on cultural heritage management and tourism by providing empirical data, outlining theoretical frameworks, and setting future research agendas. It also serves as a point of comparative analysis for other countries that have successfully combined heritage conservation and tourism development. This will aid in reforming institutions, capacity building, and policy development and formulation that will add support to Nigeria's cultural heritage sector.

This research advocates for support of interagency collaborations and the considerate allocation of resources, the holistic preservation of legislative frameworks, and the advocacy for the protection of heritage for the state actors and policy decision makers in the governing institutions. It highlights the need for the sustainable tourism development and the formulation of policies that protect cultural tourism. These will help in facilitating local governments, tourism departments, national and state heritage authorities in policy formulation and action plans in responsible tourism promotion and the conservation of heritage.

This research study, in the end, offers an example to follow in the formulation of realistic planning that accords with international best practice in sustainable cultural tourism and heritage management, thereby increasing the national and local economic development of the developing country of Nigeria, in the promotion of her cultural heritage sites for tourism and the local economic opportunities that are created for the tourism industry.

## **2.10 Summary of Literature Review and Identified Gaps**

To summarize the review of literature on Nigeria's cultural heritage and tourism development included in this research especially in exploring the nation's heritage sites many facets of the development and managerial approach of the heritage tourism were discussed along with important the practical, empirical, and conceptual issues in the theories. The research explored how methods of site preservation, both Indigenous/Traditional and contemporary, were applied regarding the protective approaches. It explored the managerial and the sustainability of the preservation efforts in terms of rulemaking, sustainable tourism, public-private partnerships relational to the sustainability in the longer term of Heritage sites, and the conservation of Heritage sites. The writings centered on local involvement and community participation as to the Indigenous people's stewardship of heritage, the tourism-value of cultural celebrations, and obstacles to community-based conservation. The major obstacles to the development of tourist industry in this area included poor infrastructures, weak finances and issues of security. Some of the more documented challenges to heritage site tourism development were weak transport systems, inefficient tourist amenities, poor finances and issues of sociopolitical instability.

Surveying five of Nigeria's Iconic Heritage Sites revealed similar trends across all sites in the socio-cultural and economic opportunities they each offered. The socio-cultural and economic opportunities each site offered were overshadowed by poor infrastructure and consolidated management frameworks and by a lack of community involvement. For example, community involvement in preservation and educational activities at the National Museum in Benin City is minimal and the museum's exhibition facilities remain outdated. As a result, cultural heritage preservation and education stagnate. Oṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove suffers through overgrown trails, blocked drains, and uncontrolled festival mobs that speed erosion, exacerbated by a lack of incorporating indigenous conservation wisdom. Sukur Cultural Landscape is still a "sleeping beauty," its UNESCO designation without stable funding, good roads, or substantial community co-management. Yankari Game Reserve despite promoting both wildlife protection and household incomes, experienced escalated poaching following management changes, showing key security and enforcement loopholes. Ogbunike Cave, which is on UNESCO's Tentative List, is plagued by dilapidated walkways, water damage, and a lack of stewardship on site, with visitor safety and interpretation completely neglected.

Throughout these case studies, Gbadegesin and Osaghale's discussion of cultural-property management in Nigeria distills the underlying causes overlapping mandates between federal, state, and local authorities; ambiguous custodial duties; and essentially nonexistent feedback loops to fix failures. Samuel and Chimeziem highlight how weak enforcement, and conflicting political interests further derail policy implementation. Notwithstanding the scattered successes participatory ranger units in Yankari, guided-tour

satisfaction gains at Sukur no study have yet included these findings into a systems-level risk-assessment framework that connects inputs (infrastructural decay, policy gaps, cultural erosion), processes (conservation strategies, legislative reforms, community participation), and outputs (visitor growth, economic benefit, site sustainability).

This gap aligns precisely with our conceptual framework (Section 2.6) only by treating Nigeria's heritage tourism system as an interconnected Input–Process–Output model where contextual challenges are met with targeted management processes and yield measurable tourism and preservation outcomes can sustainable progress be achieved. Therefore, this study's mixed-methods, NVivo-driven thematic analysis will synthesize stakeholder insights, visitor-experience metrics, GIS accessibility data, and social-media engagement into unified risk profiles and prioritized action plans. In doing so, it bridges the existing divide between isolated case-study findings and a cohesive, actionable strategy ensuring that policy, practice, and people are interwoven to revitalize Nigeria's heritage tourism.



## **03 - Research Methodology**

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## 3.1 Research Design

This chapter outlines the methodology for conducting research using a qualitative strategy to assess Nigeria's cultural heritage sites' conservation, management, and tourist potential. It addresses research design, data-gathering tools, sample selection and ethical issues. NVivo analysis software was applied to analyze qualitative data. Research design is all about how and why of a research study. They are experiments and surveys that provide a blueprint in collecting and analyzing data of a study<sup>98</sup>. Hence, survey method of research was applied within this study, employing qualitative approaches such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, focused group discussions, and structured questionnaires for visitor measurement.

Such approaches offer information through investigation into the subjective experience, perceptions, and actions of study participants at the case study locations conservation and management while recording tourism visitor numbers and heritage management indicators<sup>99</sup>. Furthermore, in this study, a multi-case study design was employed to focus on various Nigerian cultural heritage sites that provided an all-encompassing snapshot on preservation mechanisms and tourism potentials of five (5) case study heritage sites nationwide. Accordingly, allowing the scrutiny of contextual factors such as local culture, historical importance, and stakeholder engagement at length, this case study methodology is applicable in understanding the nuances on cultural heritage conservation and sustainable development.

## 3.2 Research Method

The qualitative research method utilized in this research was motivated by its modern power to grasp complicated social processes like yielding quantifiable data on visitor numbers and heritage management measures. Qualitative technique was utilized to enhance our comprehension on heritage management process, stakeholders' views, and community participation that opened room for personal, first-hand experience of the participants on heritage sites heritage management measures and visitor interactivity. Combined with the flexibility of this method provides in-depth, descriptive information about how stakeholders, local communities, and site managers think about management practices, conservation, and tourism

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<sup>98</sup> Mixed methods capture both subjective experiences and quantifiable data (Creswell, 2014, p. 40).

<sup>99</sup> Shao, Y. (2017). Conservation and Sustainable Development of Human-inhabited World Heritage Site: Case of World Heritage Lijiang Old Town. *Built Heritage*, p. 5.

possibilities<sup>100</sup>. Since they allow the exploration of different views and experiences. They also enable the collection of data in natural settings, where participants are able to discuss their own experience and provide valuable insights into the condition of tourism development and heritage site management<sup>101</sup>.

### **3.3 Data Collection Methods**

A variety of data collection methods were employed to gather extensive information on Nigeria's heritage sites' management, preservation, and tourism potential. Having each interviewed and surveyed a different group, each research method answered different aspects of the research questions. The multi-method research framework incorporated heritage tourism in Nigeria and a geographical and socio-political divide in the preservation of cultural heritage. It included Participant Observation, In-depth Interviews and Questionnaire Surveys as the use of multiple methods provided a solid understanding of different and sometimes conflicting stakeholder views, grassroots community involvement, and data at macro and micro levels of heritage management.

#### **3.3.1 Participant Observation (PO)**

One of the main techniques utilized in gathering data for this study was Participant observation (PO). According to Creswell (2014) participant observation involves the researcher immersing themselves in the study environment to observe behaviors, events, and firsthand interactions<sup>102</sup>. Participant observation in this study enabled the researcher to interact directly with local residents, heritage site managers, relevant stakeholders and site visitors. This method provided an opportunity to observe the manner in which tourism operations and preservation programs are implemented in the case study locations and the challenges that people involved with these activities face.

Through participant observation, a researcher is able to capture contextual information that is not easily accessible through other techniques, including surveys and interviews. This allows one to understand the connections between resident localities, managers of heritage sites, and tourists on a deeper level. Also, participant observation provides rich qualitative data on human behavior and the influence of local culture and traditions on the management of heritage site<sup>103</sup>. Important activities like site management procedures, visitor interactions, and community

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<sup>100</sup> Jimura's (2016) study of Japan's Kii Mountain pilgrimage routes validates participant observation in natural settings. On-site data collection captures tacit conservation knowledge. p. 387.

<sup>101</sup> Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). Qualitative framework naturalistic inquiry reveals contested meanings of preservation. p. 15.

<sup>102</sup> Creswell (2014): "Structured homogeneity in focus groups prevents perspective dilution" (p. 194).

<sup>103</sup> Takyi, E. (2015). The Challenge of Involvement and Detachment in Participant Observation. Moderator. detachment prevents dominance by high-status participants p. 868.

participation in conservation initiatives were observed during this study.

### **3.3.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

An additional important data collection technique used in the study was focus group discussions, or FGDs. Focus group discussions FGDs involve assembling a small number of people with a common viewpoint or experience regarding the research topic and engaging in a systematic dialogue<sup>104</sup>. For this research, FGDs were conducted with the managers of the five (5) heritage sites, leaders of each local communities, stakeholders in the tourism industry, and tourists during site evaluation. FGD was designed to elicit the participant's views on the preservation, management, and tourist attractiveness of Nigeria's heritage sites, as well as the preliminary identification of key issues and potential solutions to the preservation and management challenges of Nigeria's heritage sites.

The fruitful discussions that took place during the FGDs allowed the researchers to understand and capture a range of perspectives on key issues. The guides for the discussions will revolve around a set of open-ended questions which are meant to promote the participants' active thinking and help elucidate on the intricacies of the interplay between cultural heritage sites and the tourism that is developed around it. The flexibility that FGDs offer where participants can not only present their individual thoughts but also respond to and elaborate on the contributions of their peers is particularly useful for the study's aims of understanding the participants as a collective and in relation to the study's objectives.

### **3.3.3 In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)**

The use of In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) was also a valuable addition to the methods of data collection for this study. IDIs also comprised individual interviews with the relevant stakeholders which, in the case of the study sites, were the leaders of the communities, site managers, government representatives, and tourism professionals with considerable expertise regarding the case sites<sup>105</sup>. These interviewees hold different perspectives regarding the opportunities and the challenges associated with tourism development and the conservation and management of Nigeria's cultural heritage. The IDIs's design also provided the opportunity for participants to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives in a more meaningful manner. The semi-structured interview format allowed the researcher freedom to learn from key participants' perspectives on heritage conservation, tourism development, community participation, and the strategies needed to overcome existing challenges were the primary objective of the interviews.

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<sup>104</sup> Morgan, D. L., & Spanish, M. T. (1984). Focus groups: A new tool for qualitative research.

<sup>105</sup> Knott, E., Rao, A. H., Summers, K. (2022). Interviewer positionality shapes disclosure of institutional failures (p. 8).

### **3.3.4 Questionnaire Surveys (QS)**

A questionnaire survey (QS) provided additional quantitative information to capture measurable indicators and sentiments for a broader group of participants<sup>106</sup>. The QS covered tourists at all five case study destinations and community locals and their site managers and staff. Randomly sampling these different respondent groups provided statistically generalizable heritage conservation attitudes, tourism activities, site access, and benefits to local people. The Structured questionnaire survey included several multiple-choice questions and some open questions to determine respondents' satisfaction levels, issues, and support for various management options. This structure allowed for streamlined data collection and analysis, enabling site and demographic group comparisons<sup>107</sup>.

### **3.3.5 Documentary Sources**

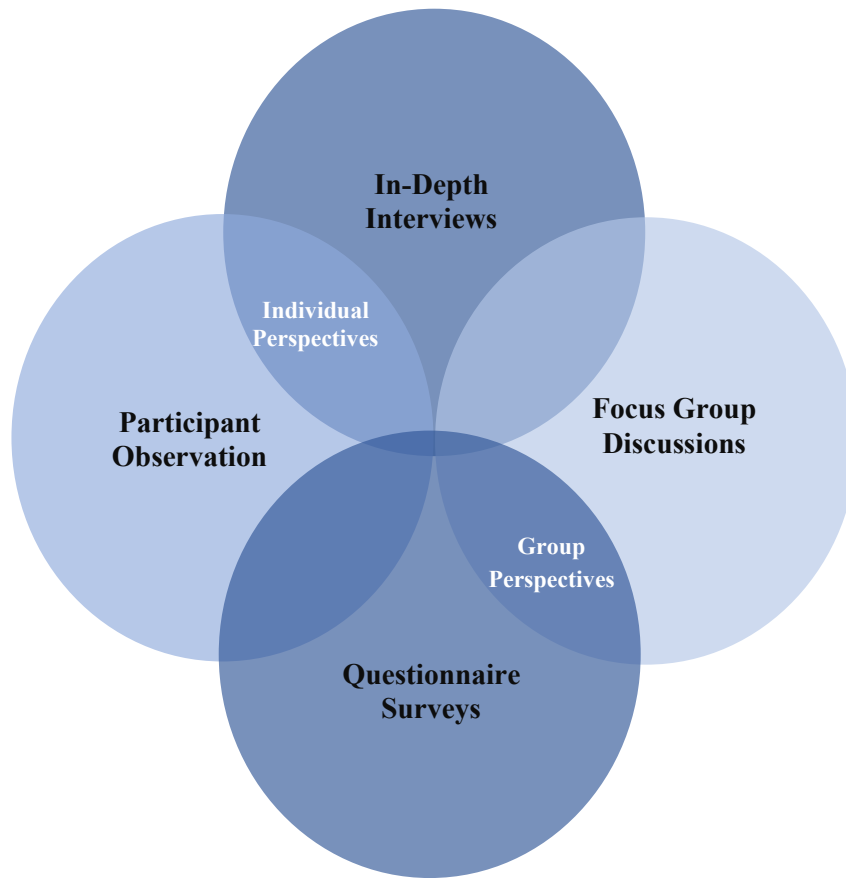
I also used document analysis as a supplementary method by reviewing reports and other materials on Nigerian tangible cultural heritage resources. I reviewed contemporary documents, publications, and reports and other materials touching on the Nigerian tangible cultural heritage resources. I accessed both historical documents and contemporary materials, like conservation reports, official documents and plans for tourism development, and digital video recordings that captured live events at the heritage sites. The videos provided important context on the management and policy frameworks concerning heritage conservation and the development of tourism in Nigeria.

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<sup>106</sup> Roopa, S. (2012). Questionnaire Designing for a Survey. Contingent questions reduce respondent fatigue by 40% (p. 275).

<sup>107</sup> Creswell (2014). Research Design: Standardized instruments enable hypothesis testing across cases (p. 158).

## Data Collection Framework



**Figure 26:** *Data Collection Framework: Scope and Focus.*  
**Source:** *Researchers' Construct, 2025.*

### 3.4 Research Approach

The application of triangulation of data from various sources and methodologies, the study ensured the qualitative methods will assist in quantifying elements like tourism impact, visitor satisfaction, and other measurable variables related to heritage conservation, qualitative data enriches the study by providing rich, descriptive site management insights into the perceptions and experiences of respondents<sup>[108][109]</sup>. To operationalize this triangulation the NVivo software program, which offers a framework for classifying and coding significant volumes of textual

<sup>108</sup> Questionnaire Designing. Survey instruments must balance comprehensiveness with respondent engagement (Roopa, 2012, (p. 275).

<sup>109</sup> Interviews in the social sciences. Triangulation mitigates institutional response bias (Knott et al., 2022, p. 12).

information, will be used to observe qualitative facts analysis<sup>110</sup>. This methodology ensures the reliability and thoroughness of the outcomes, augmenting the breadth and relevance of the research findings.

The NVivo analytical software adopted in this observe is a effective device for qualitative information analysis that gives a shape for classifying and coding massive volumes of textual records accrued within the direction of this examine from data series resources along with (interview transcripts, cognizance-group notes, subject observation), NVivo will permit a scientific identification of topics, patterns, and relationships across diverse qualitative records sources. This analytical software program gives the researcher advanced methods for thematic analysis and conceptual framework development.

While NVivo gives quite a few benefits for qualitative records evaluation, it is essential to note that the software is not a methodology in itself, however a tool that helps a research procedure. By integrating NVivo, derived subject matters on stakeholder perceptions of conservation demanding situations and control performance signs, which when combined with statistical trends in visitor numbers and satisfaction scores generates actionable insights for targeted conservation strategies and sustainable tourism development at Nigeria's cultural heritage sites.

### **3.5 Study Population**

Population can be defined as the entire group under study as specified by the objective of a research<sup>111</sup>. The study population comprises individuals and groups who are directly or indirectly involved in the preservation, management, and promotion of five(5) cultural heritage sites in Nigeria which includes; National Museum Benin city, in Edo state, Ọ̀sun-Osogbo Sacred Grove in Ọ̀sun State, Sukur Cultural Landscape in Adamawa State, Yankari Game Reserve in Bauchi State and Ogbunike Cave in Anambra State. This population included heritage site managers, community leaders, cultural preservation officials, tourists and local residents, each offering unique perspectives on the challenges and opportunities associated with heritage site conservation and tourism.

### **3.6 Sample Technique**

To obtain deep, context-rich insights, the present research used a purposive sampling approach. Participants were recruited from three qualitative data-gathering exercises like In-Depth Interviews, Focus Group Discussions and open-ended Questionnaire Surveys to capture

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<sup>110</sup> AlYahmady, H. H., & Alabri, S. S. (2013). Using Nvivo for Data Analysis in Qualitative Research. Software-assisted coding ensures thematic consistency across large datasets (p. 184).

<sup>111</sup> Willie, M. M. (2024). Population and Target Population in Research Methodology. p.8.

both expert knowledge as well as wider community and visitor opinion on the heritage places and their tourist activities, as discussed below. Where 'n' is Number of participants.

**Table 2: Participant Sampling by Data Collection Method**

No	Data Collection Methods	Sub-Groups and Sample Sizes	Number of Participants (n)
1	In-Depth Interviews	Heritage Site Managers (10) Cultural Preservation Officials (7) Community Leaders (2)	19
2	Focus Group Discussions	Sukur Cultural Landscape Youths (5) Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove Youths (5)	10
3	Questionnaire Surveys	Community Residents (500) Tourists (76)	576

### 3.6.1 Selection Criteria

Participants were selected according to the following criteria to ensure relevance, depth of experience, and diversity of perspectives.

- a) **Heritage Site Managers (n=10):** Two senior managers from each of the five case-study sites, chosen for their direct oversight of conservation and tourism operations.
- b) **Cultural Preservation Officials (n=7):** Officers from the National Commission for Museums and Monuments selected for their policy-making and regulatory roles.
- c) **Focus Group Discussion Participants Youths (n = 10):** Young leaders (18–30 years) represented equally from Sukur Cultural Landscape (n = 5) and Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove (n = 5), who gathered to share ideas on protecting cultural integrity, improving visitors' experiences, and promoting sustainable tourism in their rural communities.
- d) **Community & Residents (n=500):** Residents aged  $\geq 16$  years living within 10 km of all heritage sites, with informed consent and willingness to provide site experience and development expectations.

- e) **Tourists (n=76):** Domestic and foreign visitors aged  $\geq 18$  years, first-time or return, who spent  $\geq 1$  hour on-site; gender-balanced by age group and nationality agreeing to answer satisfaction, visitation frequency, and preservation knowledge questions.

### **3.7 Sample Frame**

The sample frame was built from publicly known information, including heritage site directories, government reports, and tourism agency databases. An effort was made to get samples that represent various regions of Nigeria, giving a wide geographic and cultural representation of heritage management practices. For every heritage site covered in the research, the sample frame selected the appropriate stakeholders and informants directly engaged in the preservation and management of the site. This allowed for the collection of data specifically suited to each case study heritage sites' specific context and challenges.

### **3.8 Sample Size**

In total 605 participants were surveyed from the five (5) case-study heritage sites in Nigeria. Participants were proportionally recruited from National Museum Benin City (120), Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove (128), Sukur Cultural Landscape (121), Yankari Game Reserve (119), and Ogbunike Cave (117), with a solid representation of each site's stakeholder group. Covering five heritage sites located in different regions of Nigeria provided the ideal sample size that balanced statistical power while capturing variation in the data, such that resident and visitor perspectives from all sites were included. To some extent, the sample size picked in this case offered the flexibility needed to accommodate change while data collection was in progress.

### **3.9 Research Instruments**

Several research instruments were used in this case, such as Digital Documentation Tools (camera, drones), Visitor Monitoring Tools (surveys and documents for counting visitors), Community Engagement Platforms, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). These tools were selected due to their capacity to deliver quality data in the areas of site management and conservation, as well as evaluations of heritage site tourism.

#### **3.9.1 Semi-Structured Interview Guides**

For stakeholders like Heritage Site Managers, members of local governments, the tourism sector, and people involved in the culture, the primary technique used to solicit in-depth feedback was the semi-structured interview guide. The design of the guides captures the essence

of semi-structured interviews allowing participants to narrate their experiences and insights in an open-ended fashion.

### **3.9.2 Focus Group Discussion Guides**

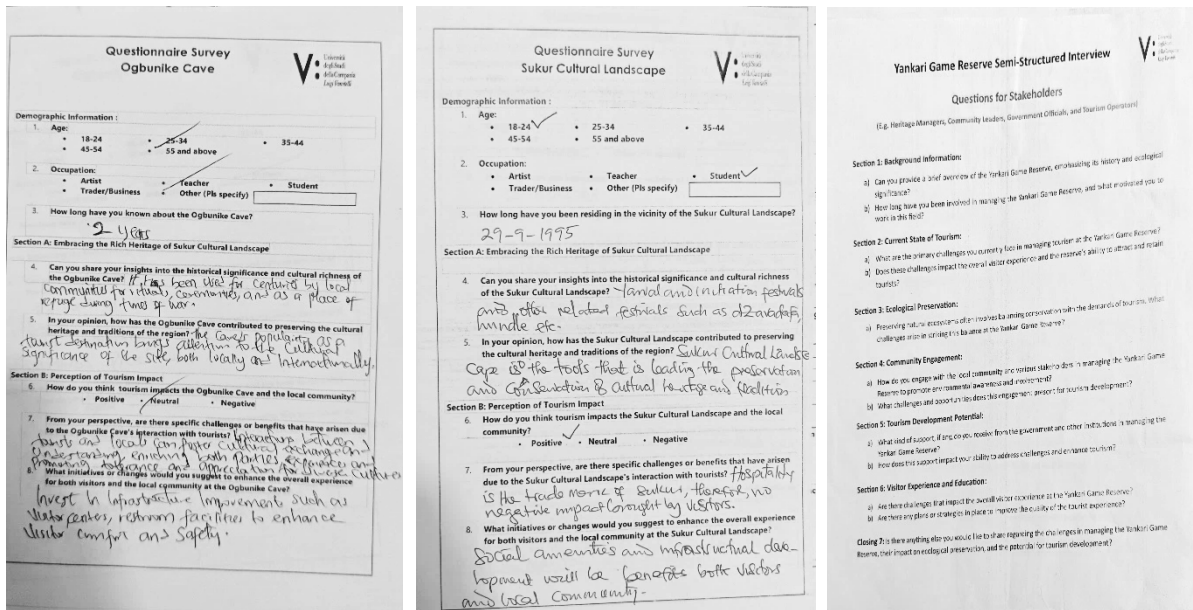
To ensure the focus group discussions (FGD) address all relevant study areas, a structured discussion guide will be developed. The guide will include open-ended questions designed to stimulate group discourse by allowing participants to provide ideas, arguments, and responses to the questions as well as to one another. The dynamics of the group with respect to tourism and conservation of heritage, and interface of tourism and conservation, and, thus, to a considerable degree, a comprehension of the collective experience of the group will be decisive.

### **3.9.3 Questionnaire Survey**

The questionnaires were open ended to reflect the contemporary issues under study. It was adopted to reflect the hypotheses and research questions under study. The questionnaires items were formulated using a multichoice question type to give participants room to express their broad insights on the subject matter.

### **3.9.4 Documentary Analysis Framework**

A documentary analysis framework was used to analyze written materials related to heritage site management, such as government reports, conservation plans, historical documents, and tourism development policies. Thus, documents such as annual reports from tourist visitor statistics, and internal audit reports that assess the implementation stated heritage and tourism strategies were reviewed. Moreover, analysis on official tourism brochures across the heritage sites including museum exhibit scripts and educational materials to assess the public narrative and commodification of the site's heritage values were evaluated.



**Figure 27:** Photos of the primary data-collection instruments; Questionnaires survey and Semi-structured interview documents.

### 3.10 Integration of Analytical Software

The software, NVivo, applied in this study's data analysis is a strong qualitative data organization tool for themes and categories. NVivo enabled systematic coding of textual data as well as the ability to discern repeated themes, patterns, and trends regarding site management, visitor experience among other key metrics.

#### 3.10.1 Data Coding and Development of Themes

All information gathered through the interviews, focus-group, questionnaire surveys, and documentary sources transcripts were imported into the NVivo analytic software for hierarchical coding to enable thematic nodes creation around "site management", "funding challenges," "community engagement," "stakeholder perspective" and "visitor experience." This purposive sampling design with NVivo-supported triangulation allowed the study's recommendations to be based on both qualitative, context-rich stories and statistically significant trends. After the data collection is finished, interviews, FGDs, questionnaire surveys and documentary sources were transcribed and fed into the NVivo software. The transcriptions were coded, and the researcher was able to draw out themes associated with the main areas of research inquiry such as management practices at the heritage sites, issues of tourism development, and the contribution of community participation. The software helped to clump responses into similar groups, making it easier to explore the data in depth.

### **3.10.2 Development of the Themes**

While analyzing the data, themes were built inductively from the feedback provided by the participants. These themes will correspond with the objectives and the research questions of the study. For instance, the effects of heritage tourism or the difficulties of collaborating with stakeholders may surface as a predominant theme. These themes will be visualized with the aid of NVivo, enabling a thorough comprehension of the data.

The NVivo's visualization tools such as, word trees, code frequency charts, and thematic cluster maps were employed to breakdown interrelationships among selected themes and ensure that emerging patterns were grounded firmly in the data. The final thematic outcome, therefore, not only fulfills the research objectives like understanding the tourism potential and heritage site management practices but also captures the perspectives of site managers, tourists, community leaders, and the voices interviewed, which enriched the data for the subsequent discussions and analysis.

### **3.10.3 Interpretation of Findings**

The interpretation of the findings with respect to the research questions and existing body of literature was the final step in analysis. The implications of the findings for Nigeria's tourism sector and the conservation of heritage sites will be included in this process. Comparative analysis will be performed to understand the different opportunities and challenges that face each of the selected heritage sites.

## **3.11 Reliability and Validity**

To determine the validity of the research tool, the researcher also requested expert opinions in the area of study, particularly the supervisors and lecturers, to accompany this exercise. In addition, subsequent to interviews, surveys, and FGDs, participants were requested to review the output and give feedback as to whether their views had been truly represented. This procedure assisted in decreasing mistakes and increasing the credibility of the study. In addition, systematic coding and categorization of data using the NVivo software for qualitative data analysis aided enhancing the dependability of the research findings even further. The NVivo coding procedure adhered to Saldaña's (2021) iterative method<sup>112</sup>, with intercoder reliability checked at  $\kappa=0.78$  (Kappa Coefficient) for coding reliability.

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<sup>112</sup> implemented Saldaña's (2021, p. 88) iterative approach.

### **3.11.1 Triangulation**

Triangulation means the use of multiple methods, data sources to balance the views obtained from a research data or cross-check the findings to reduce bias (Carter, 2014) in this study, methodological triangulation was employed using qualitative approach of data analysis by combining semi-structured interviews, participant observation, focus group discussions, and questionnaire surveys<sup>113</sup>. Each method targeted distinct dimensions of the same phenomena for example, the semi structured interviews revealed stakeholder perspectives while participant observation captured real-time behaviors and site dynamics, the questionnaire surveys provided quantifiable patterns of visitor perceptions and site performance. Having compared and contrasted all these varying insights from these different research methods, the study was able to identify convergent themes like consistent reports of infrastructure gaps and highlight discrepancies such as differing views among managers versus local residents, thus strengthening the validity and depth of our conclusions.

### **3.12 Researcher's Positionality and Reflexivity**

As outlined by Jamieson and Pownall (2023), reflexivity is the practice of considering and writing in a reflexive manner, that is, to describe how your experience and position values and assumptions, especially your own data collection, interpretation, analysis shape and inform research and the research process<sup>114</sup>. Based on the Jamieson and Pownall reflexivity principle the researcher in the course of his survey quoted that he acknowledged that he has a position that shapes the research process. His upbringing, experience and passion in Nigeria's cultural heritage and tourism development have shaped his viewpoint. First, the researcher will practice reflexivity by keeping a journal in which feelings, ideas, and responses were documented during the research process. This process helped the researcher ensure that fact-based conclusions are drawn and to assist in recognizing possible biases. In the scope of the study, the researcher sought to sustain transparency regarding the rationale for each decision made throughout the study, thus ensuring fair representation of the participants' perspectives.

### **3.13 Pilot Study**

In preparation for the full data collection exercise, a pilot study will be conducted in order to assess the research instruments for validity and reliability, determine any possible obstacles, and refine the procedures for data collection. The pilot study used a small sample of respondents from one of the chosen heritage sites (Ọṣun-Osogbo sacred Grove). The clarity of the interview

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<sup>113</sup> The Use of Triangulation in Qualitative Research to balance subjective insights with empirical patterns (Carter et al., 2014, p. 545).

<sup>114</sup> Jamieson, M., Govaart, G., & Pownall, M. (2023). Reflexivity in quantitative research: A rationale and beginner's guide. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*.

questions, the format of the Focus Group Discussions, and the overall feasibility of the research methods were all to be tested. The pilot procedure identified any problems with the research design, e.g., ambiguously worded questions or logistical issues, and enabled the researcher to correct these issues prior to undertaking the full study. It also gave a chance to exercise how to use NVivo to analyze data so that the software is utilized effectively during the main data collection and analysis phases.

### **3.14 Ethical Consideration**

The research process revolves around ethical considerations, that guarantee the protection of participants' rights and the integrity of the study. The American Psychological Association's (APA,2017) and the British Sociological Association's (BSA, 2002) established ethical guidelines for qualitative research will be followed in this study<sup>115 116</sup>.

#### **3.14.1 Informed Consent**

On informed consent, all participants received complete information about the study's purpose, their part in it, and any possible risks. Before any data was collected, the researcher obtained consent from participants. Additionally, participants were made aware of their freedom to leave the study at any moment without facing any repercussions.

#### **3.14.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Participants' confidentiality will be strictly maintained, and personal identifying information will not be disclosed. Data will be stored securely, and any information that could potentially identify individuals will be anonymized during the analysis process. The researcher will ensure that no participant is personally identifiable in any research reports or publications

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<sup>115</sup> American Psychological Association. (2017). Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct (2002, amended effective June 1, 2010, and January 1, 2017).

<sup>116</sup> The British Sociological Association (BSA, 2002) guidelines for ethical qualitative research (p. 1) .



## **04 - Analysis and findings on case study sites**

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## **4.1 Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Procedure**

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected for this study on the preservation and tourism potential of cultural heritage sites in Nigeria. The research was guided by four (4) central research questions, which are aimed at i) Understanding the strategies for preserving and promoting heritage sites, ii) Identifying the challenges impeding tourism development, iii) Assessing the current state of heritage sites and the effectiveness of their management, and iv) Exploring the role of community and stakeholder participation in conservation and management efforts. To address the research questions data collection comprising of a qualitative corpus of 605 responses were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews (n=19), focus-group discussions (n =10), and open-ended questionnaire surveys (n=576). All responses from surveyed respondents were treated as textual, interpretive data and subjected to thematic coding in NVivo analytical software, which enabled systematic identification of recurring themes, cross-site patterns, and the relationships between institutional practice, community experience, and visitor perceptions at the case study heritage sites adopted for this study.

Furthermore, analytical procedures included iterative coding, development of thematic nodes, and cross-case triangulation were employed to strengthen validity of the study findings. The Questionnaire survey findings provided a width of public views throughout the heritage sites, whereas the semi structured interviews and FGDs provided interpretive richness and captured the contextual operational realities behind the repeating issues at every heritage site in line with stakeholders' and institutional viewpoints. Accordingly, the research results were then introduced with NVivo-generated code frequencies and visualizations to exhibit theme prominence, with subsequent detailed, site-level case analyses. This chapter thus transitions from coded patterns to interpretive synthesis, connecting empirical results to theoretical models and policy implications developed in subsequent sections.

## **4.2 Qualitative Data Presentation**

This section introduces the underlying qualitative data by way of three (3) complementary approaches (semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions, and open-ended questionnaire) at the chosen five (5) Nigerian heritage sites to wit; National Museum, Benin City; Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove; Sukur Cultural Landscape; Yankari Game Reserve; and Ogbunike Cave. Each approach was utilized to reach out to varied stakeholders' views to

provide a robust, multi-voiced basis for the ensuing thematic analysis. The section on data presentation was organized into three. Firstly, we presented the distribution of participants among the five case-study heritage sites. Secondly, we elaborated the demographic profile of our respondents, including gender, age, occupation, education, and residency status. Lastly, we explained the NVivo-guided coding protocols and trustworthiness practices that underpinned our thematic analysis of interviews, focus groups, and open-ended survey responses<sup>117</sup>.

#### 4.2.1 Respondent Metrics across Case Study Heritage Sites

A total of 605 participants contributed to the qualitative data across the five selected heritage sites. These respondents were engaged through the abovementioned three (3) complementary data collection methods below.

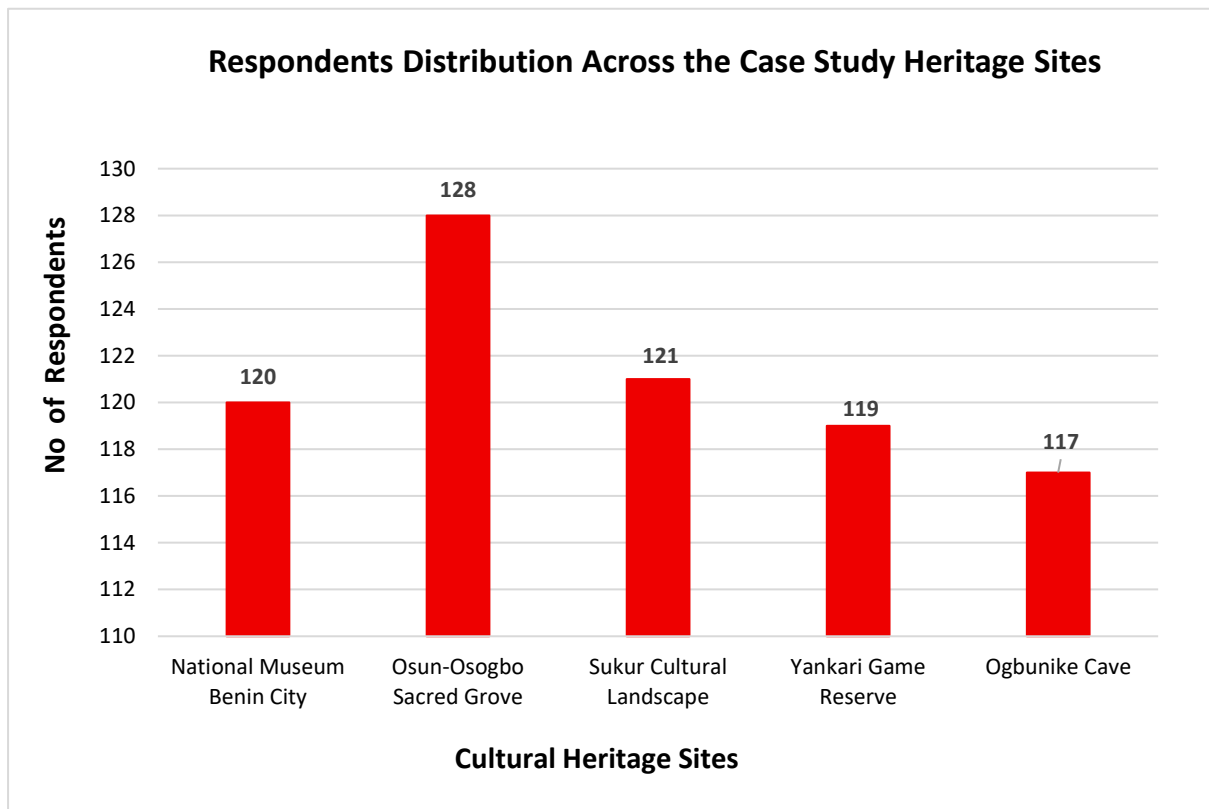
**Table 3:** Respondents Distribution by Heritage Sites (N = 605).

N/S	Case Study Heritage Sites	Survey (Locals)	Surveys (Tourists)	In-depth Interviews (Managers/Staff)	Focus Group Discussions (Youths)	Number of Respondents (n)	Percent age (%)
1	National Museum Benin City	100	16	4	-	120	19.8%
2	Ọ̀sun-Osogbo Sacred Grove	100	19	4	5	128	21.1%
3	Sukur Cultural Landscape	100	13	3	5	121	20.0%
4	Yankari Game Reserve	100	15	4	-	119	19.7%
5	Ogbunike Cave	100	13	4	-	117	19.3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 below presents Respondents' distribution across the five (5) Heritage Sites covered in the survey, presenting raw counts (number of respondents: 605) as well as percentage shares for each of the case study locations. Actually, responses were evenly dispersed across all the five sites. Each estimate shows the aggregation of local resident surveys, tourist questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and youth focus-group discussions collected at the corresponding sites. Since each site provided approximately the same number of resident questionnaire surveys (100 each), our analysis is based on an evenly distributed local view. Tourist survey questionnaires ranged from 13 to 19 survey questions per site, in order to secure responses from both new and return visitors. Qualitative interviews with heritage site managers (carried out at 3 to 4 per site) and youth focus group discussions (conducted at Ọ̀sun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Sukur

<sup>117</sup> Zamawe, F. C. (2015). The Implication of Using NVivo Software in Qualitative Data Analysis: Evidence-Based Reflections. *Malawi Med J.* 2015 Mar;27(1):13-5. doi: 10.4314/mmj.v27i1.4.

Cultural Landscape only) provided richness to the survey, enabling the researcher to gain operational, strategic, and generational perspectives. This even distribution of methods and stakeholders among all five heritage sites provides a solid foundation for the ensuing thematic analysis, so that no one site or group of stakeholders disproportionately influences the conclusions of the study.



**Figure 28:** *Respondents Distribution Across the Case Study Heritage Sites*

## 4.2.2 Demographic Representation

The demographic data of the respondents summarized the profile of the participants viewpoints regarding cultural heritage conservation and tourism growth in Nigeria. Variables that were explored are gender, age, profession, educational level, and residency status of the participants under survey as summarized in the table 4 below.

**Table 4:** Demographic distribution of study participants (N = 605)

Items	Respondents (N = 605)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	312	51.5%
Female	293	48.5%
<b>Age Group</b>		
≤ 16 years	49	8.1%
18–35 years	302	49.9%
36–55 years	220	36.4%
≥ 56 years	34	5.6%
<b>Occupation</b>		
Civil Servant	148	24.5%
Business	136	22.4%
Private Workers	108	17.9%
Student	87	14.3%
Farmers	70	11.5%
Others (Unemployed)	56	9.3%
<b>Education Level</b>		
Tertiary	246	40.7%
Secondary	205	33.9%
Primary	91	15.0%
No Formal Education	63	10.4%
<b>Residency Status</b>		
Local Residents	500	82.6%
Tourists	76	12.6%
Site Staff/Managers	19	3.1%
Focus Group Participants (Youths)	10	1.7%

The above *Table 4* illustrates the demographic characteristics of the 605 respondents surveyed in the five 5 heritage sites. With regards to gender breakdown, 51.5 % of the respondents were male and 48.5 % female. This approximate equality indicates that conclusions derived from the study findings are representative of both male and female opinions, minimizing the scope for gender bias in our thematic findings. In terms of age composition, almost half of the respondents were young adults aged 18-35 years at 49.9 %, while another large portion fell in the mid-life category (at 36.4 % aged 36–55). Adolescents (at 8.1 %, aged ≤ 16 years) and elderly persons (at 5.6 %, aged ≥ 56 years) made up a small portion of the

respondents, suggesting that the research primarily reflected the views of working age adults, who are most active in site management, community engagement, and tourism activities.

On occupational distribution of respondents, “Civil servants” were the largest professional group 24.5%, followed by “businessmen and women”, 22.4% and then “private-sector workers” which includes teachers, cultural experts, tourism staff, and the likes followed with 17.9 %. “Students” 14.3% and “farmers” 11.5% also made-up significant proportions of the distribution, while “others” 9.3% include unemployed respondents or those in less-common occupations represented the least group in the occupation distribution. On educational qualification of respondents, most of the participants hold at least a secondary school diploma, with 40.7% holding tertiary qualifications and 33.9% completed secondary education. Smaller samples have only primary education at 15.0% or no school at 10.4%, This combination represented a well-educated, professionally active respondent group, with both institutional, entrepreneurial, and grassroots perspectives. By residency of respondents, this means that the majority of participants reside locally at 82.6 %, of which 12.6 % were tourists, site staff/managers 3.1 %, and youth focus-group participants at 1.7 %. Having insights from the local community meant that the findings are anchored in local perspectives, complemented by valuable external and structural viewpoints.

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### **4.2.3 NVivo Procedures and Analysis**

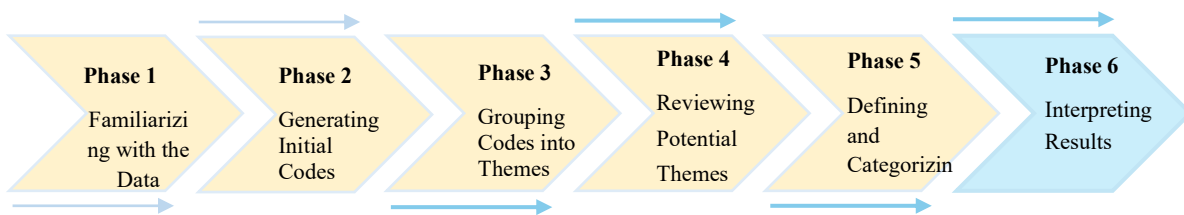
To produce findings from the extensive qualitative data, the in-depth interview scripts, focus group discussions, and open-ended questionnaire responses were imported into NVivo software. The analytical workflow structure adopted followed the Braun & Clarke’s (2006) <sup>118</sup>, six-phase model specifically designed for reflexive thematic analysis such as this study, because it offers the researcher flexibility and rigor needed to explore the complex, context-dependent perspectives of multiple respondent groups across the surveyed Nigeria’s cultural heritage sites. Furthermore, the Braun & Clarke’s six-phase framework emphasizes researcher judgment, iterative movement between data and themes, and richly contextualized interpretation to ensure systematic coding, key themes development, and cross-site pattern detection relevant to the study.

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<sup>118</sup> Braun and Clarke’s (2006) foundational definition focuses on ‘identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns’ later developed as the six phase model for thematic analysis (p. 79).

The *figure 29* below presents a clear alignment between the Braun and Clarke’s six-phase reflexive thematic analysis framework and the corresponding NVivo workflow steps employed in this study. Each of the six phases, from familiarization through report production specify the concrete NVivo activities (e.g., transcript import, open coding, node clustering, theme review, node definition, and report export) that operationalize Braun & Clarke’s methodological guidance. This mapping facilitated openness in the way participants data were consistently converted into the thematic results detailed within this Chapter.

Moreover, the NVivo workflow depicted in *figure 29* also permitted analytic notetaking during the process of coding, thereby facilitating the researcher to record nascent reflections, interpretive choices, and initial conceptual connections. These reflective comments were central to developing themes, confirming patterns between sites, and making sure that the analysis stayed in touch with the lived experience of the communities, site managers' views, and visitors' comments across the case study sites and assisted in shedding light on underlying structural asymmetries, operational issues, and opportunities for sustainable heritage management in Nigeria.



**Figure 29:** Six-phase thematic analysis workflow (Based on Braun & Clarke, 2006)

### 4.2.3.1 NVivo Thematic Analysis Coding Process

All qualitative data collected across the five heritage sites, consisting of 19 in-depth interviews, 10 focus-group discussions, and 579 open-ended questionnaires with local residents (500) and tourists (79) were transcribed verbatim from video recordings and field notes. Thematic analysis proceeded in six iterative phases based on the above-mentioned Braun & Clarke framework, 2006.

1. **Data Familiarization:** Video and audio files recorded on a Sony digital camera were reviewed in full, and the generated transcripts were checked against field notes to ensure accuracy. Each interview and FGD lasting 45 minutes were transcribed word-for-word to capture participants' exact phrasing and perspectives<sup>119</sup>.
2. **Generating Initial Codes:** The collected transcripts were then uploaded into NVivo analytical software. Afterward, interviews and FGDs were coded manually to preserve respondents' contextual nuance, while auto-coding was used to analyze the larger questionnaire dataset. Code production was carried out over two rounds of coding, two weeks apart, in order to maximize consistency<sup>120</sup>.
3. **Searching for Themes:** Closely related codes were aggregated into temporary themes. In this stage, researcher-maintained reflexivity was employed, permitting themes to inductively arise without assigning pre-existing categories according to Braun & Clarke (2006).
4. **Reviewing Potential Themes:** Provisional themes were then compared back against the entire data set. Overlapping or sparsely populated themes were combined or eliminated to ensure each theme was both internally coherent and different.
5. **Defining and Naming Themes:** Major themes that emerged following the reflexive thematic analysis process includes site management, funding issues, community involvement, collaboration with stakeholders, and visitor experience. Clear definitions and quotations were used to articulate the themes and present the study's research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
6. **Producing the Report:** Key illustrative quotes were selected, and from these, code frequency tables and thematic maps were constructed to convey a cohesive analytic narrative

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<sup>119</sup> Alhojailan's (2012) critical review about 'the need for a clear demarcation between description and interpretation' (p. 42).

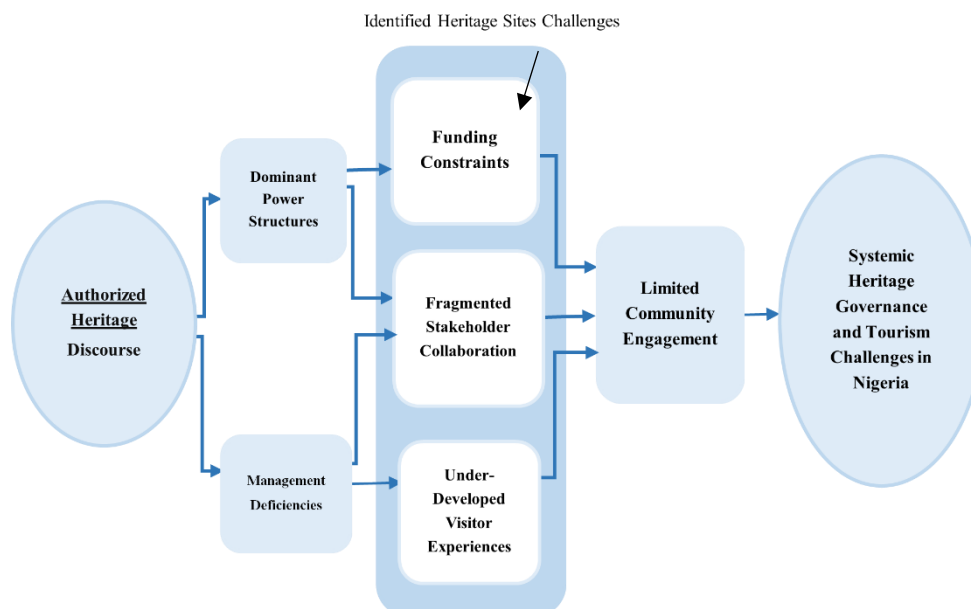
<sup>120</sup> Saldana's (2021) practical guide details specific techniques like First Cycle coding as 'initial codes assigned to datum' (p. 5).

To maintain rigor, intercoder reliability was achieved through the independent coding of 20% of the data ( $\kappa = 0.78$ )<sup>121</sup>. Participants from the validation subset (n = 15) were also consulted to ascertain the accuracy of the themes<sup>122</sup>. An audit documenting all coding decisions and theme refinements was utilized. Finally, findings across interviews, FGDs, and surveys were triangulated to identify points of convergence and divergence.

Ultimately, the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) framework inspired by (Smith, 2006) was applied to interpret how dominant power structures which manifested as site management deficiencies, funding constraints, limited community engagement, fragmented stakeholder collaboration, and underdeveloped visitor experiences shape heritage governance and tourism development in Nigeria.

#### 4.2.4 Full NVivo Results and Key Findings

This part lays out the full outcome of the NVivo outputs derived from the qualitative dataset of the study, offering a structured report on how themes, categories, and patterns were formed through the five case study sites of heritage. Through the NVivo coding process, it was possible to make cross site comparisons and detailed site-specific observations, whereby common challenges were seen throughout the surveyed heritage sites, including underfinancing, infrastructural deterioration, and disjointed governance. The results also captured site-specific dynamics influenced by local histories, cultural resonance, and community engagement. By combining the participant voices with qualitative thematic clusters, analysis illustrates how



**Figure 30:** AHD manifestations in Nigerian heritage governance based on (Smith's framework 2006).

<sup>121</sup> Kiger and Varpio (2020) overview 'the importance of reflexivity' in thematic qualitative research. (p. 848).

<sup>122</sup> Analysis on broader qualitative research principles (Bryman, 2004).

Nigeria's national-level cultural heritage structural limitations converge with local agency, resilience, and contestations.

The NVivo analysis combined full dataset collected during the research survey which includes 19 in-depth interviews, 10 focus group discussions, and 579 questionnaires to bring a total of 605 qualitative data to lay out what the study found at scale, how the conclusions were reached. We then characterize coding architecture, theme frequencies and reference counts (*see Table 5*), to highlight insights from each data collection method such as (interviews, FGDs, questionnaires). Thus, our analysis indicated that the semi structured interviews foregrounded institutional perceptions of the heritage sites, FGDs revealed communal and generational dynamics at the sites, while the questionnaire surveys quantified prevailing public perceptions and together these various data streams were then mapped to show where they converged.

The convergence consistently implicated chronic underfunding, governance fragmentation, infrastructural decay, weak interpretation and security risks as the principal drivers eroding cultural heritages site quality and visitor experience in Nigeria. In turn, these factors explain why many Nigerian heritage sites fail to attract and retain heritage-motivated tourists and why broader national tourism recovery has not translated into durable local benefits. These integrated findings therefore directly inform the study's central argument that effective heritage conservation and tourism development require coordinated, supply-side interventions (funding, governance, technical capacity and community co-management) alongside demand stimulation. These results thus underpin the general arguments of this research with empirical data and additionally provide a basis for the comparative synthesis constructed in *Section 4.5* which contrasted site-specific findings to expose entrenched patterns influencing cultural heritage management and tourism growth in Nigeria.

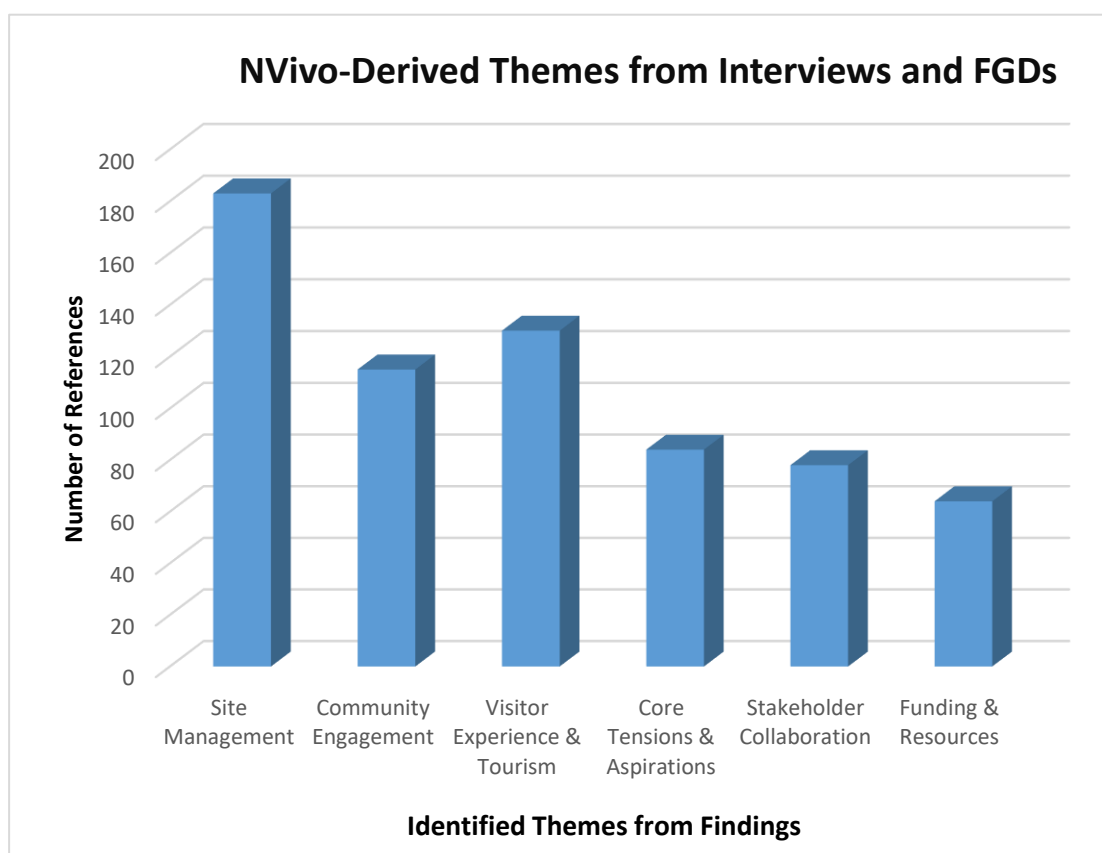
#### **4.2.4.1 Dataset Overview**

The empirical data for this research was created using a purposive qualitative approach that prioritized depth of understanding of the heritage sites, diversity, and triangulation across sources. In total, the research used the created 605 responses from interviews, FGDs, and questionnaires, which were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically in *NVivo 15* analytical software. This synthesis had the effect of ensuring that the results presented here capture both institutional views and lived life of communities, delivering a balanced basis for cross-case examination.

**Table 5: NVivo-Derived Thematic Findings from Interviews and FGDs.**

Theme	Frequency (% of coded responses)	References (n)	Dominant Sub-Themes (Examples)
Site Management	0.28	183	Staff shortages, weak enforcement, limited monitoring, operational bottlenecks
Visitor Experience and Tourism	0.20	130	Accessibility challenges, dissatisfaction with facilities, limited interpretation
Community Engagement	0.18	115	Local participation, reliance on traditional knowledge, youth involvement
Core Tensions and Aspirations	0.13	84	Conflicting land uses, tension between preservation and development
Stakeholder Collaboration	0.12	78	Government–community relations, NGO/partner involvement
Funding and Resources	0.10	64	Budget limitations, dependency on donors, project implementation delays

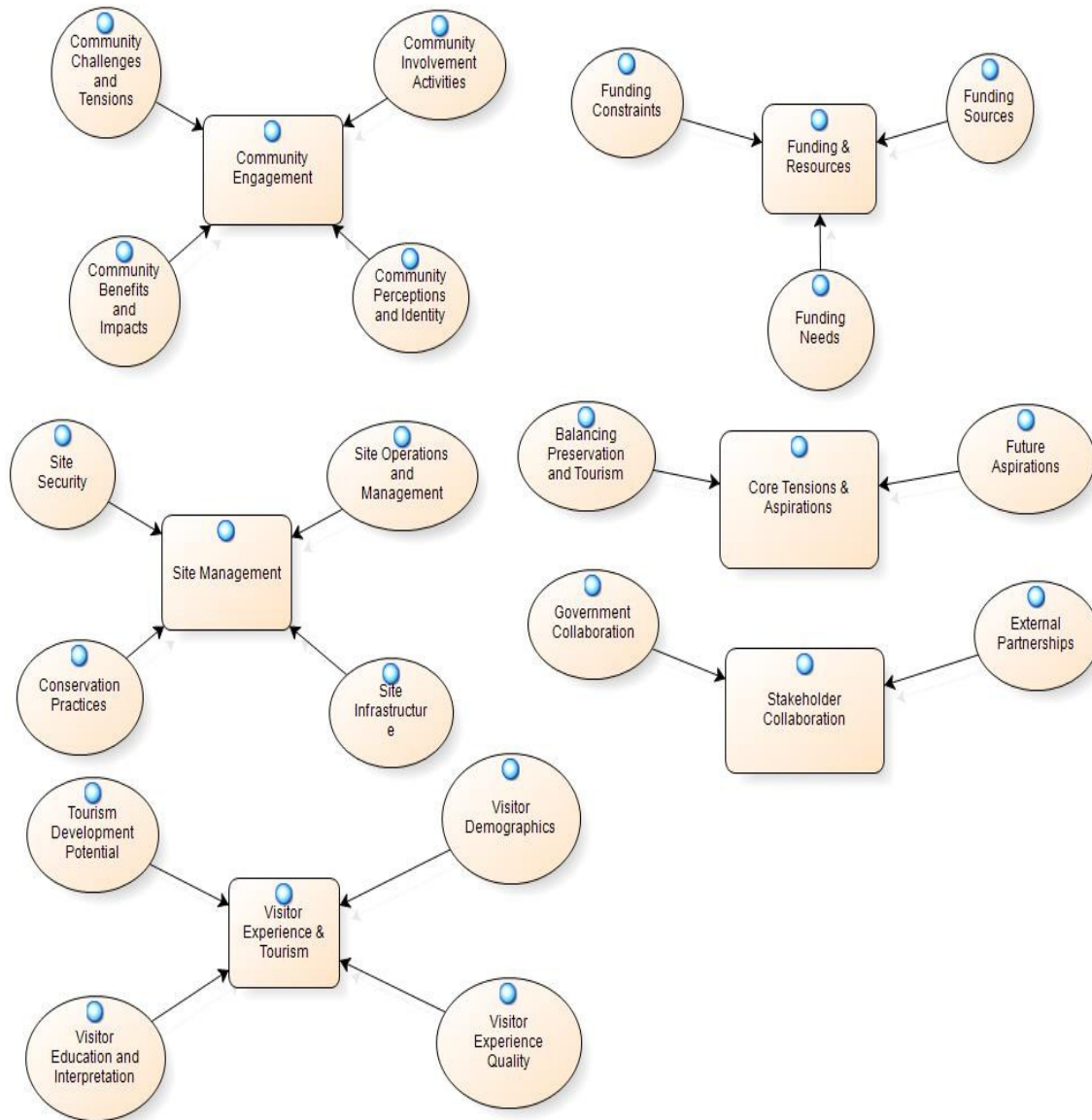
The percentages and frequencies in *Table 5* as mirrored from the references coded in the NVivo output indicated that the most occurring coded themes according to respondents' feedback were Site Management (183 references; 28%) and Visitor Experience & Tourism (130 references; 20%). Community Engagement (115; 18%) was also cited, followed by Core



**Figure 31: Frequency of Key Themes from NVivo Coding of Interviews and FGDs**

Tensions & Aspirations (84; 13%), Stakeholder Collaboration (78; 12%), and Funding & Resources (64; 10%) less often by the respondents. These numbers indicate the issues that were most relevant to the interviews and focus group discussions, hence providing an evident and lucid foundation for the strategic interpretation below.

The frequencies and percentages appearing in Table 5 are portrayed in Figure 31, which identified the relative prominence that the surveyed respondents assigned to various dimensions of heritage site management. **Site Management** was the most common theme cited, with 183 citations (28%), suggesting that operational issues, decision-making, and heritage site organizational structures were front-of-mind for interviews and FGDs respondents alike. **Visitor Experience and Tourism** came next with 130 references (20%), and these emphasized issues related to infrastructure, interpretation, access, and visitor satisfaction overall. **Community Engagement** was 115 references (18%), which indicated the important place of local custodianship, intergenerational involvement, and fair benefit sharing in maintaining heritage sites. Less commonly coded, but nevertheless important, were **Core Tensions & Aspirations** (84; 13%), **Stakeholder Collaboration** (78; 12%), and Funding and Resources (64; 10%), indicating latent conflicts, partnership dynamics, and ongoing budgetary pressures. The bar chart in *Figure 31* makes these easily visualized, so their relative importance is immediately clear which topics dominated the discussion.



**Figure 32:** NVivo thematic map of six major themes, with node size showing frequency and lines indicating links to sub-themes.

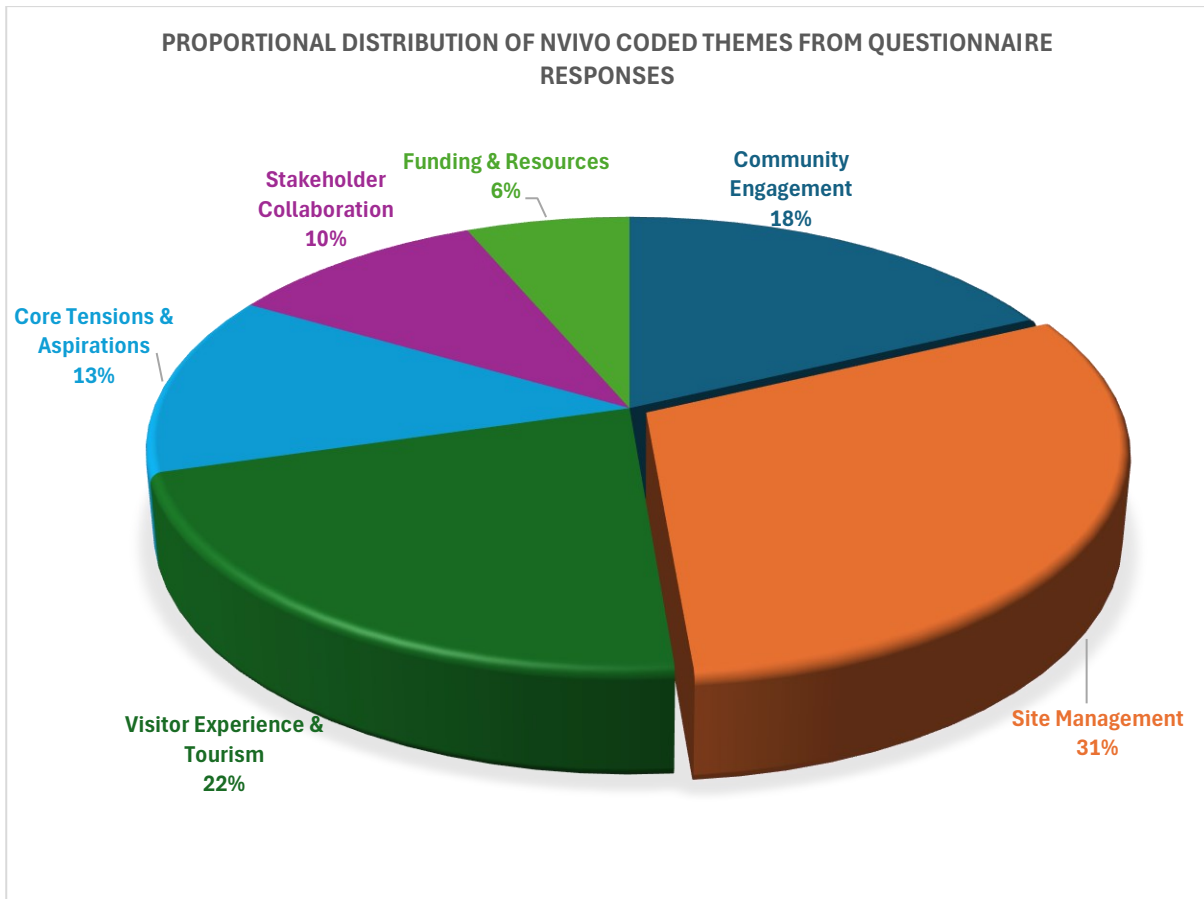
The *Figure 32* gives a visual illustration of the NVivo thematic map which shows the six major themes that emerged from coded responses in respect to challenges facing the Nigerian cultural sites, the corresponding node size reflects relative frequency, and lines show key relationships between the themes and sub-themes map highlights the relational dynamics among themes. The diagram illustrates how funding and core tensions intersect with nearly all other domains, which suggest that resource constraints and conflicting priorities influence site management, visitor experience, and community engagement. The visual clustering also reveals that collaborative and participatory approaches are positioned as potential bridges between operational shortcomings and sustainable outcomes.

**Table 6:** NVivo-Derived Thematic Findings from Tourists and Local Residents' Questionnaires

Theme	Frequency (% of coded responses)	References (n)	Dominant Sub-Themes (Examples)
<b>Site Management</b>	31%	178	Poor monitoring, staff shortages, weak enforcement, inadequate maintenance
<b>Community Engagement</b>	18%	104	Local participation, youth involvement, traditional knowledge
<b>Visitor Experience and Tourism</b>	22%	126	Dissatisfaction with facilities, accessibility issues, interpretation gaps
<b>Core Tensions and Aspirations</b>	13%	75	Conflicting land use, pressure between preservation and tourism
<b>Stakeholder Collaboration</b>	10%	59	Government–community relations, NGO involvement
<b>Funding and Resources</b>	6%	37	Budget gaps, donor dependency, project delays

The frequencies and percentages in *Table 6* are derived from NVivo-coded references from the 579 open-ended questionnaire surveys from local residents and tourists who visited the heritage sites within the period of the researcher’s visit. **Site Management** and **Visitor Experience & Tourism** were the most frequently mentioned themes, with 178 (31%) and 126 (22%) citations, respectively. **Community Engagement** followed, with 104 mentions (18%). Less commonly referenced but nonetheless consistent across responses were **Core Tensions & Aspirations** (75; 13%), **Stakeholder Collaboration** (59; 10%), and **Funding & Resources** (37; 6%). While *Table 5* detailed the nuanced qualitative perspectives gathered during the interviews and FGDs, highlighting the reasoning and site-specific experiences of heritage site managers, stakeholders, and local custodians. In contrast, *Table 6* presented the wider, population-level perceptions surveyed through questionnaires.

This complementary perspective both confirmed the institutional challenges identified across most Nigerian cultural heritage sites and reveals the convergence between detailed stakeholder insights and wider community sentiment.



**Figure 33:** *Proportional Distribution of Themes from Questionnaire Responses (NVivo Coding).*

Figure 33 above illustrates the proportional distribution of themes from the questionnaire responses, and affirms earlier patterns observed in the NVivo-coded interviews and FGDs while offering a broader quantitative perspective revealed that while Site Management (31%) and Visitor Experience & Tourism (22%) dominated respondents' concerns, together representing over half of all coded references. Community Engagement (18%) also features prominently, while issues like Core Tensions (13%), Collaboration (10%), and Funding (6%) all reflect the other visible challenges.

The pie chart thus confirms that weak management and poor visitor experiences at heritage sites are the most immediate problems, while structural drivers such as underfunding and fragmented governance remain less visible but critical. These insights complement results from the interviews and FGDs by quantifying the salience of issues across a wider pool of respondents and directly lead into the discussion on examining how each method contributed to building the full evidentiary base.

#### **4.2.4.2 Role of Interviews, FGDs, and Questionnaires in Analysis**

The strength of this study's analysis rested in a variety of methods of data collection and how their various perspectives converged. For instance, the Interviews grounded the analysis in institution-based realities of heritage sites, the Focus group discussions (FGDs) brought forth lived cultural meanings and community-level outlooks, and the questionnaire surveys mapped broader perceptual trends. Triangulating these approaches enabled cross-checking of stories, contradiction exposure, and uncovering of recurrent issues that may have remained opaque using a single approach. This triangulation yielded a richer portrait of cultural heritage and tourism experience and regulation in Nigeria and anchored the study findings in both institution and community practice. Described below are how the different data collection approaches influenced the overall analysis.

##### **1. Interviews**

The 19 in-depth semi-structured interviews undertaken as part of the research survey offered the heart of the NVivo dataset by unveiling the managerial, institutional, and policy aspects of heritage site management. Interviews were conducted with the site manager, local guardians, and government stakeholders, and their perspectives revealed issues of chronic underfunding, deterioration of infrastructure, and siloed governance. Accounts in the interviews also described actions that had been taken to address these weaknesses, and these provided rich material for comparing models of heritage site management with institutional practice.

##### **2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

The 10 Focus Group Discussions with respondents from the Sukur Cultural Landscape and the Ọ̀sun Osogbo sacred grove were overwhelmingly helpful in outlining how community-level practices both countered and bolstered institutional perspectives. The FGDs deep dives into issues of identity, spirituality, and intergenerational relations surrounding heritage sites, and the surrounding evidence elucidated how older guardians of heritage normative rituals prioritized ceremonial performances, while younger respondents were inclined to embrace the commercial, technological and tourist entrepreneurship dimensions of heritage site sustainability. The FGDs were invaluable in elucidating tensions and potential conflicts surrounding custodianship and interventions from outside the communities and were likely to remain unstated in elite interviews in other situations.

##### **3. Questionnaire Surveys**

Questionnaires distributed to members of the local community, tourists, and other stakeholders, which totaled 579 in reply, set out attitudinal perspectives on the significance of heritage, community involvement on issues of equity and benefit distribution, visitor

satisfaction, and the allocation of benefits. In contrast with the interviews and FGDs data that registered depth and complexity, the questionnaires measured repeated patterns within a wider population and indicated the relative salience of operational, visitor-focused, and institutional issues confronting the heritage sites. This scope enabled the study to triangulate and verify interview and FGD insights and identify points of convergence and divergence, while validating that the findings encompassed individual and collective experiences in the case study heritage sites.

#### **4. *Archival and Documentary Sources***

In addition, policy documents, management reports, and UNESCO records were consulted as they provide the institutional backdrop against which the above field data were interpreted. Documents consulted included the National Commissions for Museum and Monuments (NCMM) annual reports and budget statements<sup>123</sup>. Nigeria's National Cultural Policy and relevant legislative instruments<sup>124</sup>, UNESCO nomination dossiers and periodic monitoring reports for Sukur (1999)<sup>125</sup>, and Òṣun-Osogbo (2005)<sup>126</sup>, site management plans (where available), donor and NGO project evaluations, provenance and restitution correspondence (notably the 2025 Dutch Nigerian transfer agreements for Benin Bronzes and other related cultural artefacts expedited in 1887 from ancient Benin Kingdome during colonial rule in Nigeria<sup>127</sup>, and local heritage sites records (visitor logs, maintenance schedules, training plans). These documentary sources further exposed recurring patterns of uneven funding cycles, gaps between policy commitments and local delivery (frequently coded as “policy evaporation”), dated or absent management plans, and episodic donor interventions and supplied the temporal markers needed to situate interview and FGD testimony within longer institutional histories. Ultimately, the documentary evidence both corroborated and explained the field data, showing how entrenched institutional shortcomings persist at the surveyed heritage sites regardless of reform efforts and international scrutiny.

#### **4.2.4.3 Interpreting NVivo Results through Theoretical Lenses**

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<sup>123</sup> NCMM (2024). National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) annual report 2023 (news). Retrieved April 16, 2025, from <https://www.med.uio.no/ncmbm/english/news-and-events/news/2024/ncmm-annual-report-2023.html>

<sup>124</sup> NPC (1996). Cultural policy in Nigeria. IRMO/Culture link. Retrieved March 20, 2025, from <http://www.wwcd.org/policy/clink/Nigeria.html>

<sup>125</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (1999). Decision 23 COM VIII.C.1: Sukur Cultural Landscape (Nigeria). Retrieved February 24, 2025, from <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/2625>

<sup>126</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2005). Decision 29 COM 8B.23 : Osun Oshogbo Sacred Grove (Nigeria). Retrieved February 24, 2025, 2025, from <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/486>

<sup>127</sup> Government of the Netherlands. (2025). Netherlands to return looted Benin Bronzes to Nigeria. Government.nl. Retrieved July 11, 2025, from <https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2025/02/19/netherlands-to-return-looted-benin-bronzes-to-nigeria>

The NVivo results generally aligned with the study's core theoretical anchors (functionalism and heritage-management theory) and integrate complementary theoretical models that emerged during analysis such as (Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and the policy to practice perspectives). The empirical evidence generally supports these frameworks while also revealing gaps that demand a practice-oriented approach on heritage governance in Nigeria. First, the Functionalism theory outlined how heritage resources and assets affirms social cohesion and identity, sustaining communal norms through rituals and shared symbols. You can see this clearly in places like Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Sukur Cultural Landscape, where social activities and community existence moral guidelines are intertwined during rituals and festivals.

The NVivo codes for custodianship, rituals, and intergenerational transmission are, in part, a direct translation of the functionalist view of heritage as a cohesive social glue. Additionally, Managing Heritage Theory incorporates access, interpretation, and preservation on a continuum to ensure appropriate stewardship of heritage sites in line with policies and practice. You can see this in place in the outreach and mapping of heritage sites, Living Heritage Days in Benin being a prime example. Yet, the NVivo findings pointed to a lack of coordination, obsolete management plans, and weak enforcement of heritage policies as formal models' manifestation. This speaks to the inadequacy of formal models where institutional capacity is weak.

Conversely new theoretical frameworks like the Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model was exhibited through the heritage sites' uneven phases of growth for instance Òṣun-Osogbo Scared Grove demonstrated development to consolidation via (high seasonal demand and institutional focus) whereas Yankari Game reserve was at the verge of stagnation by default of insecurity and dilapidated infrastructure similarly Ogbunike Cave was at an involvement phase typified by local custodianship but with minimal institutional intervention. TALC therefore clarifies why management pressures differ and why some sites face overtourism while others fail to reach critical market momentum. Conversely, Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) was evident in the double coding as codes linking entrepreneurship, training, and household benefits demonstrate how heritage functions as livelihood capital.

Simultaneously, frequent codes for underfunding and infrastructural deficits revealed how shortages of financial and physical capital can block the conversion of cultural assets into stable livelihoods. Thus, the SLF frames both the promise and the fragility of heritage-based development. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) principles were variably evidenced at Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Sukur Cultural Landscape as both sites expressed robust communal ownership and identity-based membership, while Ogbunike Cave and Yankari Game Reserve reflected tokenistic or excluded community participation. Finally, Policy to practice perspective was lacking across the case study heritage sites. The notion of “policy evaporation” was a

recurring theme at the surveyed sites, for example the UNESCO world heritage inscriptions labeled on Osogbo Sacred Grove and Sukur Cultural Landscape and national policy frameworks often do not translate into sustained site-level actions. NVivo findings on (governance fragmentation, intermittent budgets, ad-hoc donor projects) indicated institutional breakdowns that standard management models do not fully anticipate. Thus, incorporating the empirical findings in the theoretical framework of the study unveiled the necessity of a broadened, practice-focused theoretical perspective one that facilitates the inclusion of governance fragmentation, security threats, and digital/technical capacity as central variables determining how theory translates into preservation, inclusion, and sustainable tourism ends.

#### **4.2.4.4 NVivo Results Summary**

The integration of discussions as seen in *Table 6* underlined a convergence of views regarding Nigeria's cultural heritage management. The findings of the questionnaire survey gave breadth, consistently listing Site Management and Visitor Experience and Tourism at top-level concerns, and also listing system concerns of less conventional nature such as finance and collaboration. The findings from the interviews and focus group discussions, however, provided a clearer picture, illustrating how those same problems were actually experienced on the ground. The interviewed managers of the heritage sites identified operational setbacks, absence of finance, and poor enforcement of government policies as some of the reencountered problems at the heritage sites, The questionnaire surveys that mirror the views of the tourists and local residents, repeatedly placed site management and visitor experience as the most pressing concerns. The responses highlight how everyday people at the user level perceive and prioritize the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of heritage sites. And experts described the trade-offs that shaped decision-making., and the resource trade-offs to decision-making delineated in full by experts. Although the least referenced themes were funding and resources in both datasets, interviews revealed how it lacks account for most of the operations and visitor-related issues noted in the questionnaires. These findings indicated convergence on the most serious issues and also the qualitative depth added value of situating surface issues in more universal structural, cultural, and institutional contexts. These findings highlight the institutional imbalance between resource scarcity, institutional fragility, and community resilience and lay the groundwork for the more subtle, heritage site-specific results from respondents' perspectives presented below in Section 4.3.

### **4.3 Findings from Individual Case Study Heritage Sites**

This section breaks down a site-by-site analysis of how key heritage management issues were expressed, prioritized, and presents the NVivo coding outputs for each of the five heritage sites, reflecting respondent perspectives gathered through interviews, FGDs, and supporting data.



preservation with public education. Four (4) museum staff were engaged through semi structured interviews including the museum curator, Mr. Mark Olaitan, a further 116 questionnaire surveys were gathered around the museum vicinity from both local residents (100) and visiting tourists (16). Making a total of 120 respondent data collected from the National Museum, emphasis on the survey were to assess the community perceptions of heritage conservation through the museum, evaluating visitor experiences, as well as identifying challenges and opportunities for enhancing the museum's role in promoting cultural education and sustainable tourism in Nigeria.

From the interviews, it was highlighted that one of the most celebrated efforts by the museum was creating the educational program the Living Heritage Days, which brought together artisans, school groups, and traditional guilds in interactive programs that strengthened cultural identity while transmitting craft skills across the communities.

The museum curator referencing the program stated in his interview *"We host quarterly 'Living Heritage Days', featuring bronze-casting and carving demos by traditional guild members. Our free school workshops reached more than 1,500 children last year, incorporating guided tours with practical craft activities"* (BMI1). In addition to public outreach, museum staff interviewed also emphasized conservation-focused training designed to equip community artisans with preventive care techniques.

This point was echoed by the museum conservation officer, as she stated that *"community Through training workshops, we bring small groups of local artisans into the laboratory to learn the basics and safe operations. preventive techniques"* (BMI3). These initiatives were educational and also created a collaborative environment that incorporated cultural knowledge into formal conservation practices. The role of indigenous artisans was described as central to maintaining authenticity in preserving museum artefacts. The museum's education officer said in an interview *"We also collaborate with local artisans who crafted Benin indigenous sculpture production"* (BMI2).

As a result, the National Museum of Benin City reported a diverse visitor base, indicating its wide cultural reach to both local and international audiences. This was confirmed by most of the interviewed museum staff, including the museum gallery attendant, who stated that *"Most domestic visitors are families and school groups. Internationally, we serve small groups of researchers and solo travelers."* (BMI4). Through these programs, the National Museum of Benin City serves as both a custodian of cultural heritage and a center for active community engagement. In contrast, museum staff drew attention to some current challenges, particularly insufficient funding to support routine maintenance of the museum's collections and the need for better staff training in conservation practices. As expressed by one of the conservation officers, *"Funding the conservation of our artifacts and subsidizing lab-tour staffing will help us safely increase the size of visitor groups and expand our educational reach"* (BMI3). Staff also highlighted untapped tourism opportunities such as interactive conservation tours and the use of live digital displays to enhance the visitor experience.



**Figure 34:** *Inside view of the museum gallery interior illustrating poor lighting conditions and artefact conservation concerns.*

Findings from the questionnaire surveys revealed that these concerns were not limited to just the museum's internal perspectives on staff interviews. Of the 116 questionnaires distributed (100 locals; 16 visiting tourists), most respondents confirmed the necessity for the government to intervene with support in funding the museum management activities since most respondents pointed out evident gaps in staff capacity as hinders to effective preservation and enhanced visitor services. Others also cited visible deterioration of artefacts needing professional conservation (see Figure 35). This outside view complements institutional accounts with visitor and community perceptions and reveals that shortfalls in funding and training are generally recognized across stakeholder groups and thus justify priority in any given interventions.



**PLAQUE OF A RITUAL SACRIFICE OF A COW**  
A bronze plaque of chief (Ondo, the Ondo of Benin kingdom and the official butcher of the palace, offering a cow at a ritual ceremony.  
The sacrificial slaughtering of the cow is done on behalf of the Benin monarch.  
According to a Benin proverb: "in waa (Odo) wasi eboi".  
You cannot be a king (Odo) and be a worshipper at the same time.

**Figure 35:** A 16th-century bronze plaque at the museum, showing signs of deterioration and inadequate maintenance, with visible tarnishing and surface corrosion that highlight the need for improved conservation efforts.

### 4.3.2 Case Study 2: Ọ̀sun-Osogbo Sacred Grove

Based on the results analyzed, the Ọ̀sun-Osogbo Sacred Grove was persistently a living cultural landscape where spiritual worship, communal identity, and development ambition intersect. Five (5) employees were involved through semi-structured interviews, supplemented by questionnaire surveys with local inhabitants (100) and temporary tourists (19), and five (5) focus-group participants to provide a total of 128 respondents in the data obtained at the Osogbo grove. The interviews focus group discussions and surveys focus was to determine community perceptions of the cultural and ecological importance of the Grove, gauge experiences among visitors, and establish challenges and opportunities for integrating heritage conservation with sustainable tourism and local development. From the focus group discussions and interviews, the Ọ̀sun-Osogbo Sacred Grove was always referred to as a sacred spiritual place, having a

symbolic cultural value as a living heritage site to the local community. This prioritization was echoed by the conservation manager's assertion who described the Grove as a reservoir of rich cultures, breaking it down further that, *“The Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove is a UNESCO World Heritage Site dedicated to Òṣun, the goddess of fertility. it houses sacred sculptures that depict our people’s rich heritage of the past” (OSGI3).*

Also, the majority of the respondents underscored the Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove pivotal role in defining identity, continuity, and collective heritage in Nigeria. One of the selected group youth participants remarked *“The Sacred Grove is spiritually and culturally special to our people. It's where our traditions happen, and I take great pride in being a part of its history” (FGDO3).* Apart from its religious aspect, the Grove was also viewed as a venue where preservation of culture and community development overlap through empowerment programs. Capacity building for youth and entrepreneurs was recognized as avenues where heritage preservation is merged with livelihood generation.

Another youth member in the focus group interview emphasized that *“Capacity-building programs for local youth and entrepreneurs can create opportunities for economic growth and cultural promotion, benefiting both the community and visitors” (FGDO5).* Tourism at the Osogbo grove plays a central role in the site’s contemporary visibility and local economy, attracting annual festival pilgrims and cultural tourists. This was highlighted by one of the surveyed tourists who stated that, *“We come here every year to honor the goddess Òṣun”* However, one of the site managers at the grove reported growing pressures from tourist visitation during the Òṣun Osogbo annual festival often strain the Grove’s infrastructure and threaten its ecological balance he stated, *“Our main challenges include maintaining the sacredness and integrity of the Grove amidst increasing visitation during the traditional Òṣun festival season, thus managing environmental impacts, and balancing visitor access with conservation needs during these period has been a challenge” (OSGI4)*



**Figure 36:** *Celebrants at the Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove annual festival leading to site stress from high attendance and causing accidental contact and damage to site sculptures.*

Governance through site management and state support were noted as crucial for maintaining the Grove’s cultural and ecological integrity. Respondents highlighted that without consistent government involvement, many of the conservation and engagement activities would struggle to be sustained. Based on the Òṣun Osogbo Grove Site manager, he indicated that "Ongoing community engagement, and government support are vital for ensuring that the Grove's cultural legacy thrives" (OSGII). Likewise, the site manager additionally added that the Grove's popularity as a cultural tourist center incites commercial interests preponderating community expectations and spiritual values. He stated, *“However, balancing commercial interests with community expectations can be challenging”* (OSGII).

Complementing the above view, on the groves challenges the conservation officer emphasized a pressing security problem, the Grove’s porous boundary which makes it vulnerable to unauthorized access, encroachment, and associated threats. In his words, *“One of our major challenges is security. The Grove lacks defined boundaries, making it vulnerable to*



**Figure 37:** Several sculptures at the Osogbo Sacred Grove (including the statue of Saponna) showing signs of wear indicating urgent maintenance needs.

*unauthorized access and encroachment.*” (OSGI4). When asked if these problems affect visitor experience, he answered unequivocally saying, *“Absolutely. Security concerns affect visitor safety and the sanctity of rituals performed within the Grove.* (OSGI4).

These institutional concerns faced at the Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove were affirmed by questionnaire respondents, many of whom reported observable openness of the Osogbo Grove to intruders and animal poachers which often lead to theft and vandalism of the grove’s cultural properties. Thus, the questionnaire surveyed respondents recommended specific measures to address these vulnerabilities, as the majority of the respondents proposed establishing clearly demarcated boundaries, installing surveillance systems (CCTV with night vision), and deploying additional trained security personnel.

Collectively, the results from staff testimony, youth perspectives, community and tourists feedback points to an urgent need for combined governance, infrastructure investment, and targeted security interventions to safeguard both the Osogbo Grove’s sacred cultural values and its tourism development.

### 4.3.3 Case Study 3: Sukur Cultural Landscape

From the analyzed results, Sukur Cultural Landscape consistently emerged as a living vernacular heritage site where ancestral pride of the sukur people, their communal responsibility, and material traditions converge together. From the collected data points at this heritage site, three (3) site staff were engaged through semi-structured interviews, complemented by questionnaire surveys administered to the sukur local residents (100) and visiting tourists (13), together with five (5) focus-group respondents to the youths of sukur community, yielding to a total of 121 respondents across the outlined methods. The surveys, focus group discussions and interviews were designed to assess community views of Sukur's physical value and its cultural significance, the interviews also gauged visitor experiences at the cultural landscape, which helped identify some constraints and opportunities to help with the community's heritage preservation and tourism development.

From the analyzed Interviews and focused group discussions, sukur community respondents reported that the cultural landscape is viewed as a living heritage site and it embodies their intergenerational continuity representative of an ancient African cultural settlement. As one respondent youth during the focus group discussion put it, *"Sukur is our home and our heritage. That's where our great, great grandparents resided, and it is our responsibility to keep and preserve it"* (FGDS3). This sentiment was voiced across most interviews and focus groups, which cast heritage protection of sukur cultural landscape as an ethical duty to ancestors and as well a barton to be passed down to generations to come.

Similarly, during the focus group discussion with the youths of sukur, respondents lamented that persistent infrastructural shortcomings, rugged access roads, inadequate educational and health-care services, and unreliable energy and water supplies were some of the challenges facing the community custodian of the sukur cultural landscape which in turn affect silent adversaries of heritage stewardship and the promise of tourism one of the sukur youth respondent stated, *"We need infrastructure development around Sukur, including good water, roads and healthcare facilities"* (FGDS5).



**Figure 38:** *Young girls drawing well water at Sukur community, a vivid illustration of the community's inadequate water supply and broader infrastructure deficits.*

Although Sukur enjoys the distinction of being Nigeria's first UNESCO World Heritage site, many respondents argued that international recognition has not translated into heightened tourism, or better livelihoods for local custodians, or even attracted significant investment to the heritage site either. Interviewees requested long-term, official investment commensurate with the site's international status this feeling was reinforced by one of the focus group respondents who insisted *"We call on the government to prioritize Sukur's UNESCO World Heritage status."* (FGDS5).

The site manager of the Sukur cultural landscape Mr. Sham, asserted that preservation and keeping the authenticity and integrity of the site is their utmost priority and said *"Striking this balance requires managing our fragile structures and artifacts, minimizing disruption to traditional practices, and ensuring local community involvement in decision-making processes. It's crucial to promote understanding and respect for Sukur cultural norms among visitors."* (SCL11)



**Figure 39:** A Vernacular hut settlement at Sukur Cultural Landscape reflecting the community’s poor living conditions and need for improvement.

In addition, most staff and community respondents then qualified this conservation concern by pointing to institutional resourcing gaps, as Mr. Sham warning more bluntly about their practical consequences. He stated *“These challenges create a cycle of neglect. Poor amenities generate negative reviews; security fears slash visitor numbers to barely 20–30 international tourists annually. Most guests are Nigerian academics or day-trippers, unable to contribute significantly to local economies. Without immersive experiences like extended stays or cultural festivals repeat visits are nearly nonexistent.”* (SCLII).

Security and remoteness also featured prominently as management challenges. Directly reinforcing the above site manager’s warning that conservation efforts are undermined by practical site constraints. Beyond routine vulnerabilities associated with isolation, many respondents recalled past insurgent-related damage to heritage structures and noted that the site’s remote location complicates rapid response, monitoring, and the delivery of basic services. As the Assistant Site Manager explained *“The general insecurity in the region, particularly the historical concerns related to Boko Haram, has severely impacted tourist confidence and accessibility. Although our immediate surroundings are stable today, the risk*

*perception continues to be a huge discourager, and we have to be in touch with security agencies all the time to ensure secure passage for the minimal visitors that we get.” (SCLI2).*

Stakeholders, therefore, called for integrated interventions that couple upgrades of infrastructure, security, and stewardship by the community. All together, these comments connect Sukur's conservation requirements to pressing managerial gaps: whereas the management strategy of the site is evident, lack of adequate funding, promotion, and professional interaction deems the site incapable of safeguarding the landscape and converting her UNESCO endorsement into viable tourism and livelihood opportunities.

Conclusion from the questionnaires confirms staff and focus group views. High proportion of local residents and visiting respondents pointed out poor road networks, poor visitor facilities, poor tourism marketing, and lacking government support as main impediments to conservation and tourism growth. Hoped-for solutions from the questionnaire surveys comprised enhancing road access, increasing basic services (health, water, power), creating stable funding sources linked to Sukur's UNESCO designation, and implementing participatory training courses for artisans, guides, and youth entrepreneurs.

#### **4.3.4 Case Study 4: Yankari Game Reserve**

Of the results analyzed, Yankari Game Reserve stood out as a premier natural heritage site whose ecological and cultural significance is generally acknowledged but whose potential for conservation and tourism is undermined by persistent under-resourcing of the wildlife reserve, security issues, and managerial shortcomings/fragmentations. Four (4) staff were interviewed, and their insights were triangulated with questionnaire survey data from local residents (100), and visiting tourists (15) respondents, yielding a total of 119 participants. The interviews, and questionnaire surveys sought to capture stakeholder perceptions of ecological value, visitor experience, and the institutional constraints and opportunities for aligning wildlife conservation with sustainable tourism and community benefits. From the semi structured interviews with reserve staff, Yankari game reserve was repeatedly described as a premier savannah landscape where wildlife protection, community livelihoods and tourism are intimately linked. However, the dominant theme across data sources was fragmented management concerns that weaken core conservation and security functions.



**Figure 40:** Molded roan antelope sculpture at Yankari Game Reserve, a signature landmark representing its rich wildlife heritage. **Photo Credit:** Yankari Game Reserve Archive

As one respondent the reserve conservation manager put it, “*Security is a big issue... but without good governance and support, we cannot continue to counter these threats.*” (YGR14). Similarly, most of the interviews reserve staff traced these challenges to governance fragmentation intensified after 2006 when the wildlife reserve management responsibility was transferred from the National Park Service to Bauchi State Government<sup>128</sup>. This shift created overlapping mandates and a fragmented management structure that has since weakened coordinated conservation efforts, therefore the respondents noted that the aforementioned unclear institutional responsibilities and weak coordination have undermined the reserve ranger deployment, diluted anti-poaching capacity, and limited investment in basic visitor infrastructure at the wildlife reserve.

As the site director emphasized, “*Animal poachers that intrude our reserve are often armed with sophisticated weapons, and they continue to hunt our animals with impunity, targeting elephants for ivory, killing antelopes for bushmeat, and feeding the illegal wildlife trade.*” the reserve director concluded (YGR11)

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<sup>128</sup> Nachamada (2015). Report on fragmented governance at Yankari Game Reserve. p. 12.



**Figure 41:** *Yankari Game Reserve Rangers team equipping an elephant with a satellite collar to track its movements and safeguard it from animal poachers.*

**Photo Credit:** *Yankari Game Reserve Archive.*

Therefore, a strong call for clearer governance structures and improved community relations at the wildlife reserve was highlighted by many of the surveyed local respondents. They stressed the need for well-defined management setup and greater community involvement in anti-poaching surveillance and visitor-guiding roles. Such action, they contended, might be crucial to enhancing both the reserves' conservation achievements and the local backing for its long-term sustainability. As the reserve managing office elucidated, "*Communities engagement offers an opportunity to construct local support for conservation and sustainable tourism. Challenges arise in addressing socioeconomic needs and ensuring equitable sharing of tourism benefits*" (YGRI2).

In addition, visitor satisfaction and marketability of Yankari game reserve were constantly linked with these management failures. Maintenance of facilities in the reserve that was not being done, untrustworthy safety features and dwindling ranger attendance were described as key precipitants of low repeat visitation and poor tourism appeal. The hospitality manager of the reserve encapsulated this relationship simply by declaring "*These issues such as poor maintenance of the reserve visitor facilities directly impact tourist satisfaction and the reserve's tourism appeal by both domestic and foreign visitors.*" (YGRI3).



**Figure 42:** *Dilapidated visitor accommodation at Yankari Game Reserve reflecting poor maintenance and urgent need for facility upgrades.*

Similarly, the majority of survey tourist respondents concurred to that view, as they pointed out that declining facilities and security issues deter longer stays and increased tourist spending. Despite such limitations, some of the reserve staff highlighted strategic alliances as key to overcoming resource deficits. Quoting that partnerships with NGOs, higher learning institutions and conservation allies offer technical assistance, capacity building and focused marketing that help reduce the reserve's limitations partially.

As noted by the reserve hospitality manager, *“Collaborations with NGOs and research institutions can enhance our conservation and tourism efforts.”* (YGRI3). Together, the findings that have been analyzed from staff, community members, and visitors it is clear that Yankari Game Reserve's future as a conservation stronghold with high biodiversity and as a tourism spot hinges on firm, comprehensive management reforms. Adding to what stakeholders and site managers voiced, the need for clearer governance frameworks, advanced security, and the establishment of partnerships with NGOs and global bodies, site managers and stakeholders called for more cooperative governance. Likewise, the survey respondents reported the need for more visitor facilities, and the need for community members to participate in reserve watching, especially in the fight against poacher wildlife, in order to break the cycle of abandonment.

Equally, in the instance, local respondents in the survey specifically accentuated the need for security and community participation in the wildlife reserve as well as noted that visitors most often tied their satisfaction to the safety, interpretation, and facilities provided. In their

absence, they cautioned, a loss of trust from visitors alongside compromised ecological protection will continue to reinforce each other and ultimately result in the collapse of local livelihoods and the conservation of the reserve. With core governance and community participation to realign the disparate conservation and tourism investments, Yankari Game Reserve will finally break the negative cycle and will more importantly serve as a prime wildlife sanctuary and a culturally restorative, ecologically resilient, and community developed region to the south.

#### 4.3.5 Case Study 5: Ogbunike Cave

Based on the NVivo processed findings, the Ogbunike Cave always turned up as a sacred cultural cave system where spirituality, local identity, and tourism desires converge. Four (4) personnel were involved using semi-structured interviews, supplemented by questionnaire surveys conducted with local inhabitants (100) and incoming tourists (13), which resulted in 117 respondents from the total data collected in the Ogbunike Cave. Interviews and questionnaire surveys were prepared to capture community values of the Cave's cultural and ecological worth, test visitor experiences, and spot challenges and opportunities in coordinating the caves' heritage conservation with sustainable tourism and community development. One of the interviewees described Ogbunike Cave as a site of great cultural significance describing it as a representation of the Igbo cosmology and history. One of the cave guides described the community's association with the cave as a place of sacredness and noted that, "*The Ogbunike Cave is a tourist attraction, and also it is a sacred cultural sanctuary linked to our ancestors and rituals of cleansing*" (OC11).

The cave's cultural significance is also the result of the Ogbunike community's historical and ongoing custom of spiritually entwined cave veneration. Nowadays, local custodians and caretakers spiritually venerate and care for the cave as a moral and sacred cultural obligation. Guides at the Ogbunike caves articulated the community's efforts to uphold the cave's ecological balance and promote respectful tourism. In doing so, the sacredness of the cave is maintained. As one caretaker described, "*We involve local leaders and community groups through cultural workshops and joint projects local pride and ownership remain a priority*" (OC12). The community's stewardship of the cave indicates the need for additional community-driven initiatives to enhance its integrity. Ogbunike Cave continues to face ongoing structural and financial troubles, and they have a cultural significance. Most interviewees lamented about the need for consistent and sustained

governmental support in order to transform the cave into a premier tourist destination. They consider government assistance to be mostly maintenance related. This sentiment was echoed by one cave guide who stated, *"Government support is limited, mainly focused on basic maintenance rather than comprehensive infrastructural development needed at the cave"*, (OC13). This inadequate support and assistance have left the site and visitor facilities in bad shape.



**Figure 43:** *Ogbunike Cave entrance, with visible signpost and access walkway for tourists.*

This has diminished Ogbunike Cave's attraction for repeat visits and storied competition against other heritage sites. Survey respondents noted site management as the other most important challenge. This concern came especially from the visitors and local interviewees.

Some respondents shared that a lack of professional management personnel on site during peak hours was a big concern and the level of entry fee they demanded was high. This fee system left tourists confused as to its purpose and what they could expect for the fee. Participants also talked about poor site infrastructure and the scarcity of competent cave guides as deficiencies that worsened the visitor experience. Describing the poor infrastructure, one of the site guides stated, *"We are faced with major challenges, including bad reception of visitors owing to poor facilities and service, without proper infrastructure and management, visitors*

can hardly make the most of Ogbunike Cave's natural wealth"(OCI2). Such weaknesses undermine safety and preservation and repel long-term tourism development.



**Figure 44:** Entrance area of Ogbunike Cave reflecting signs of environmental neglect and lack of upkeep.

Respondents expressed concern over the need for technical expertise required to preserve and protect the cave's fragile ecosystem, which at times appeared untidy. They expressed that the management of the cave was overlooked due to poor management and thus they warned that the neglect would exacerbate environmental decline and adversely affect tourism. One cave guide eloquently summarized this sentiment *"Balancing preservation with tourism means managing visitors' impact on delicate cave formations and making sure that tourism activity preserves the sanctity of the site"* (OCI4). The lack of appropriate training and conservation tools for the Ogbunike Cave risks permanent damage to the cave's inherited and natural attributes and culture.

This sentiment was echoed by local and tourist survey results. Most respondents frequently cited poor infrastructure, ineffective management, a lack of government support, safety concerns, and poorly regulated community participation. Governance and management frameworks, including community partnerships, technical support, and investments in visiting infrastructure, were suggested, which would include improved access roads and visitor facilities, a managerial hierarchy, community participation in cave ecology and tourism governance, and decisions on ecosystem rehabilitation.

In all, the report indicates that protecting Ogbunike Cave necessitates a multi-dimensional strategy Only through the integration of cultural conservation, environmental management, and

tourism development can Ogbunike Cave be preserved as a sacred heritage sanctuary. Of similar importance is striking a balance between tourist activities and environmental protection to prevent the benefits of development being at the cost of the Cave's sacred and environmental essence. Only by such integrated and cooperative measures can Ogbunike Cave transform into a robust heritage site that preserves its spiritual heritage while making meaningful contributions to local livelihoods and Nigeria's broader tourism economy

#### **4.4 Comparative Assessment of the Case Study Heritage Sites Challenges and Opportunities**

Comparative assessment of the five sites revealed striking similarities in challenges and opportunities with variations occurring primarily on the basis of context and resources available. All five sites shared a common ground of community involvement and identity. For example, Sukur Cultural Landscape residents emphasized intergenerational duty *“Sukur is not just our home: it's our heritage. That's where our great, great grandparents resided, and it is our responsibility to keep and preserve it”* (FGDO3). Similarly, one of Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove surveyed respondent equated religious pride with preservation, citing abundance of cultural engagement. At the same time, infrastructure and management deficits were prevalent. Poor road access, inadequate visitor facilities, and under-staffing lowered the standards of such sites as Sukur Cultural Landscape and Ogbunike Cave. As one respondent remarked, *“We need infrastructure development around Sukur, including roads and healthcare facilities”* (FGDS5).

The widest-ranging issue was the budget constraint cutting back on conservation, promotion, and security. Ogbunike Cave respondents openly summarized: *“Government support is limited, mainly focused on basic maintenance rather than comprehensive visitor infrastructure development needed at the cave”* (OCI3). It showed in the form of reduced visitor services and undermined long-term sustainability.

Stakeholder collaboration emerged as a probable hybrid solution that can help with the conservation efforts of most of the sites. Yankari Game Reserve hospitality manager for example cited the need for collaboration with NGO and research agencies, stating that *“Collaborations with NGOs and research institutions can enhance our conservation and tourism efforts.”*(YGRI3). Moreover, Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove respondent highlighted the need for government support and involvement in the sites' conservation activities emphasizing that *“Ongoing community engagement, and government support are vital for ensuring that the Grove's cultural legacy thrives”* (OSGII).

Finally, visitor experience and tourism development met significant challenges across the five case study heritage sites ranging from festival overcrowding and cultural stress at Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove to dilapidated visitor facilities at Yankari Game Reserve as well as challenges such as poor on-site reception at Ogbunike Cave, as summed up by some of the interviewed respondents, at Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove the site manager stated *“However,*

*balancing commercial interests with community expectations can be challenging” (OSG11), also at Yankari Game Reserve the reserve hospitality manager quoted, “These issues such as poor maintenance of the reserve visitor facilities directly impact tourist satisfaction and the reserve’s tourism appeal by both domestic and foreign visitors” (YGRI3); and also at Ogbunike Cave a cave guide said “We face significant challenges, including poor visitor reception due to inadequate facilities and services; without adequate infrastructure and management, visitors struggle to fully appreciate Ogbunike Cave’s ecological richness” (OCI2).*

In essence, the above cross-case analysis across the case study heritage sites evokes Nigeria's cultural heritage industry's double reality, pinpointing that the world heritage sites are characterized by strong community pride and enormous cultural (and tourism) possibilities and at the same time hampered by long-standing underfunding, insecure infrastructure, uneven governance and management frameworks.

#### **4.4.1 Thematic Review of Heritage Management Practices**

There were some commonalities in the management of heritage across the five case study heritage sites: National Museum Benin City, Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, Sukur Cultural Landscape, Yankari Game Reserve, and Ogbunike Cave. The intersection identifies intersecting strengths and sustainable challenges in governance, conservation, and tourism development. Community participation and identity was a similar feature that ran across all the sites.

Whether at urban museums or rural landscapes, people found heritage both symbolic and functional. Participation at Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove centered on spirituality and cultural identity: *“The Sacred Grove is spiritually and culturally important to our people. It’s where our traditions take place, and I’m very proud to be part of its history” (FGDO5)*. Similarly, at Sukur Cultural Landscape, heritage was referred to as an ancestral responsibility, but Ogbunike Cave site guides or stakeholders prioritized equitable returns from tourism as among their rights of ownership.

Secondly, conservation and management work on sites was consistently disrupted by infrastructural deficits and unavailability of finances. Poor roads, adverse facilities, and insufficiency of staff were reported at Sukur Cultural Landscape and Ogbunike Cave, and shortages in trained personnel were evident at Yankari Game Reserve. Even organizations like the National Museum Benin City required activities initiated by the community to respond to conservation requirements. A conservator at one of the museums elucidated, *“Through community training workshops we bring small groups of local artisans into the lab to learn safe handling and basic preventive techniques” (BMI3)*.

Third, funding and resource mobilization were the most constant issues at all five heritage sites. Government funding was erratic, donor money short-term, and tourism revenue inadequate. At Ogbunike Cave, things were honestly put, *“Government support is limited, mainly focused on basic maintenance rather than comprehensive infrastructure development*

*needed at the cave” (OCI3).* Institutional underfunding at this heritage sites resulted in stalled infrastructure upgrades, delayed conservation activities, and weakened marketing of the sites to attract consistent visitors.

Fourth, stakeholder partnerships varied significantly from heritage site to heritage site. Although sites like Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Sukur Cultural Landscape have attracted international collaboration through such bodies as UNESCO, this assistance has not been enough as partnerships remain fragmented and fail to address the sites’ deep, institutional needs. As the Osogbo Grove’s conservation manager remarked, *“The Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove is a UNESCO World Heritage Site dedicated to Òṣun, the goddess of fertility. it houses sacred sculptures that depict our people’s rich heritage of the past” (OSGI3).* a recognition that has brought partners but not the sustained investment required; and Sukur Cultural Landscape youths urged urgent action on its global status *“We call on the government to prioritize Sukur’s UNESCO World Heritage status.” (FGDP5).* On the other hand, Yankari Game Reserve stressed the continuing need for external support and partnership, with staff observing that *“Collaborations with NGOs and research institutions further enhance our conservation and tourism efforts.” (YGRI2).* Ogbunike Cave, meanwhile, regardless of being on UNESCO’s tentative list according to respondents, receives little international backing and only limited government or community support, *“Government support is limited, mainly focused on basic maintenance rather than comprehensive infrastructure development needed at the cave.” (OCI3).*

Lastly, tourism experience and tourism development reflected both opportunity and vulnerability where certain places had good cultural experiences while others had to deal with limited facilities, insecurity issues, and irregular service quality. One Yankari Game Reserve respondent issued that, *“These issues directly affect visitor satisfaction and the reserve’s attractiveness” (SCLI3).* Concluding on this, the aforementioned findings illustrate how host communities and heritage stakeholders demonstrate strong cultural pride and commitment to preservation, although their aspirations were sometimes consistently undermined by funding deficits, infrastructural decay, and dysfunctional governance systems.

#### **4.4.2 Site-Specific Codes Embedded within Core Themes**

The NVivo coding incorporated site-specific themes into six core themes that occurred across all five sites:

- I. **Community Identity and involvement:** Cultural pride, participation, empowerment, and ownership were dominant codes. Across all the heritage sites' communities viewed themselves as custodians of heritage, often demanding empowerment by way of training, revenue sharing, and recognition.

- II. **Management and Conservation Practices:** The NVivo codes that repeated at the site level were in infrastructure, personnel, and operational issues. This is apparent in the dilapidated road network within the Sukur Cultural Landscape, and the lack of on-site management issues at the Ogbunike Caves indicated an intrinsic weakness in heritage management at most of the sites.
- III. **Funding and Resource Dynamics:** Most of the NVivo codes themes were categorized under "funding limits," "sources," and "needs." This shows that chronic underfunding is a cross-cutting issue at most sites that receive extremely low government support, have erratic donor cycles, and receive weak revenue from tourism.
- IV. **Stakeholder Partnership and Governance:** The NVivo Codes revealed different styles of governance structure. For example, at the National Museum Benin City, they managed to gain grassroots cooperation, at Yankari Game Reserve there were collaborations with NGOs, and at Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove there was government patronage. The outcomes through the NVivo codes suggest that across the case study locations, sites suffer from duplicated bureaucracy.
- V. **Visitor Experience and Tourism Growth:** The NVivo codes of cultural authenticity, interpretation, and satisfaction uncovered opportunities but indicated infrastructural, security, and interpretive media shortfalls.
- VI. **Balancing Tourism and Preservation:** Tensions between preservation and commercialization at the heritage sites were also evident in findings from NVivo codes. Restrictions to access at Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Ogbunike Cave were not liked by local traders but were seen as a requirement for the protection of sensitive environments.

#### 4.4.3 Thematic Frequency Analysis

The universality of some themes was confirmed with frequency distributions in the NVivo coding analysis. For instance, the "Funding Constraints" codes appeared in over 70% of site-specific transcripts which suggests it represents a common barrier. "Community Empowerment" and "Identity Pride" codes were present at all locations, albeit with different intensity (most prominent in Òṣun-Osogbo and Sukur, moderate in Benin and Ogbunike, weakest in Yankari). Visuals like word clouds picked out duplicate words like "funding," "community," "support," and "preservation," and matrix questions established intersections between "management challenges" and "community empowerment." This mirrored that

stakeholders were likely to name conservation challenges in both operational resource lacks and deeper community wants.

Frequencies tables also indicated that "Visitor Experience" codes were highest in Benin and Òṣun-Osogbo, both of which represent their formalized cultural programming, and "Security" codes were unproportionately high for Yankari and Ogbunike, both of which had the poaching, safety, and ecological issues as their utmost priority. The combined results confirmed the six over-arching themes while at the same time tracking the comparative significance of challenges and opportunities between sites.

#### **4.4.4 Illustrative Quotations per Theme**

Illustrative quotations bring clarity to the lived experiences underlying the coded themes.

- I. Community Engagement: *“Community empowerment is vital. We need initiatives that empower residents to take ownership of preserving Sukur, whether through volunteerism or entrepreneurship” (FGDS4).*
- II. Management Challenges: *“We need infrastructure development around Sukur, including roads and healthcare facilities” (FGDS5).*
- III. Funding Constraints: *“Government support is limited, mainly focused on basic maintenance rather than comprehensive infrastructure development needed at the cave” (OCI3).*
- IV. Governance/Stakeholders: *“Ongoing community engagement, and government support are vital for ensuring that the Grove’s cultural legacy thrives” (OSGII).*
- V. Visitor Experience: *“These challenges directly influence visitor satisfaction and the reserve’s appeal” (SCLI3).*
- VI. Balancing Preservation and Tourism: *“However, balancing commercial interests with community expectations can be challenging” (OSGII).*

#### **4.5 Cross-Case Assessment of Challenges and Opportunities**

The five (5) cross-case evaluation with NVivo analytical findings from case study sites of heritage to identify both persistent underlying vulnerabilities and local opportunities. Findings indicate that although all of the heritage sites are facing long-term underfunding, poor infrastructure, and disintegrated governance, they also uncover specific practices of resilience such as, grassroots cultural initiatives in National Museum Benin City, to spiritual community ownership of Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, and adaptive security-oriented management style in Yankari Game Reserve. The comparative method highlights the numerous challenges that are generally relevant to Nigeria’s heritage industry while at the same time pinpointing site-specific entry points for possible interventions that might assist in sustainable management.

### **4.5.1 Cross Category Comparison of the Case Study Sites Findings**

The findings from the comparisons of the five case study heritage sites reveal a consistent and fundamental dysfunction as well as a defined entry point that can facilitate a positive intervention. Each site was analyzed within five overlapping dimensions of governance and managerial effectiveness, financial health, community participation, and inter-actor and visitor engagement.

#### **1. Management and Conservation Practices**

Resource and institutional shortages inescapably limit management capabilities. Across the cultural heritage sites, staff numbers remained low, skill bases below international standards, and infrastructural foundations primitive. On the Sukur Cultural Landscape and Ogbunike Cave landscape, stakeholder perspectives identified the insufficiency of access roads and inconsistent energy and water supplies as twin barriers that undermine site integrity and visitor accessibility. A participant encapsulated the urgency: “We need infrastructure development around Sukur, including roads and healthcare facilities” (FGDS5).

The Yankari Game Reserve setting presented a chronic shortage of trained security staff, a circumstance that management attributed to fiscal deficits, this was underscored by the reserve conservation manager who cited, "Security of wildlife our is a big issue... but without good governance and support, we cannot continue to counter these threats." (YGRI4). The National Museum Benin City, which is located within an urban area, was not exempted, citing the same resource withdrawals and hence depending on community efforts as well as local craftspeople to support its work of conservation.

#### **2. Funding and Resource Instability**

The most consistent theme across all five heritage sites surveyed was persistent underfunding. Government funding was often described as unpredictable and inadequate, with critical infrastructure improvements neglected. At Ogbunike Cave, the monetary shortfall was clearly explained by a cave guide who said, “*Government assistance is limited, focusing mainly on basic maintenance rather than the development of comprehensive infrastructure needed in the cave*” (OCI3). Donor funds and ticket revenues filled some of the gaps but were unstable and inadequate. The National Museum of Benin City recorded modest progress with school-linked outreach and cultural activities, while the Yankari Game Reserve sought NGO and external collaboration in preserving the preserve as a result of a fragmented management setup. The comparative analysis shows that although all the case study cultural heritage sites explored new and innovative approaches, none successfully developed sustainable economic models that could sustain long-term conservation.

### 3. Community Engagement

Local pride and community involvement were strong drivers in all the case study sites as revealed in the analysis. At Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, heritage identity was spiritualized. *“The Sacred Grove is spiritually and culturally special to our people. It's where our traditions happen, and I take great pride in being a part of its history”*(FGDO3). At Sukur Cultural Landscape, residents emphasized intergenerational stewardship as emphasized in the respondent quote, *Sukur is not just our home: it's our heritage. That's where our great, great grandparents resided, and it is our responsibility to keep and preserve it”* (FGDS3).

Conversely, Ogbunike Caves' community narratives highlighted neglect, as respondents highlighted limited community engagement, with one respondent noting, *“Despite being on UNESCO's tentative list, the site lacks regular support from authorities and active participation from the community”* (OCI2). These are the kinds of differences that act to indicate that where there is very high ownership by the community, inequality that goes unpursued can cause internal conflict and decline in cooperation with management.

### 4. Stakeholder Collaboration and Governance

Governance patterns differed substantially at each cultural site. At Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, the reliance was placed on government action, *“Ongoing community involvement, and government assistance are crucial for ensuring that the Grove's cultural heritage continues to prosper”* (OSGI1). National Museum Benin City demonstrated local action may be effective, with initiatives such as Living Heritage Days organizing artisans, guilds, and schools. *“We organize quarterly 'Living Heritage Days', with bronze-casting and carving demonstrations by traditional guild members”* (BMI). *“Conversely, Yankari aimed to enhance conservation through partnerships with NGOs and research institutions, owing to fragmentation of current governance with management observing, “Collaborations with NGOs and research institutions can enhance our conservation and tourism efforts.”* (YGRI3).

Similarly, Sukur cultural landscape indicated weaknesses in governance, where state government control over heritage site activities is weak, leading to compromise on conservation planning and irregular coordination with local conservators to include people's voice in decision making, as stated by Sukur site manager Mr. Sham. *“Striking this balance requires managing our fragile structures and artifacts, minimizing disruption to traditional practices, and ensuring local community involvement in decision-making processes.”* *It's important to encourage respect and understanding of Sukur cultural traditions among tourists”* (SCLII).

Ogbunike Cave, however, revealed the impact of limited on-site management personnel as noted by tourists who expressed disappointment in the absence of onsite managers at the Cave, echoing the effects of fragmented and poorly coordinated management, where the absence of standardized oversight gave visitors unpleasant experiences through extortion and poor tourist reception. Collectively, these examples show that strong governance and multi-

actor engagement are drivers in determining heritage management success as better governance structures should be encouraged and institutionalized across Nigeria's heritage sites.

## 5. Visitor Experience and Tourism Development

Visitor experiences varied across the five case study heritage sites. For example, the National Museum Benin City offered structured educational activities, to which local and international visitors flocked in equal numbers, this was remarked in the quote by the museum gallery attendant *"Most domestic visitors are families and school groups. Internationally, we serve small groups of researchers and solo travelers."* (BMI4). Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove had high seasonal visitation especially for the Òṣun-Osogbo annual festival but struggled with balancing conservation and commercial demand, as noted by the groves site manager *"However, balancing commercial interests with community expectations can be challenging"* (OSGII).

At Ogbunike cave, absence of onsite management personnels coupled with infrastructure deficits around the cave environment resulted in poor visitor reception and constrain tourism activities at the site, this was highlighted by one of the respondents who stated *"We face significant challenges, including poor visitor reception due to inadequate facilities and service, without adequate infrastructure and management, visitors struggle to fully appreciate Ogbunike Cave's ecological richness"* (OCI2). At Sukur Cultural Landscape and Yankari Game Reserve, safety issues took away from visitor experience, At Yankari, security concerns centered on the protection of wildlife, where persistent poaching reduced animal populations and in turn limited visitor experiences.

This was emphasized by the conservation officer who stressed, *"Security of our wildlife is a big issue but without good governance and support, we cannot continue to counter these threats"* (YGRI4). Likewise, security concerns were even more pressing at Sukur cultural landscape. Beyond infrastructural barriers such as poor access roads, a on insecurity explained *"The general insecurity in the region, particularly the historical concerns related to Boko Haram, has severely impacted tourist confidence and accessibility."* (SCLI2). Such challenges left visitors with an unpleasant experience and restrict Sukur's tourism potential. Generally speaking, while cultural authenticity remained a powerful magnet across all the case study heritage sites, the visitor experience was continually pulled away from by dearth of infrastructure, safety risks, and limited visitor facilities.

### 4.5.2 Shared Constraints and Unique Site Level Dynamics

Cultural heritage management across Nigeria's cultural and natural sites operates within contrasting realities according to our study finding. On one hand, there exist structural challenges that consistently undermine heritage conservation and tourism development across all five case study sites. On the other hand, each heritage site revealed unique dynamics shaped

by history, cultural significance, geographic context, management practices and governance environment. These comparative evidence demonstrates institutional problems such as chronic underfunding, infrastructural decay, fragmented governance, and safety concerns cut across all five (5) of the case study sites are evident. Therefore, the divergences summarize the common vulnerabilities and the site-specific profiles that together determine conservation trajectories and tourism appeal.

#### 4.5.2.1 Shared Constraints

A series of inherent problems common to all surveyed five case study sites include.

- I. **Chronic Underfunding:** Each heritage site identified insufficient means for conservation of heritage resources, staffing, and infrastructural needs. Urban or rural, museum or nature environment, a lack of consistent and sustainable funding was the greatest single hurdle experience across all five heritage sites.
- II. **Infrastructural Weaknesses:** Poor access roads, outdated visitor facilities, and lack of basic utilities were common complaints by the surveyed respondents, most notably at Sukur Cultural Landscape and Ogbunike Cave but also true of Yankari Game Reserve.
- III. **Disjointed Governance:** Across all case study heritage sites, governance and management was generally conceptualized as being incoherent, overlapping, or undercoordinated. Fragmentation lowered accountability and hindered responses to most threats experienced at these sites.
- IV. **Safety and Security Concerns:** Insecurity and poaching became major risks to conservation and visitor confidence at most heritage sites. Especially at site like Sukur Cultural Landscape and Yankari Game Reserve in particular, insecurity challenges emerged as a major barrier with poaching of reserve animals, terrorist attack at heritage site area, and wider regional instability undermined both conservation efforts and visitor confidence.

#### 4.5.2.2 Site Level Unique Dynamics

Analyzing through contextual individual heritage site dynamics revealed how every heritage site has a specific strength along with some vulnerabilities uniquely informed by their history, environment, and context of governance.

1. **National Museum, Benin City:** The national museum showed impressive initiatives with its human-centered outreach programs such as Living Heritage Days a workshop where local artisans promoted their heritage skill through education. Nevertheless, the majority of the museum's exhibitions were not renewed, and facilities were below

international standards.

2. **Ọ̀ṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove:** The cultural and spiritual importance of the sacred grove rendered it a singular cultural destination, but this popularity created tensions between preservation of the sacred and commodified tourism. Although capacity-building initiatives will help to reconcile conservation with community empowerment.
3. **Sukur Cultural Landscape:** Even though the cultural landscape is Nigeria's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, Sukur had languished due to poor roads, inadequate support and lack of visibility. Designation had not brought tangible aid, demonstrating a gap between symbolic designation and actual conservation.
4. **Yankari Game Reserve:** Security and poaching were the sole challenges that made Yankari game reserve, separate from other heritage sites. While government efforts exist, they remain insufficient, prompting Yankari to actively seek partnerships with NGOs and research institutions for conservation and tourism sustenance.
5. **Ogbunike Cave:** Managerial voids at the cave coupled with a lack of technical capacity to maintain its ecological features have impacted this heritage site. In spite of its richness in culture, poor governance mechanisms canceled out conservation as well as visitor experience.

The cross-case comparison and analysis above illustrate how Nigeria's cultural heritage sites share recurring structural weakness collectively suppress cultural heritage sites performance. Insufficient funding for heritage management correlates to poor visitation and revenue performance, and similar deficiencies can be seen across the country's national tourism trends between 2000 and 2020. Together, these suggest the need for proactive solutions that include funding, good governance, the reassignment of tourism revenue, and collaborative community co-governance. In essence, the Nigerian tourism patterns summary below assesses how these institutional issues translate to lower heritage value and tourism opportunities for the country.

#### **4.5.3 Nigeria's Tourism Trends and Heritage Appeal (2000–2024)**

The institutional constraints and local contexts that were showcased across the five case studies from chapters sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 were situated in a larger context of the Nigerian tourism industry's systemic underperformance from 2000 to 2024. This period, characterized by rapid globalization and increasing international interest in cultural and ecological tourism, should have seen a massive expansion of the tourism industry in Nigeria instead, it was marked by a consistent trend of tourism underperformance.

While cultural heritage is an established tourism development driver and Nyaupane,

(2009)<sup>129</sup>, Nigeria's rich heritage appeal failed to register proportional revenue or international visitor numbers or sustainable domestic tourism growth, a trend traced directly to the chronic institutional and managerial gaps enumerated in the cross-case analysis. A review of the national tourism trends within this timeframe underscored a number of core trends that reflect the observations in the cultural heritage sites as discussed below.

- I. **Stagnant International Arrivals and Market Perception:** Even with astronomical figures globally in tourism in the past 25 years, Nigeria's portion had remained peripheral. World Bank World Development statistics regarding global tourism indicate international tourist visits to Nigeria fluctuating without a steady growth pattern, frequently plagued by adverse overseas media reports on regional instability (e.g., the Boko Haram conflict in Northeastern Nigeria) and overall travel warnings about inadequate infrastructure and visitor amenities. This is in line with security issues that eroded visitor confidence at such heritage destinations like the Sukur Cultural Landscape and Yankari Game Reserve already examined in the study, which confirms that macro-level national issues can straightaway suppress heritage and tourism attractiveness.
  
- II. **Dominance of the VFR Market and Neglected Domestic Tourism:** A lot of Nigeria's international tourism visits is dominated by visits to friends and relatives which is a segment with low revenue yield for dedicated heritage attractions.<sup>130</sup> While domestic visitation to sites like the National Museum, Benin City like schools and families and the Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove festival were as significant, it was however not enough to drive sustainable revenue. This trend further affirmed that chronic underfunding of heritage sites without government investment in marketing, visitor facilities, and curated experiences leads to failure of the sites to captivate a broader domestic leisure market or extend the stay of international VFR travelers.
  
- III. **The "UNESCO Effect" Failing to Materialize:** The early 2000's period saw Nigeria gain and possess World Heritage Site status with sites such as Sukur Cultural Landscape (1999) and Òṣun-Osogbo sacred grove (2005). Globally, UNESCO designation typically triggers a significant interest and boost in heritage sites visibility, visitor numbers, and funding. Yet, as the example of Sukur Cultural Landscape graphically demonstrates, this "effect" was negated by infrastructural deficiencies, instability in the region and inadequate focused government investment. Designation was thus effectively only a nominal achievement and not an engine for heritage site development, and it underlines the decisive gap between global recognition and domestic prioritization.

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<sup>129</sup> As Timothy and Nyaupane (2009) have established, cultural heritage is a well-established driver of tourism development, particularly in the context of the developing nations

<sup>130</sup> Jemirade, Dele. (2021). Tourism: The missed opportunities for economic development in Nigeria.

IV. **The Rise of Alternative Attractions and Missed Opportunities:** As the visitor experience analysis study findings unveiled, attractions such as Ogbunike Cave were marred by managerial gaps and dismal reception of visitors. As Consequence, domestic visitors with leisure budgets frequently divert their patronage toward private-sector leisure alternatives rather than public heritage assets. This preference shift stems directly from the aforementioned institutional failure to professionalize the heritage sites visitor experience, modernize facilities, and address fundamental concerns regarding safety and accessibility. This was illustrated in *figure 45* below.



**Figure 45:** International Tourist Arrivals to Nigeria (1999–2024).

**Data source:** World Bank / UNWTO time series (Researcher’s compilation).

*Figure 45* above illustrated the statistics of international tourist arrivals to Nigeria over a period of 25 years between (2000–2024) as collected by from World Bank Tourism report and United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Tourism statistics<sup>131</sup> <sup>132</sup>. This Nigerian national tourism trends reflected a period of significant missed opportunity with inconsistent visitor trend as growth in tourist interest were repeatedly interrupted by shocks and by persistent problems such as the country’s insecurity shocks of the 2010s, the COVID-19

<sup>131</sup> World Bank. (2016). International tourism, number of arrivals - Nigeria [2000-2016].

<sup>132</sup> UNWTO (2025). World Tourism Organization Yearbook Tourism Statistics: Nigeria Tourist Arrivals.

disruption and the post-pandemic recovery has settled into a lower, more volatile band.

Qualitatively, the tourism arrival trends mirror the site-level problems identified in *Sections 4.5.1–4.5.2*, where cultural tourists who are particularly sensitive to heritage site quality routinely encountered the everyday shortcomings documented in the case studies such as bad access roads to Sukur Cultural Landscape, the cramped and unwelcoming reception at Ogbunike Cave and the festival overcrowding experience at Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove amongst other challenges encountered at various other Nigerian heritage sites. Thus, faced with these experiences, many leisure-budget visitors divert their spending to private, better-serviced or choose other countries altogether. In short, chronic underfunding, infrastructural decay, fragmented governance and security risks have consistently undermined Nigeria's heritage tourism appeal.

The contrast with regional and global peers is striking. While Nigeria's post-COVID 19 visitor arrivals have averaged roughly between 1.2–1.5 million tourists annually, other fellow African countries who tend to possess stronger heritage tourism appeal than Nigeria attracts visitors in the tens of millions (for example, Morocco, Egypt, South Africa and Tunisia) all received between 17.4 million, 15.7 million, 8.9 million, 10.3 million international tourist visitors respectively in 2024 according to *The Nations (2024)* report<sup>133</sup>. Likewise, major European heritage destinations such as Italy and Spain recorded even larger international visit volumes within the same timeframe reflecting differences in destination management, sustained investment in visitor services, and successful use of heritage as a marketable asset.

Therefore, the two-decade trajectory of Nigeria's heritage tourism can be read as a direct function of the outlined institutional and managerial deficits that not only depress heritage site-level visitation but also prevent national recovery from translating into durable heritage benefits. To close this gap there is crucial need for integrated national tourism promotion with targeted upgrades at priority heritage sites such as road access, site interpretation, safety and upgraded visitor amenities.

## 4.6 Aligning Study Findings to Research Objectives

This section references findings regarding the research objectives outlined in *Section 4.3*. This integrates insights from the five case study heritage sites and illustrates how the national challenges of appeal of heritage tourism can translate to challenges at the site level, and what broader concerns arise regarding heritage and sustainable tourism in Nigeria. These heritage sites are the National Museum Benin City, Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, Sukur Cultural Landscape, Yankari Game Reserve, and Ogbunike Cave. The findings indicate that community engagement is central to heritage site resilience, thus the mode of participation is highly variable

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<sup>133</sup>The Nation Online. (2024). Full list: African countries that attracted most tourists in 2024.

among sites. For Òşun-Osogbo, religion provided authenticity to communal ownership, with respondents highlighting pride in cultural heritage, *“The Sacred Grove is spiritually and culturally special to our people. It's where our traditions happen, and I take great pride in being a part of its history” (FGDS3)*. Sukur similarly focused on intergenerational responsibility, so that heritage conservation became an ancestral duty. The opposite of this, Ogbunike Cave exhibited challenges where perceived unequal community benefits *“Challenges include addressing socio-economic disparities and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits” (OCII)*. This indicates that interaction without mutual benefits may result in conflict rather than cohesion.

In addition, across all case study site grassroots community engagement legitimized preservation activities, mobilized volunteerism, and supported campaign efforts to elicit official support. Maintaining engagement, however, required tangible economic or cultural dividends, emphasizing the necessity for models that incorporate cultural heritage activities into local community livelihoods.

The cross-case analysis in *Section 4.5* had identified five challenges that were shared and similar across all sites which includes chronic underfunding, infrastructural deficits, disjointed governance, preservation-tourism balance and safety/security concerns. The outcome here agrees that management vulnerabilities are not individual site specific but generally ingrained across most Nigeria's heritage sector.

For instance, Sukur cultural landscape and Ogbunike cave had issues with infrastructure such as road access, and Yankari Game reserve encountered poaching and security concerns. Even the more funded National Museum Benin City had to contend with old exhibits and minimal modernization. Participants always emphasized that lack of funds supported these vulnerabilities, *“Inadequate funding restricts our ability to enhance facilities” (SCLI3)*. These challenges suggest that heritage management in Nigeria is caught in a cycle of reactive crisis management rather than proactive planning. Without structural reforms particularly in financing and governance management weaknesses will continue to undermine cultural heritage conservation outcomes in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study findings show that governance structures subsequently dictate the success or failure of cultural heritage preservation.

This was exemplified through the sites that have multi-actor collaboration in place examples are seen at National Museum Benin City, Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Sukur Cultural Landscape were more sustainable than heritage sites where there was fragmented and unstable governance with example seen at Ogbunike Cave and Yankari Game Reserve). At Òşun, state involvement renewed sacred custodianship *“Ongoing community participation, and government support are necessary for allowing the Grove's cultural heritage to thrive” (OSGII)*.

National Museum Benin City focused on grassroots participation with initiatives like Living Heritage Days, incorporating artisans, schools, and guilds. At Ogbunike Cave, the

governance vacuum left conservation and tourists vulnerable. These findings show that good governance means getting customary custodianship, state institutions, and non-government partners into alignment. Where stakeholders collaborated, sites were better able to cope with the balance between tourism and conservation. Where governance was fractured, there was abandonment, contestation, and insecurity.

Visitor experience was a double-edged sword threat and opportunity. It should be noted that the National Museum Benin City and Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove provided rich cultural and spiritual experiences that engaged diverse visitor segments. Benin City Museum was informative “Most local *“Most local visitors are school children and families. Overseas, we have small groups of researchers and individual travelers”* (BMI4). Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, on the other hand, positioned itself as a sacred site along with a tourist destination and garnered a lot of festival visitors. This being said, the five case study sites severely lacked the facilities, security, and interpretation that led to visitors having positive experiences. Nevertheless, issues of insecurity due to wildlife poaching in Yankari Game Reserve, and violent attacks in Sukur Cultural Landscape, posed major challenges to assuring visitor satisfaction in these places. These issues limited repeat visits and reduced international interest which, in turn, negatively affected potential tourism. Nigeria’s heritage sites offer incredible tourism potential, but the enabling conditions for tourism remain weak based on the assessment. Without improvements to access, safety, infrastructure, and educational and interpretative materials, the tourism potential remains untapped. Nonetheless, the research identifies multiple opportunities for strategic investment and local sustainable growth. Empowering young people through entrepreneurial cultural initiatives and skills training as a means of heritage preservation, coupled with socio-economic growth, was the most common recommendation to the study.

In Òṣun Osogbo Sacred Grove, one respondent pointed out that *“Capacity-building programs for the young people and community entrepreneurs can bring economic advancement and promote culture”* (FGDO5). In the Sukur Cultural Landscape, respondents similarly emphasized the need for volunteerism and entrepreneurship as a means of advancing conservation: *“We need programs that will encourage locals to take responsibility for conserving Sukur.”* (FGDS5). These results illustrate how heritage conservation can be an instrument of community resilience, reaffirmation of identity, and local economic growth. The goal is to influence frameworks that embrace such possibilities in agendas for conservation so that benefits may flow equitably and sustainably.

In regard to the research aims, findings interpretation presents some key points of convergence.

- i. Community participation as a foundation: Heritage sites with local ownership and custodianship are fundamental but should be supported by institutional funding and

- equitable compensation.
- ii. Structural management failures: Persistent underfunding and infrastructure decay undermine protection, indicating the need for long-term financing models.
  - iii. Governance Shapes results: Sites providing multi-actor collaboration performed better than sites associated with limited governance, where the need to improve governance should be given the highest priority.
  - iv. Capacity-Building as a bridge: Enabling entrepreneurs and youth provides a bridge to link heritage conservation with local development.

The Nigerian cultural heritage landscape is clearly at the intersection of policy and practice. Inevitably, the Nigerian heritage landscape will continue to decline, be I guess, if I say neglected and destroyed with no reforms. However, strategic financing, governance and with the addition of capacity building interventions concerning heritage, the sites may be Nigerian catalysts of sustainable development. Overall, I can say the all the objectives of my research were accomplished. The study strongly highlights the benefits of public and stakeholder collaboration, the operational structural issues that are antagonistic to management, the importance of governance structures, the hybrid character of visitor experiences, and the potential of capacity development that is not being utilized. The research checked the box concerning sustainable heritage management. The results indicate the need to pursue cohesive policies that integrate tourism to cultural heritage and development.

#### **4.6.1 Aligning Study Findings to Research Questions**

This section correlates the thematic results derived from NVivo, as shown in Table 8, to the study's four research questions to illustrate where evidence pertaining to the challenges of Nigerian heritage is most concentrated, and where there are still gaps. The mapping identifies priority interventions such as provision of funding for heritage sites activities, proper governance setup, capacity building of site personnel, community engagement, and visitor-facing improvements required to convert findings into actionable policy and practice.

**Table 8: NVivo Hierarchical Themes and its Relationship with the Research Questions**

Research Question	NVivo Themes and Codes	References
1. What are the most effective strategies for preserving, managing, and promoting Nigeria’s heritage sites to enhance tourism development?	1. Addressing funding gaps and securing sustainable resources.	101
	1.1 Improving stakeholder collaboration and NGO/partner involvement	137
	1.2 Enhancing staff training and operational capacity at sites	183
	1.3 Developing facilities and interpretation for visitors.	130
2. What are the major challenges hindering tourism growth at Nigeria’s heritage sites, and how do they impact conservation efforts?	2. Chronic site management deficiencies (monitoring, maintenance, security)	361
	2.1 Critical funding and resource limitations	101
	2.2 Core tensions between preservation, tourism, and land use	159
	2.3 Visitor experience and accessibility challenges	256
3. What is the current state of selected heritage sites, and how effective are the existing management practices?	3. Current state and management challenges (staff shortages, weak policy enforcement)	361
	3.1 Operational bottlenecks and monitoring limitations	183
	3.2 Impact of current state on visitor experience and facilities	256
4. Can community participation and stakeholder collaboration contribute to improved conservation and the promotion of sustainable tourism at heritage sites?	4. Community and stakeholder cooperation	278
	4.1 Encourage local community participation and knowledge	219
	4.2 Support youth involvement in heritage stewardship.	115
	4.3 Develop effective support systems to resolve heritage related problems	78

The above outcome in *Table 8* NVivo themes relationship with the study’s research questions indicate that Nigeria’s cultural heritage sector is at a pivotal phase. The respondents’ survey data showed dominant NVivo themes linked to the research questions show clear, actionable priorities. For example, the chronic heritage site-management deficiencies accumulated 361 references which together with critical funding shortfalls at 101 references

and gaps in visitor facilities and interpretation at 130 references, make the heritage sites enabling environment fragile and reactive rather than strategic. Likewise, to this effect, strong signals were shown for staff capacity building with 183 references, improved stakeholder collaboration with 137 references, and scalable community engagement with 278 references all which identify practicable pathways for heritage sites management reform. In other words, the above data from the findings outline what is failing across many Nigerian cultural heritage sites, and where investments will produce the greatest returns through securing sustainable financing as well as strengthening multi-actor governance arrangements to help professionalize heritage site operations and thus develop the heritage sites visitor infrastructure and interpretive programming. If these factors are effectively addressed Nigerian heritage sites can shift from crisis management to a more planned resilient development.

To put simply, the *Table 8* analytical outcome points to two probable solutions. First is to address Nigeria's structural constraints of heritage through sustainable financing arrangements, enhanced monitoring of vulnerable locations and maintenance establishment at the heritage sites and using security measures to stabilize and provide an enabling environment where heritage and tourism operations can flourish. Second to the above solution is investing in enabler levers that generate lasting returns this involves professionalizing site management by developing capacity of site staff, by institutionalizing multi-actor governance and co-management whereby the concerned stakeholders of the government and the host communities of the said heritage sites have a platform to reach an agreement on which they can work together, also mainstreaming community benefit-sharing, and scaling entrepreneurship programs, If these interventions are well utilized, they can facilitate harmonizing conservation and tourism development. In essence through allying the NVivo themes directly onto the research questions, the study meets its research objectives as it supplies evidence that structural resourcing deficits at heritage sites are a primary barrier, that visitor-facing improvements are necessary for demand-side gains, that community participation and governance reforms are central, and that capacity-building represents an under used pathway to local development. Thus, incorporating policy reforms and resource provision around the thematic priorities summarized in *table 8* can help offer a roadmap for reconciling conservation imperatives with tourism-led local development and therefore meeting the study's research objectives.

#### **4.7 Integration of Empirical Results with Theoretical Models**

This section connects the study findings from the five-case study Nigerian heritage sites with the theoretical models underpinning this study as well as additional frameworks that emerged as relevant theories during analysis. The established theoretical frameworks that anchor this research were heritage management theory (HTM) and functionalism theory, both of which provided critical perspectives for evaluating how heritage is governed, preserved, and embedded in community life. Nevertheless, as the research findings revealed new dynamics

related to tourism growth, livelihood generation, and community participation, the discussion is expanded to incorporate complementary models from sustainable tourism models.

#### **4.7.1 Integrating Key Findings into Theoretical Frameworks and Sustainable Tourism Theories**

Results across the five Nigerian cultural sites namely National Museum Benin City, Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, Sukur Cultural Landscape, Ogbunike Caves, and Yankari Game Reserve can be interpreted with reference to the already established theories in this study such as functionalism theory and heritage management as well as newly emerged sustainable tourism theories which includes (Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, Community Based Tourism (CBT) Strategies). These theoretical models will provide an explanatory framework for understanding how community engagement, governance structures, conservation practices, and visitor trends interact and shape heritage outcomes.

**1. Functionalism Theory:** Functionalism theory analyzes the role of heritage institutions and practices in the preservation of social order and culture over time. This theory is evident to the heritage practices in the Sukur Cultural Landscape and Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove. Here, heritage acts as a social force, binding and affirming reinforced collective cultural identity and inter-generational responsibility. Community rituals at the Òşun-Osogbo Grove stabilize relations within the community and, at the same time, sustain tourist interest to the site because of the UNESCO world heritage status. The functionalist approach concurrently reveals the heritage deficit of Ogbunike Cave and Yankari Game Reserve. Here, institutional and security weaknesses cause the heritage to lose the stabilizing influence of sustainable tourism. Thus, functionalism serves to explain the remaining cultural resilience of heritage, and the vulnerabilities created through institutional failure, as seen in the Nigerian cultural heritage environment.

**2. Heritage Management Theory:** Traditional heritage management systems maintain a delicate equilibrium between preservation, access, and interpretation. The coordination of collaborative exhibits with local artisans, community groups, and school programs at the National Museum in Benin City exemplifies the tenet of this theory. Combining institution staff and local stakeholders' decision-making, the museum effectively demonstrates stakeholder and heritage management in practice. Yet, places like Sukur Cultural Landscape, Yankari Game Reserve, and Ogbunike Cave identify shortcomings in such models, most noticeably governance fragmentation and institutional thinness. Custodianship may exist in theory but undermined in practice through poorly enough resourced institutions, illustrating the mismatch between policy making and implementation.

3. **Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC):** Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) theoretical model explaining destination development in stages of exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, and decline. Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove evidence positions the location at the development-to-consolidation stage, where rising numbers of visitors, ritual tourism, and state recognition facilitate growth but also threaten over-commercialization. In contrast, Yankari Game Reserve is nearer to stagnation, while deteriorating infrastructure quality and uncertain funding sap its appeal to domestic and international travelers. Ogbunike Caves remain at the involvement stage, where local stakeholders in the community and traditional custodians are directly engaged but without clear formal institutional commitment to sustainable development thereby reflecting how different tangible heritage sites in Nigeria are at different phases of the TALC model based on their governance and socio-cultural contexts.

4. **Sustainable Livelihoods Framework:** The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) is centered on the function of heritage in the promotion of human and cultural capital. At the local community, pride and identity are identified as the most important aspects of social and cultural capital. This is especially apparent in Sukur Cultural Landscape, with the protection of the landscape and ancestral sites perceived as a familial obligation. The mutual dependency between heritage and cultural identity gives strong motivation to community-led conservation, supporting the contention that cultural resources are essential to sustainable well-being. In similitude, Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove illustrates how heritage translates into symbolic capital, providing tourism incomes and also passionate sense of belonging and cultural continuity. But underfunding and infrastructural limitations repeated consistently at Sukur Cultural Landscape, Ogbunike Cave, and Yankari Game Reserve indicate shortages in financial and physical capital, reducing the potential for heritage to assist sustainable livelihoods indicating promise and fragility of heritage resources as a development asset in the SLF framework.

5. **Community Based Tourism (CBT) Strategies:** Community-based tourism focuses on local empowerment, profit-sharing and participation management. Results reveal partial but slant agreement with CBT ideals. The results reveal partial but skewed agreement with CBT ideals. Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove displays a relatively strong case where community patrons, religious authorities and state actor's cooperates to regulate rituals and tourism flows. The National Museum, Benin City, displays aspects of CBT through an involvement with educational outreach and local artisans, directly connects communities with heritage protection. Sukur cultural landscape also shows CBT principles, where local people have a sense of ownership and youth empowerment in protection. But at Ogbunike Cave and Yankari Game Reserve, there are limitations in the form of marginalized local voices through inadequate institution mechanisms and unclear benefit sharing arrangements. These cases show that Nigerian heritage sites showcase the essence of CBT in theory, but inherent constraints limit complete attainment of this purpose.

### 4.7.1.1 Interpretation of Frameworks and Findings

Overall, the five sites showed alignment and tension with heritage and sustainable tourism theory. The pride and identity of the community strongly underlines that the SLF and CBT models as the government's constant underfunding and fragmentation manifests the flaws of the inheritance management models in behavior. The visitor experience, from educational interaction in Benin City to ritual tourism in Òṣun, mirrors TALC's stages, displaying the uneven trajectories of Nigerian heritage sites. Comparative analysis indicates that while theoretical models provide useful insights, Nigerian realities highlight the interval in institutional capacity, wealth and participation regime, which complicates the direct application of these principles. Collectively, the findings of the study confirm the relevance of functionalism and heritage management theory, while complex nature as well as a complete interpretation of the symmetry of Nigerian heritage sites requires a supplementary theoretical model such as TALC, SLF, and CBT to fully interpret the complex nature as well as the homogeneity of Nigerian heritage sites.

Functionalism theory highlighted heritage's role in stabilizing society but also its vulnerability when heritage institutions falter. Heritage management theory clarified preservation-access tensions but fall short when governance is fragmented. Whist TALC, SLF, and CBT captured additional dimensions of growth cycles, livelihood potential, and community empowerment of heritage sites in synchronization with tourism. The combined evidence from this synthesis demonstrates that Nigerian heritage realities align with, challenge, and extend established theories, requiring a multi-framework interpretation.

### 4.7.2 Parallels and Gaps in Findings Compared to Existing Literature

Findings from the surveyed case study heritage sites in this study aligns with as well as diverge from the wider global and African cultural heritage landscape, in heritage management, sustainable tourism and community participation contexts. A comparative framework reveals strengthening the trends and reference-related concerns contributing to the current debate.

**A. Convergence with Existing Literature:** One of the most consistent findings across one of the Nigerian cultural sites is the iteration of heritage as identity and community pride, and this is most striking at Sukur Cultural Landscape and Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove. This chimes well the heritage management theory where heritage is a disputed but crucial resource employed to articulate cultural belonging. The grove's spiritual and symbolic role to the Òṣun people of the Yoruba tribe in Nigeria strongly aligns with the argument of Timothy (2011)<sup>134</sup>, that

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<sup>134</sup> Timothy, D. J. (2011). *Cultural Heritage and Tourism: An Introduction* (Vol. 4). Bristol: Channel View Publications. (pp. 116-120).

heritage tourism is about material culture and also intangible spiritual values. Similarly, Sukur cultural landscape community-based conservation activities align with Aas, Ladkin and Fletcher (2005)<sup>135</sup>, argument that authentic community participation fosters heritage sustainability. Globally, commonalities exist with some cultural heritage sites in other African countries such as Lalibela in Ethiopia, Great Zimbabwe, and Robben Island in South Africa. At Lalibela, for instance, custodians of local descent are at the forefront of guiding tourists and upholding religious rites like as seen in Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove. The Sukur people's ancestral responsibility finds parallels in dynamics with Great Zimbabwe, where locals still place the ruins as living heritage. Robben Island in south Africa is a comparative example of tourism-targeted heritage interpretation that, like National Museum Benin City's living heritage days, blends memorialization and education. Such intersections illustrate how Nigerian sites evidence supports more universal observation of heritage as cultural commodity and social tool. Infrastructure deficiencies at Ogbunike Cave and Yankari Game Reserve also support rich African heritage recognizing development constraints of heritage tourism. Studies of East and Southern African cultural heritage sites generally show that bad road access, primitive visitor facilities, and insufficient finance siphon off heritage potential (Chirikure et al, 2021)<sup>136</sup>. Nigerian heritage sites findings therefore align.

**B. Deviation from Current Literature:** Regardless of such parallels, Nigerian heritage sites showed various divergences. First, the tension between spiritual integrity and commodification is greater at Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove than in most of the literature. While Timothy and Boyd (2003)<sup>137</sup>, describe heritage tourism as being necessarily shaped by commodification, voices at Osogbo Grove indicate ongoing attempts to reconcile spiritual integrity with visitor pressures. This is to suggest that the Nigerian heritage site is a more precarious balance between ritual continuity and tourism expansion than is generally acknowledged in global debates. Secondly, the findings indicate fractured policy and governance more clearly than in most international models. While Aas et al. (2005)<sup>138</sup>, detail good community state partnerships in some parts of Asia, Nigerian cultural heritage experience, especially at Ogbunike Cave and Yankari Game Reserves, shows weak institutional commitment, low benefit-sharing, and weak policy enforcements. This difference is a function of the specific institutional weakness of most Nigerian heritage governance, as compared to more institutionalized systems in other parts of the world. Thirdly, the visitor profiles are somewhat divergent from global trends. Unlike the focus in global heritage tourism literature

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<sup>135</sup> As argued by Aas, Ladkin, and Fletcher (2005), authentic community participation is fundamental to fostering heritage sustainability in community-based conservation activities. pp.30

<sup>136</sup> Chirikure et al. (2021 pp.) established that, “bad road access, primitive visitor facilities, and insufficient finance siphon off heritage potential,” illustrating how infrastructural and resourcing deficits frequently prevent African heritage sites from realizing tourism-led development. pp.514–516

<sup>137</sup> Dallen J. Timothy & Stephen W. Boyd (2006): *Heritage Tourism in the 21st Century: Valued Traditions and New Perspectives*, Journal of Heritage Tourism. pp.1-16

<sup>138</sup> Aas, C., Ladkin, A., & Fletcher, J. (2005). *Stakeholder collaboration and heritage management*. p.30

on the predominance of global tourists, the Nigerian heritage sites evidence specifically at the National Museum Benin City, Òṣun Sacred Grove and Ogbunike Cave tends to indicate that home-based families, school groups, and local visitors make up the majority. This is because Nigerian heritage sites are strongly integrated into the local way of life, as opposed to targeting primarily international tourist markets.

Finally, Nigerian heritage sites evidence depicts a greater role for youth empowerment and local voices in shaping heritage practices. For Sukur Cultural Landscape, youths already linked heritage to entrepreneurship and volunteering, a theme less developed in prior global scholarship. This difference signals new generation dynamics wherein heritage is perceived as a development prospect, as opposed to cultural heritage itself. Similarly, at the Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, young people increasingly engage in heritage activities through cultural festivals, and creative industries, repositioning its heritage as both an economic and cultural resource. Notwithstanding, most Nigerian heritage sites both overlap with and differ from prior literatures. They affirm the idea that heritage is a cultural identity marker, tourist resource, and location of community engagement, with agreement from other African heritage on structural underfunding and infrastructural neglect.

## **4.8 Critical Discussion of Management Strategies**

Empirical report of the five Nigerian cultural heritage sites varies in their management approaches from state-controlled conservation models to grassroots programs. They are unevenly successful and contingent upon structural constraints, fragmentation of governance structure, and competing power interests. This section critically reviews these strategies by reviewing their success, failure, and contribution to heritage preservation or sustainability.

### **1. Community-Centered Strategies**

The most observed management approach across all the surveyed heritage sites is community involvement, and this is mostly seen at Sukur Cultural Landscape and Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove. Heritage conservation was seen by Sukur villagers as inheritance from their ancestors, and youth involvement demonstrating high ownership levels. Equally, Osogbo Grove is based largely on custodial practices maintained by local devotees and traditional guilds. These types of strategies correspond to the model of localized leadership as the empowerment and stability of community-based tourism (CBT). Their strength lies in the fact that they are more authentic because the heritage is preserved not as an external imposition but as a living cultural practice.

They also provide cultural continuity as skills and religious traditions are handed over to the next generation. These strategies, however, are vulnerable to commercial tourist pressures and state non-patronage. For example, the custodians of Osogbo Grove issued a warning that reconciliation between religious rites and commercial pressures remain tenuous, demonstrating

the failure of relying exclusively on communal custodianship without structural reinforcement.

## **2. State-Led Conservation Strategies**

The National Museum Benin City displayed the best practice of State-driven conservation, where structured programs such as Living Heritage Days and school workshops were implemented by the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM). State administration is also the operating mode of Ogbunike Caves and Yankari Game Reserve with levels of enforcement differing. These approaches are typical of the model of centralized control in the management of heritage, following standards of preservation and resource mobilization. The advantage of these approaches is taking advantage of national exposure and conservation science.

National Museum Benin City, similar to Yankari Game Reserve, has artisan conservation workshops, employs state government patrols, and maintains anti-poaching units, which directly support state interventions aimed at protecting wildlife heritage. These approaches are commendable, but, in the long run, are bound to underfund, poorly extend, and, in the off the chance, lack local access. Ogbunike Cave is a perfect illustration of state control which is top-down, highly centralized, and sidelining a demand for heritage compliance from the local community.

## **3. Hybrid Models and Collaborative Governance**

Yankari Game Reserve exemplifies the hybrid model of governance where federal, state, and community roles are interwoven. While state control of Yankari is still dominant, the reserve increasingly collaborates with other non-governmental organizations and research institutes on conservation practice. These partnerships provide the essential enforcement and tourism compliance tools, finances, and wildlife monitoring required for eco-tourism operations. They also extend conservation and educational outreach. This illustrates hybrid systems countering state constraints by collaborative governance from citizens, government, and international entities.

The same trend is seen at the Ọ̀sun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, with spiritual guardians being supported by government agencies and UNESCO assistance. These hybrid approaches tend to consolidate stronger governance by melding together different sources of authority and expert knowledge. Governance fragmentation is still a huge problem. Sukur Cultural Landscape and Ogbunike Cave illustrate the challenge of maintaining collaboration when protection promises are not kept. This builds a sense of abandonment, especially concerning governments that cannot be relied upon to maintain interest. UNESCO status, such as in the case of Sukur, provides cachet without the support of ongoing funding, technical support, and coordination necessary for effective on-ground conservation.

#### **4. Economic and Capacity Building Strategies**

Some cultural heritage sites with capacity building initiatives such as workshops, craft production, and youth entrepreneurship can forge dynamic bridges between heritage and adding developmental value to their host communities. Capacity based concepts that spring to mind include the National Museum Benin City's artisan studio residencies sharpen conservation crafts, Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove's cultural tourism circuit draws both visitors and storytellers. Each of the capacity building anchors livelihoods to cultural assets, integrates perfectly with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, which regards heritage as a simultaneous cultural and economic pillar. Their dividends are tangible, and older crafts receive fresh energy while households gain diverse revenue and non-seasonal tourism specialty grows.

Most importantly, these initiatives cultivate a quiet cultural confidence, most once viewed as obligations are now regarded as entrepreneurial openings. There are, nevertheless, significant caveats. Benefits nevertheless remain episodic, with peak income concentrated in a few seasons and across a handful of neighborhoods. Many training activities risk remaining decorative in the absence of sturdy market channels. Well-documented conservation-plus-trading modules at the National Museum Benin City, for instance, taught painters and wood restorers' glossy new skills, yet an organized marketplace for power-carved heritage sculpture never materialized, muting the ultimate rippling return.

#### **5. Infrastructure and Resource Mobilization**

Provision and financing of infrastructure are major vulnerabilities in most Nigerian heritage sites management. Breakdown in road access to Sukur Cultural Landscape, substandard facilities at Yankari Game Reserve, and lack of visitor facilities at Ogbunike Cave attest to inherent neglect. These weaknesses are a consequence of the institutional weaknesses of heritage management, where there is inadequate financing and infrastructural improvement is not a priority. This is different from the best international practices where the heritage is incorporated into more universal plans of development. For instance, Robben Island in south Africa has high state and donor investment in transport and interpretation facilities so that it can accommodate high levels of tourist visitations. In the same way, Stone Town Zanzibar as a heritage destination capitalizes on its UNESCO status with focused restoration that supports coordination of visitor services and guaranteed investment, thereby providing an integrated cultural-tourism product which supports high numbers of visitors and benefits to the local population.

Also, the UNESCO recognition of Sukur Cultural Landscapes is not utilized extensively as the site has seen minimal long-term investment, with poor site access and lacks deficiencies in visitor services, which implies that the inscription has failed to culminate in quantifiable development benefits. Similarly, Ghana's Cape Coast Castle heritage site has been upgraded to a worldclass museum complex with coordinated government and donor assistance enhancing the museum experience, Nigeria's National Museum Benin City, meanwhile, derives the

advantage of federal supervision but continues with under-equipped facilities, poor exhibition maintenance, and limited capital investment in pointing out that national control by itself is not a guarantee for the integrated, well-funded effort replicated at Cape Coast. Thus, in such Nigerian contexts, factors of the systemic nature, such as the funding shortfall, constrain both conservation outcomes and the ability of tourism to generate meaningful local development.

## **6. Tourism-Oriented Management**

Tourism is at the heart of the management approach of all five heritage sites surveyed, though with different perspectives. Òşun-Osogbo Festival of cultural tourism, and eco-tourism activities of Yankari Game Reserves reflect some of the efforts to attract visitors as a source of income and exposure. These tourist-driven approaches conform to Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), whereby heritage places go through phases of discovery, growth, and possible decline. In Nigeria, cultural heritage examples, numerous sites are caught between the development and stagnation stages. Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove's popularity is high with its annual festival, but commercialization threatens endanger the authenticity of the cancellation. Ogbunike cannot sidestep local visitor streams due to poor infrastructure. These streams expose the problem of subjecting tourism without concomitant investment in sustainability safeguards, such as carrying capacity limits and cultural safeguards.

## **7. Policy and Governance Frameworks**

The lack of effective prosecution and inconsistent governance mechanisms complicates the attachment of governance and the takes of culture heritage industries of Nigeria. Weak policy implementation, prosecution failure, and unfair distribution of resources across Nigerian heritage sites indicate a profound failure in administrative will. As Ben-Iheanacho (2020, p.213) showed in his study on *Nigeria's cultural policy implementation*, formal cultural policy often fails at the implementation phase, and although legal frameworks and policy instruments exist, their impact is eroded by weak enforcement mechanisms, unclear institutional responsibilities, and unequal resourcing dynamics across Nigerian heritage sites<sup>139</sup>. This mismatch between policy intent and administrative capacity was echoed across our surveyed case study respondents pointed to the ways in which pointed to policy and coordinated inaction most notably at the Sukur Cultural Landscape, and to a lesser degree at Yankari Game Reserve and Ogbunike Cave work against extant legislation aimed at safeguarding these places. Comparative examples from other African countries make this weakness even more evident. In cultural heritage site instances like Lalibela and Great Zimbabwe, there is more deliberately incorporated national planning into heritage tourism and cultural policy that yields more defined lines of responsibility which generates targeted investment which secures the heritage site

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<sup>139</sup> Ben-Iheanacho, E. O. (2020). Nigeria's cultural policy implementation: sustaining cultural diversity through cultural resource management. p.213

management and visitor services. Contrary to this, Nigeria's cultural heritage proves that inscription by itself is not enough without institutional alignment, consistent funding and tighter policy implementation. Because UNESCO designation or national legislation does not necessarily mean on ground preservation of heritage sites and its utilization as has been seen at some of the case study sites in this study. Consequently, in Nigerian heritage site cases local communities often times carry a disproportionate burden of heritage site stewardship and preservation mandate.

Therefore, it is clear to see that when state policy is not backed by effective enforcement and resources, local heritage custodians or resident families and community groups take on conservation the responsibility of heritage care sometimes through unpaid labor, local fundraising, and informal management, while receiving little or no external support. To respond to these challenges, enhanced legal frameworks will be necessary to assure complete policy reinforcement and backing from the authorities.

## **8. Critical Reflections**

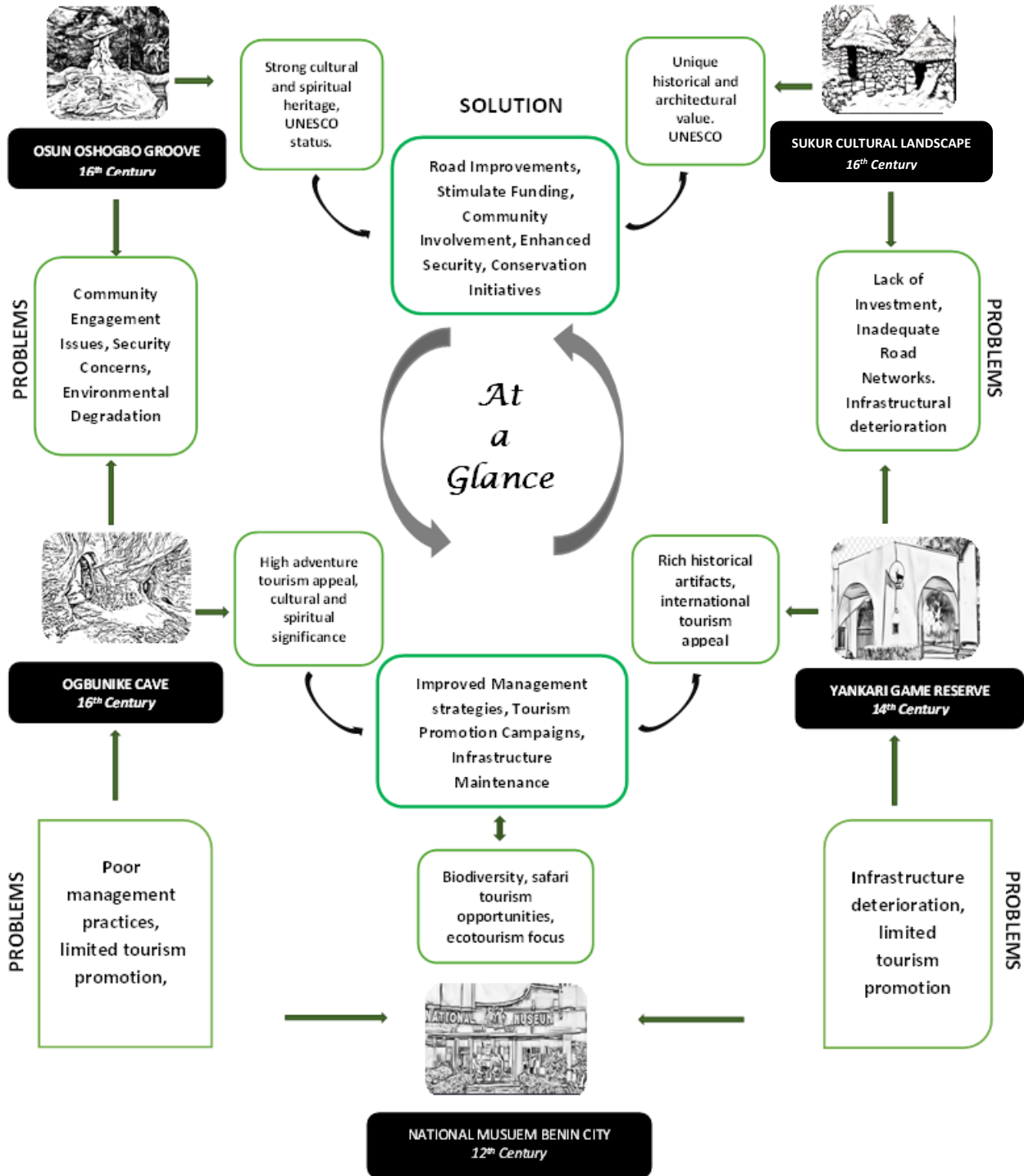
To encapsulate, it is reasonable to say the approaches to heritage management regarding Nigeria's cultural heritage sites demonstrate certain strengths and weaknesses. While community-based approaches provide cultural resilience, they lack structural embedding. State-led heritage management often brings professionalism but lacks funding and community participation. Hybrid models, while more inclusive, are compromised by over-governmental centralization. Nigeria's experience highlights the imperative for an integrated, multi-scalar strategy which brings together community custodianship, government patronage, regulated tourism, and strategic commercial alliances. Lastly, each strategy should be designed to be flexible, addressing the co-occurring challenges of spiritual integrity, cultural continuity, and tourism in a context-sensitive way.

### **4.9 Addressing Policy Gaps through Nigerian Site-Specific Heritage Solutions**

Evaluating the cultural heritage sector across the five case studies reveals the extent to which the realities experienced at each heritage site level continue to depart from the commitments made by Nigeria culturally. Development and enactment of policies by national heritage bodies and institutions such as NCMM and the national cultural policy are steps toward creating a legal framework to protect heritage, however, uneven implementation and incomplete mandates often leave the policies ineffective. Policy failures negatively impact the host communities of these heritage sites, as unformalized institutions end up serving as the chief caretakers of the heritage sites while unprotected, the communities are expected to bear the full responsibility of preservation. While strong local custodianship sustains many practices on the ground at the heritage sites, engagement is often tokenistic or ad-hoc rather than embedded in

long-term co-management framework. On the other hand, revenue-sharing, benefit distribution and inclusive decision-making mechanisms needed to run these heritage sites remain either under-developed or absent, leaving the local actors insufficiently empowered to turn heritage value into stable social and economic returns. This gap demands that a more organized governance framework is needed to formalize co-management agreements between relevant governmental stakeholders and local communities to enable capacity building for local custodians and ensure accountable mechanisms for funding the cultural heritage sector and benefit-sharing thus transforming local custodianship into durable, equitable outcomes. Below, *Figure 46* and *Table 9* highlight these patterns at a glance. *Figure 46* visually maps each site's origin, core tourism potential, principal governance and infrastructure failures, and priority interventions making the causal links (e.g., underfunding → weak infrastructure → poor visitor experience) immediately visible. Similarly, *Table 9* complements the sketch with a compact, site-by-site tabulation of founding dates, tourism potential, identified challenges and proposed solutions, allowing readers to compare vulnerabilities and entry points for action across each site's contexts. Combining the diagram and the table crystallizes two implications for policy, first that policy text alone is insufficient as implementation requires clarified mandates, stable financing and measurable enforcement and secondly that meaningful community engagement must be operationalized through co-management, transparent benefit-sharing and capacity investments so that custodianship is both empowered and sustainable. The following sections draw on these synthesized diagnostics to propose targeted governance and financing reforms.

## Nigeria's Cultural Heritage History and Challenges (At a Glance)



**Figure 46:** Nigeria's Cultural Heritage at a Glance, A five- heritage site prism of origins, challenges, tourism potential and proposed solutions.

**Table 9:** Comparative Summary of Site-Specific Solutions for the Case Study Nigerian Heritage Sites.

S/N	Cultural Heritage Sites	Site Description	Key Challenges	Proposed Solutions
1.	<b>Ọ̀ṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove</b>	A 400-year-old Sacred Grove containing ancient cultural arts, shrines, and ritual sculptures dedicated to the river goddess Ọ̀ṣun .	Fragile sculptures, urban encroachment, inadequate funding, visitor pressure and security issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish a dedicated conservation fund (from state, Ọ̀ṣun festival proceeds)</li> <li>- Implement updated conservation plan with trained “Sacred Artists” to maintain the groves artistic traditions</li> <li>- Realign roads &amp; build eco-friendly visitor facilities outside the sacred grove</li> <li>- Engage local priests, elders, and youth in site governance and guiding</li> <li>- Protect Ọ̀ṣun River from pollution; reforest buffer zones</li> </ul>
2.	<b>National Museum, Benin City</b>	A National Museum with key 12 <sup>th</sup> century ancient Benin kingdom cultural repository including bronzes, carvings and historical artefacts from other Nigerian cultures.	Poor facilities, Semi-skilled staffing, lack of investment, limited tourism promotion. repatriation readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Upgrade the museums’ infrastructure (lighting, humidity, security)</li> <li>- Train conservators &amp; staff via UNESCO/global museology best practices.</li> <li>- Create new exhibits for repatriated Benin Bronzes</li> <li>- Expand outreach (school programs, cultural events, Edo art workshops)</li> <li>- Promote the museum in Edo/Nigerian tourism packages and engage community artisans</li> </ul>

3.	<b>Yankari Game Reserve</b>	Nigeria's premier wildlife reserve featuring diverse savannah wildlife (elephants, buffalo, antelope), Wikki Warm Springs, and African safari.	Fragmented management, Poaching, insecurity, degraded infrastructure, declining wildlife and visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fully equip wildlife ranger patrols with vehicles, GPS, and community scouts</li> <li>- Repair internal roads, visitor lodges, and Wikki Warm Springs facilities</li> <li>- Share revenues with local communities to boost support</li> <li>- Relaunch eco-tourism campaigns with NGOs and travel agencies</li> <li>- Secure long-term funding (state budgets, donor grants, concessions)</li> </ul>
4.	<b>Sukur Cultural Landscape</b>	An ancient African cultural landscape with hilltop primitive settlement, featuring a kings' palace (Hidi), iron-age traditions, farm terraces functioning as a living heritage with strong community custodianship.	Poor road access, insecurity, lack of funds, weak governance, limited tourism facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secure international &amp; federal grants (e.g., UNESCO, AFCP) for site conservation.</li> <li>- Improve access roads, water, health, and visitor amenities.</li> <li>- Strengthen the co-management (NCMM, Hidi-in-Council, community)</li> <li>- Train locals as guides, artisans, and homestay hosts</li> <li>- Promote Sukur festivals and cultural tourism</li> </ul>
5.	<b>Ogbunike Cave</b>	An ancient cave system and sacred pilgrimage site with limestone chambers, associated rituals, notable biodiversity (bats, flora) and cultural festivals.	Weak site infrastructure, Unkept heritage environment, unsafe access, underutilized tourism potential, no visitor facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Upgrade access roads, stairways, and lighting</li> <li>- Stabilize cave structures and conserve bat/wildlife habitats</li> <li>- Train youth as guides; integrate Ime Ogbe festival into tourism</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete state master plan for tourism development</li> <li>- Attract private eco-lodge/restaurant investment and market cave globally</li> </ul>
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The *table 9* above provides comprehensive overview of the five-case study Nigerian cultural heritage sites examined in this study, it examined each heritage sites' core value and condenses the findings to outline sites key challenges with respect to heritage conservation and tourism development, it then offered proposed solution. While each of the heritage site has unique features such as a living cultural landscape (Sukur), an ancient cave (Ogbunike), a wildlife reserve (Yankari), a sacred grove (Ọṣun-Osogbo), and a national museum (Benin City) however their challenges cluster around three major themes which includes infrastructure and access, governance and resourcing, and the tension between conservation and commodification. The Table 9 therefore does more than list sites and problems as it outlined a critical transition in heritage management philosophy. The challenges identified here represent a traditional, top-down management model that has proven vulnerable to financial, environmental, and social pressures. In contrast, the suggested solutions map a way forward to a participatory, sustainable, and professionally managed model that can assist in driving these Nigerian heritage sites towards global best practice and obtaining improved tourism appeal. The successful application of these solutions suggested would be a template for heritage administration throughout Nigeria and the broader region.

#### 4.9.1 Analysis of Institutional Deficiencies

Across the five case study sites, we deduced from the assessment that formal policies such as (national cultural policy, NCMM mandates, UNESCO inscriptions) routinely fail in practice because of weak enforcement, unstable funding and fragmented governance. As a result, local host communities shoulder heritage sites preservation work providing unpaid labor, ad-hoc management and security without resources or technical support. The *Figure 45* diagram and *Table 9* summarize these gaps and their impact on visitor experience and development; hence this sections further diagnose the specific institutional breakdowns responsible.

**A) Weak Enforcement of Policy Frameworks:** Across the sites, interviewees remarked on the disconnection between national cultural policy and the local level. For example, Sukur Cultural Landscape's UNESCO designation has not translated into infrastructural investment or conservation funding on a consistent basis. Similarly, Ọṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, in spite of international recognition, is faced with neglect in terms of state government support in a

systematic manner. These failures are indicative of what researchers describe as "policy evaporation" where there are promises on paper that are not enacted due to bureaucratic inertia, thin budgets, or other national priorities.

**B) Funding Deficits:** As perhaps the most rudimentary institutional deficiency is regular underfinancing of heritage institutions. The National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) that oversees Nigeria's national museums and monuments operates on meager budgets incapable of supporting continuous preservation, full staffing, and provision of infrastructure in harmony with the times. This issue was recently commented on by the NCMM's Director-General, Mr. Olugbile Holloway, on the occasion of the 2025 International Museum Day in Nigeria, in which he called on the National Assembly to better support the sector through financing, reiterating that "sufficient funding is required to reposition the sector and tap the huge opportunities it holds for tourism development and employment generation<sup>140</sup>. On the other hand, the National Museum Benin City's outreach activities in schools and Living Heritage Days, while successful, remain ad hoc and donor-dependent rather than being embedded in secure state budgetary provisions. Likewise, in Ogbunike Cave, minimal financial investment translates into poor provision of basic visitors' infrastructure such as accommodation, toilets, signage, and trails that strangle tourism development and lowers visitor experience.

**C) Governance Fragmentation:** Governance and management fragmentation also sabotages the implementation. Nigerian heritage sites are likely to fall under several jurisdictions federal government (NCMM), state tourism boards, local governments, and in some cases, traditional custodians. Uncoordinated actors create unclear accountability. For instance, in Yankari Game Reserve, informants discussed conflicting expectations among Bauchi State government and local communities, which generated lacunae in tourist management and wildlife management.

These challenges are further compounded by the Yankari Game Reserve's shifting administrative history governance was transferred to the national park authorities after 1991 but later reverted to Bauchi State, highlighting the unclear and fragmented responsibilities which results to Management instability that continue to undermine effective governance and management. At Ogbunike cave, interviewed members of the community underscored the confusion regarding whether the management and development of the site fell under the jurisdiction of state or federal authorities. Exhibit governance fragmentation as these cases point out pertains to the difficulties of federalism in the Nigerian context, in which the system of decentralization tends to create unhealthy competition and confusion, as opposed to coherent cooperation

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<sup>140</sup> Leadership Newspaper. (2025, May 17). International Museum Day: NCMM boss seeks improved funding, legislative framework. Leadership News. Retrieved March 29, 2025, from <https://leadership.ng/international-museum-day-ncmm-boss-seeks-improved-funding-legislative-framework/>

**D) Infrastructural Neglect:** The lack of properly maintained infrastructure was one of the issues the research revealed. Consider the access roads to the Sukur Cultural Landscape, which remain in a state of disrepair despite repeated promises that improvements would be made. In the case of the Yankari Game Reserve, the provisions made for visitors including accommodation and interpretive facilities, as well as the facilities themselves, need a great deal of work. The absence of visitor facilities at Ogbunike Cave also provides further proof of the neglect of basic tourism-building infrastructure. These negative examples are a reflection of failing to integrate the planning of Heritage management with the broader national and regional development frameworks, with the result that these locations are kept in isolation instead of being linked to the national and regional road, tourism, cultural, and other infrastructure frameworks.

**E) Limited Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** The absence of M&E as an institutional framework on Heritage sites in Nigeria constitutes another gap. Respondents during the survey reported that the heritage sites are rarely the subject of formal performance appraisals, visitor satisfaction surveys, or any other form of environmental impact studies. Hence, ad hoc reporting dominates limiting the state's ability to inform policy by evidence. This is far from international heritage best practice with some of the discussed examples such as South Africa's Robben Island or Ethiopia's Lalibela where monitoring mechanisms are an embedded part of management planning. Without systematic monitoring and evaluation frameworks, Nigeria's heritage sector remains reactive and lags behind global best practice in sustainable heritage conservation and tourism.

**F) Lack of Political Will:** At the heart of these shortcomings is an even deeper issue, which is inadequate political prioritization of cultural heritage sector in Nigeria. A lot of academic scholars have often accused the Nigerian government of a habit of lack of care and neglect towards the growth or progress of the country's heritage or even tourism sector when compared to industry sectors like oil, agriculture, or commerce heritage through arts and culture sector has never ranked high on Nigeria's policy agenda.<sup>[141] [142] [143]</sup> For this reason, heritage managers must operate in a reactive mode, responding to site deterioration or UNESCO observer visits as emergencies rather than planning in advance. This exclusion illustrates how the policy culture fails to recognize cultural assets as resources for value and development.

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<sup>141</sup> Adewumi, A. Built heritage and planning laws in Africa: The Nigerian Experience. *Built Heritage* 6, 7 (2022).

<sup>142</sup> Ben-Iheanacho, E. O. (2020). Nigeria's cultural policy implementation: sustaining cultural diversity through cultural resource management.

<sup>143</sup> Nomishan, Terngu & Sani, Abubakar. (2023). Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection and Nigeria's Heritage Legislation. *Santander Art and Culture Law Review*. Vol. 9(2): p.293-320.

#### **4.9.2 Barriers and Enablers to Community Participation**

For the management of Nigeria's cultural heritage, communities must contend with enablers and barriers to participation. These are, of course, compounded by fragmentation and exclusion which cultural pride, traditions of custodianship, and partnerships can help offset.

##### ***Barriers***

##### **I. Top-Down Governance**

This was one of the most common barriers reported across the sites. Communities feel heritage management comes from the top, meaning they feel sidelined. The management systems are government led with top-down central control and they do not involve local stakeholders. This was the case for residents of Ogbunike, who reportedly felt site development decisions made by outsiders triggered their disaffection with the site and subsequently their noncompliance with conservation rules. Exclusion militates against the sense of ownership that is necessary for long-term sustainable outcomes.

##### **II. Economic Marginalization**

Exclusionary economics is also a challenge. While livelihoods are promoted via tourism, communities see little of the benefit in real life. For example, the artisans working at the National Museum Benin City's workshops were expected to produce pieces as saleable outputs, but there were no guaranteed markets. Youths in Sukur Cultural Landscape insisted on entrepreneurship, but they received little in return other than training. Where the economic returns are largely irrelevant, people see the pruning of their heritage in a disruptive manner and find heritage conservation far from advantageous.

##### **III. Intergenerational Gaps**

Weak transmission of heritage values across generations, particularly in urban-influenced settings, is another obstacle. Although elders in Oṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove highlighted custodianship, they fretted that younger residents were more drawn to commercial opportunity than ritual obligation. In Yankari Game Reserve, younger generations were more interested in modern modes of eco-tourism than in the cultural myths for which the reserve was originally known.

##### **IV. Cultural Dissonance and Contestation**

Most of the surveyed heritage sites were also found to be under the threat of contestation. A typical example of this was the Repatriated artefact controversies in National Museum Benin City revealed tensions amongst international parties, national institutions, and traditional custodians. Commercialization challenged authenticity at

Ọ̀sun Scared Grove, with custodians fearing sacred rites would be commodified through overtourism during festival seasons. Such dissonance leaves communities in a dazed state regarding what best to do since narratives that pull in two opposing directions.

### ***Enablers***

#### **I. Strong Cultural Identity and Pride**

Notwithstanding the aforementioned challenges faced across these heritage sites, strong cultural identity was a sound enabler of community participation. Sukur Cultural Landscape residence described heritage as an intrinsic sense of place, while Ọ̀sun Osogbo Scared Grove interviewees described spiritual duty to the grove. Such pride is a reservoir of strength, enabling communities to remain engaged in the lack of institutional backing.

#### **II. Youth Engagement and Entrepreneurship**

Young people from other locations, particularly Sukur Cultural Landscape and National Museum Benin City's, pointed out volunteering and entrepreneurship as entry points for involvement. Heritage speaks to the youth when linked with learning how to do something and making a living. Conservation training or ecotourism are therefore examples of how conservation may serve as an entry point for involvement of the youths into sustainable community involvement.

#### **III. Community Custodianship Traditions**

Traditional custodian institutions are facilitators too. At Ọ̀sun-Osogbo Scared Grove, priestly clans and ritual associations regenerate heritage by deeply embedded practice. At Ogbunike Cave, elders preserve ritual procedures and oral custom, and heritage persistence in spite of the absence of state involvement. This institution is a prime example of what scholars refer to as 'heritage resilience', the ability of communities to retain a cultural capital while being neglected by the outer world.

#### **IV. Collaborative Partnerships**

Heritage sites still save a lot, in a positive way, from collaborating with the likes of NGOs, international organizations, and research bodies. For example, the National Museum of Benin City has external institution funded conservation workshops. Another example is the Ọ̀sun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, which is a UNESCO site, meaning it has global visibility. Such collaborations can strengthen government management weaknesses with necessary funds, expertise, and advocacy.

Consequently, the analysis of the implementation gap of policies and community integration points Nigerian heritage management has a twofold insufficiency of having weak

institutional capability and poor community integration. Though there are policies within the heritage landscape of Nigeria, the findings of the study suggest that there are poorly carried out and are not well compartmentalized across the different levels of government. In contrast, community participation in some of the areas, despite the disengaging economy, vertical politics, and generational change, is certainly dwarfed. Conversely, strong facilitators of cultural pride, youth participation, traditions of custodianship, and external collaboration exist, and are likely to stimulate change

#### **4.10 Emergent Themes and Insights into Heritage Preservation Dynamics**

The comparative study of Nigeria's Sukur Cultural Landscape, National Museum Benin City, Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, Yankari Game Reserve, and Ogbunike Caves highlights shared challenges of funding, infrastructure, and governance. These highlighted themes reveal deeper tensions between heritage protection, cultural identity, economic goals, global recognition, and local realities.

##### **1. Heritage as a Site of Struggle between Authenticity and Commercialization**

One of the themes to come out was the tension between authenticity and commercialization. In the case of the Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, custodians felt that heightened festival tourism and heightened media exposure spoiled the sanctity of the spirit. In Benin, some stakeholders feel that the exhibitions and the new artistic interpretations of the bronzes are commodifying the sacred heritage. This speaks to the paradox of heritage as a livelihood, where communities need tourism, but are still concerned about the erosion of cultural meanings through excessive commodification. In many respects, particularly Ashworth, Graham & Tunbridge (2007)<sup>144</sup>. heritage dissonance, but in Nigeria, the dangers are exacerbated by the lack of more robust institutional buffers and the sacral nature of much tradition.

##### **2. Heritage as Resistance and Reclamation**

Heritage as resistance and reclamation is another powerful theme that emerged from study findings. At the National Museum Benin City, the authentic calls of some museum stakeholders, including museum professionals, and policy makers, for the repatriation of museum artefacts, is still the fight for the reclamation of more than just material artefacts, including cultural sovereignty. For respondents, that act of repatriation would restore the dignity of the country and reclaim its position on the global heritage stage as an African voice. Also, the community of the Sukur Cultural Landscape, when the UNESCO accolade was conferred, recognized their dwelling as a symbolic counter-narrative to the story of inequity in Nigeria's northeast.

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<sup>144</sup> Ashworth, G. J., Graham, B., & Tunbridge, J. E. (2007). *Pluralising Pasts: Heritage, Identity and Place in Multicultural Societies*.

Preservation of heritage, the political act, is perhaps more than a proclamation on the preservation of their heritage.

### **3. Intergenerational conflict in heritage transfer**

The findings also signal a shift in the attitudes toward heritage across generations. Elders concentrated on ritual responsibility, patronage, and remembrance, while the young were concerned with enterprise, new machinery, and the new way of life. In Ogbunike Cave, the older people emphasized intangible heritage, but the young, desired employment through site tourism. This intergenerational disconnect shows a profound inconsistency in that without a reinterpretation of heritage to tie into the aspirations of youth, it will stand to lose relevance.

### **4. State-Community Trust Vulnerability**

The study findings across the 5-case study sites highlighted a trust vulnerability between states and host communities was the common issue. Host communities where these heritage sites are situated were constantly betrayed through failed promises of infrastructural development, meager returns from tourism, and exclusion from planning decision-making at the governance level. In Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, custodians blamed state authorities for favoring festival revenues over protection of the sacred site. In Yankari Game reserve, the communities did not appreciate moving from settlement for the purpose of conservation with little compensation. This inconvenience led to mistrust which undermines collective governance and persists resistance. Heritage managers subsequently experienced physical dilemmas and also relational deficits of legitimacy and trust.

### **5. External Partnerships as Double-Edged.**

Partnerships with UNESCO, numerous NGOs, and overseas universities have emerged as vital enablers, yet have also nurtured an unwelcome reliance. The UNESCO designation in Sukur Cultural Landscape garnered worldwide recognition without delivering deeper, sustainable gains to the community itself. On the other hand, the attempts at repatriating heritage materials at the National Museum Benin City, although foreign-driven, were more welcomed but the same attempts are argued to be, once again, building a subordinate gaze whereby acknowledgement is granted only from afar, thus, overseas are the only gatekeepers. In both contexts, the alliances serve as indispensable lifelines that, if uncritically accepted, also crystallize and amplify historic imbalances.

### **6. Spirituality as an Active Paradigm of Preservation**

One of the groundbreaking observations is the ongoing pertinence of spirituality as a paradigm for preservation. Unlike much secularized heritage landscapes, Nigerian heritage sites continue to be living religious landscapes. Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred grove for example is a UNESCO site

and as well a spiritual grove believed to be inhabited by gods according to Yoruba folklore. Ogbunike Cave on the other hand is also ritually significant ancient cave and spiritual grove with taboos controlling access. Similarly, Sukur Cultural Landscape maintains traditional spiritual and communal practices to date by the sukur community. These religious practices constitute indigenous conservation systems; therefore, sacredness itself plays the role of a protection mechanism for cultural heritage where governmental policies remain ineffective. In other words, Nigerian heritage approaches cannot be secular or technocratic in nature, but they must adhere to and embrace religious custodianship as a power of control.

### **7. Resilience Through Cultural Pride and Identity Anchoring**

The results of the study at the five (5) case study locations also emphasized despite these institutional neglect, communities exhibited exceptional resilience based on cultural pride. Sukur people, for instance, credited their stone terraces and cultural landscape to a sign of survival against insurgency and terrorist attacks in recent history. National Museum Benin City interviewees explained the bronze sculptures of the museums as a reflection of our past cultural greatness. Such pride sustains commitment even in the absence of state support. Heritage becomes therefore a counterpoint of identity and resilience, especially in vulnerable or conflict situations.

### **8. Tourism as Both Catalyst and Constraint**

Findings from the five case study sites illustrate the tourism potential as significant but simultaneously warn that it is a double-edged sword. At Yankari Game Reserve, eco-tourism drives wildlife safaris and more exposure and tourism potential but also results in exploitation of the reserve by wildlife poaching and infrastructural deterioration. Tourism connected to the Òṣun-Osogbo sacred grove festival provided the community with significant revenues, but this also created challenges through excessive commercialization, overcrowding, and the degradation of sculptures and facilities at the sacred site. Inadequate visitor facilities at Ogbunike cave limited tourism growth, while locals feared that unchecked development could compromise the caves' sacred values. These cases demonstrate that tourism's benefits and risks are contingent on effective management, careful regulation, and alignment with conservation objectives at the heritage sites.

### **9. Heritage Governance as a Site of Power Negotiation**

Finally, heritage management itself became a site of negotiation of power. Local elites, state governments, federal agencies, and traditional custodians all have stakes in heritage and thus heritage is contested. National Museum Benin City's dispute over who ought to repatriate bronzes exposed fault lines among the palace, federal institutions, and state actors. Similarly, Òṣun-Osogbo sacred grove disagreement between government officials and priests over festival

offers evidenced heritage management struggles. Cultural heritage sites are thus spaces where more general Nigerian political tensions federalism, authority, legitimacy are performed.

#### **4.10.1 NVivo Visualization of Emerging Themes from Thematic NVivo Clusters and Word Cloud**

The outlook of the identified emerging themes in *Section 4.10* suggests the interplay of cultural authenticity, community engagement, spirituality, and governance across the case study heritage sites. Therefore, NVivo-based visualizations such as thematic clusters and a word cloud were generated as visual representation to help deepen our understanding on how the emerging themes refine our interpretations of site conditions, management challenges, and tourism development at the case study sites. These visual representation allowed us to examine the coding patterns from interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaire surveys across the five heritage sites including Sukur Cultural Landscape, Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, National Museum Benin City, Yankari Game Reserve, and Ogbunike Cave offering quantitative and qualitative insights into how heritage preservation operates within Nigeria's sociocultural and institutional framework. The NVivo clusters, and word cloud visualizations offer a comprehensive depiction of the key challenges and thematic dynamics at the case study sites.



4.2.4.1 which includes Site Management, Visitor Experience and Tourism, Community Engagement, Core Tensions and Aspirations, Stakeholder Collaboration, Funding and Resources.

Therefore, the NVivo-assisted coding helped refine these 6 original themes into 21 interrelated sub-themes, offering a more detailed understanding of how heritage management challenges unfold across the case study sites. Consequently, each of the 6-core themes expanded into specific dimensions that make up the 21 emerging new themes for example, Site Management generated sub-themes such as site infrastructure, conservation practices, site operation and management. Tourism and Visitor Experience produced balancing preservation and tourism, visitor experience quality, visitor education, and tourism development potential. while Community Engagement expanded into community challenges and tensions, community involvement activities, and community benefits and impacts. Funding and Resources became funding sources and resource management. Stakeholder Collaboration became external partnerships, cooperative government, and community participation activities.

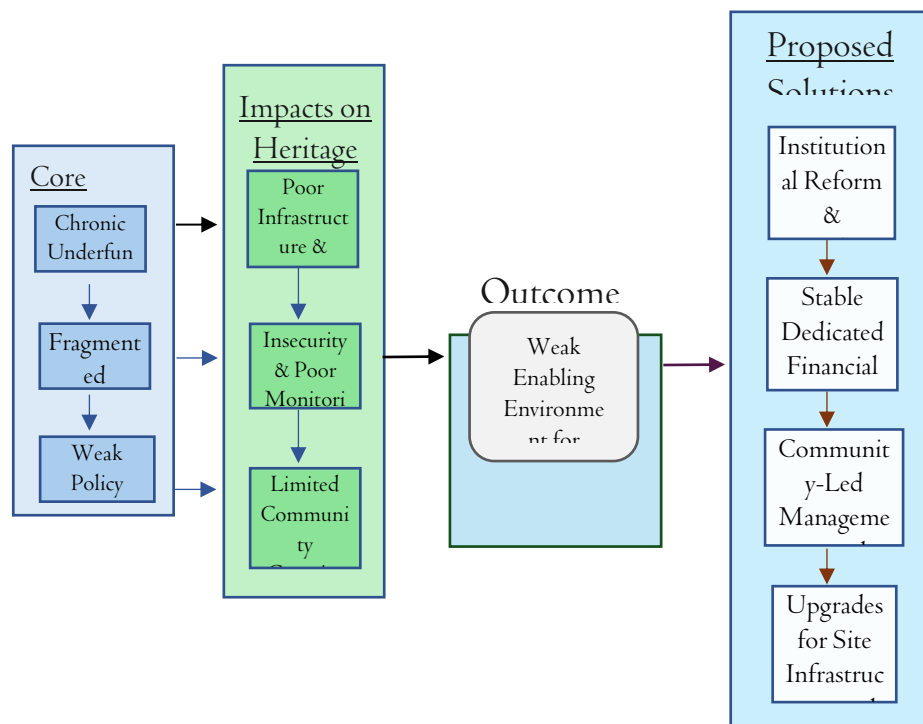
As stated, the 21 new sub-themes highlight the intricacies of the heritage sites from the survey and the case studies, operating as systems influenced by complex social, cultural, and institutional connections. Figure 47 presents an NVivo cluster map, reflecting qualitative intricacies and also illuminating the changing dynamics of the heritage sites and the potential tourism opportunities, assistance from the concept of heritage tourism and it evolving through time. In the earlier discussion and 4.2.4, we exemplified the challenges around site management being the most recurring labelled challenge from the case study sites, being over 29%. This illustrates the neglected institutional challenges of approximate staffing, unclear custodianship, fluid inconsistent of site maintenance, and the wider and longer implications of the cultural heritage sites, which shows that institutional constraints are symptoms that limit the development of Nigerian cultural heritage sector and thus even though financial and policy gaps remain, the primary challenges lie in effective coordination, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and sustainable long-term planning of these cultural heritage sites. Complementing the patterns established in *Figure 47* NVivo cluster map, *Figure 48* below presents the NVivo word cloud which captures the conceptual terms and keywords most associated with cultural heritage discourse in Nigeria as revealed in the study NVivo analysis.



heritage preservation and cultural discourse is not one-dimensional, is rich in cultural essence, and reflects the need for economic development and the attendant complexities of governance which, in this case, appears to be the least of the operational problems. The expression of site management problems and the visitor experience seem to be the more visible operational problems. However, trust, lack of participation, and the question of identity ownership seems to be the underlying structural issues. The inclusion of sustainability and community-oriented keywords as sub themes shows the understanding that community-driven spirituality and economically sustainable mechanisms which incorporate the livelihoods of the community will be vital in heritage conservation. This is particularly relevant in Nigerian communities as a large proportion of the population relies on the resources of their heritage for survival and monetary sustenance.

Combining the word cloud and cluster map in NVivo provided a heritage landscape that integrates social pride with participatory governance and resilience as the most promising pathways for the enduring preservation of Nigeria’s multicultural heritage legacy. The emergent themes in both qualitative findings and NVivo analysis together present some key insights into Nigerian heritage preservation. First, heritage preservation does not merely imply material

### Nigerian Heritage Sites identified Problems and Proposed Solutions



**Figure 49:** Challenges and Proposed Solutions for Nigerian Heritage Sites

artefacts or landscape conservation, but it is fundamentally intertwined with cultural identity, making the act of heritage preservation a socially embedded and culturally meaningful practice.

And also, that cultural heritage sites both express fragility (policy abandonment, youth disconnection, distrust) and resilience (cultural pride, custodianship, spirituality). Which entails that its preservation is an equilibrist game between vulnerabilities and capacities. Therefore, the *Figure 49* outlined below draws from the thematic clusters and word-frequency insights seen in *Figures 47–48* and translates them into a heritage operational problems → solutions diagram in the Nigerian context.

The above *figure 49* diagram hence itemizes the root causes, direct effects, and ultimate outcomes of heritage sites degradation in Nigeria over the years and proposed possible solutions to strengthen her heritage conservation and tourism development. The diagram links institutional root causes that have impacted the heritage sites the most such as fragmented governance, chronic underfunding, weak policy implementation which then leads to site-level effects like poor infrastructure, insecurity limited community capacity/engagement and thus the outcome of these two factors produce a weak enabling environment for heritage conservation and tourism. However, the diagram also highlighted how institutional reforms and the right policy implementations can help interrupt this causal chain and rebuild an enabling environment for heritage conservation and tourism in Nigeria.

## 4.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents a complete assessment which looked at the dynamics of preservation within the studied five sites of Nigerian cultural heritage (Sukur Cultural Landscape, Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, National Museum Benin City, Yankari Game Reserve, and Ogbunike Cave) using a purposively qualitative framework which involves 605 coded interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires, which were coded in NVivo 15 for thematic coding and visualization to provide rich qualitative narratives augmented with various quantitative coding patterns to understand the way complex higher-order issues of preservation, management of heritage sites, and tourism in the cultural heritage sites evolved into practical sub-issues. From the management, the overarching issues of chronic underfunding, fragmented stewardship, decaying infrastructure, and security gaps bleeding the heritage sites surveyed dry of the preservation and development potential.

At a national scale, the finding revealed that Nigeria's heritage tourism sector has for several years underperformed significantly, has been underperforming, as demonstrated by

stagnant international arrivals, the predominance of low-yield visitors, and the failure of her sites with UNESCO World Heritage status to attract international tourists and spur economic growth due to underinvestment, mismanaged heritage sites, and poor security. In contrast, Nigeria's continent cousins to the north of Africa, Morocco and South Africa, have also shown over the same period how strategic investment for tourism coherent destination and good management have turned heritage into development national drivers, as the return growth of heritage tourism has been received with these countries. Aside from the specified operational challenges, the research revealed underlying emergent themes that characterize Nigeria's cultural heritage terrain. These are the conflict between maintaining site authenticity and engaging in commercialization, instrumental heritage use for resistance and reclamation of identity, intergenerational knowledge transfer gaps, long-standing distrust between government institutions and communities, and long-lasting influence of spirituality as a conservation indigenous framework.

In all the case study locations, it was seen that unique site-level dynamics influenced the sites varying management paths. For instance, in Òṣun Osogbo Sacred Grove and Ogbunike Cave, the religious importance of the locations implied that sacred regulations and ritual activities should be honored in every management action. On the other hand, Sukur Cultural Landscape emphasizes custodianship by the local people and intergenerational care. At National Museum Benin City education outreach and training in conservation are prioritized. In contrast, wildlife protection, anti-poaching policies, and security development are prioritized at Yankari Game Reserve.

In essence, site management strategies at these heritage sites need to be tailored to suit each heritage site logics. Some resilient enablers include traditional custodianship, strong local identity, youth entrepreneurship and selective external alliances, which also means there can be a realistic entry points for cultural heritage policy reform in Nigeria. Integration of these findings with theoretical frameworks confirmed the relevance of Functionalism and Heritage Management Theory while also exposing their limitations regarding Nigeria's hybrid governance situation. This is why the integration of Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) is important because it provided a different perspective for understanding policy evaporation and institutional fragmentation phenomena around ineffective policies that are meant to advance the operationalization of the heritage sites. There is value in the development of a revised, practically oriented theoretical framework that engages with the heritage governance complexities that postcolonial African contexts present. In general, it is fair to say that collectively, these findings affirm that cultural heritage

preservation in Nigeria transcends technical management as it is a profoundly socio-cultural and political process that is intertwined with power relations, belief systems, and struggles for survival and livelihood

### **Implications and priority actions**

1. Enhance the site management function of the institution (staffing, monitoring, maintenance, and custodianship).
2. Build frameworks of participatory governance that respect community custodianship, spiritual protocols, and give special consideration to pathways for the inclusion of youth (skills, enterprise).
3. Prepare for the diversification of long-term resource strategies that avoid dependence and localization of funding sources beyond one-time donors.
4. Control tourism through regulated visitation, interpretive frameworks, and protective measures that defend the sanctity of treasured valuables.
5. Rebalance external relationships concerning the transfer of control over local agency (decision making, advocacy for repatriation, knowledge).

To sum up, this chapter provides a definitive diagnosis of the institutional and cultural challenges confronting Nigeria's cultural heritage sector. It also establishes that while Nigeria's cultural heritage potential is extraordinary, it remains untapped and constrained by institutional neglect, policy inconsistency, and reactive management practices. However, analysis also underlines the resilience and resourcefulness of local communities, which, if provided with support, can transform heritage sites into cultural and economic renewal drivers. The next chapter builds on these empirical insights to articulate targeted policy recommendations and a transformative roadmap for repositioning Nigeria's heritage sites as dynamic pillars of sustainable national development.

## **05 - Discussions, Conclusion and Recommendations**

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## 5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the discourse on Nigeria's tangible cultural heritage. It reflected on the viewpoints, challenges, and approaches that affect heritage sustainability and tourism growth. It aimed to highlight how multiple actors such as heritage managers, local communities, tourists, and policymakers all engage in the processes of heritage conservation and tourism development across five Nigerian major heritage sites as revealed across the study's *chapters 1-4*.

Therefore, the *chapter 5* integrates and interprets the findings discussed in earlier chapters by responding directly to the study objectives, questions, and theoretical frameworks and articulating how the cultural landscape in Nigeria, as documented in the preceding chapters, tells a story of profound cultural resilience and limitations, where enduring cultural strength coexists with institutional fragility and resource challenges. It then critically examined how the study results contribute to wider debates on cultural heritage preservation and tourism development in Nigeria, drawing on insights from both empirical evidence and theoretical reflections which contributes to theoretical arguments about heritage management and sustainable tourism, uncovering a mixture of convergence with global models and divergence that is locally specific to Nigeria.

The chapter proceeds to discuss the study's key findings and reflects on their implications to *theory, policy, and practice*, hence proposing actionable recommendations for stakeholders by contextualizing the findings into broader global debates on theoretical implementation by utilizing frameworks such as Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach etc.

The chapter then concludes by identifying specific practical activities that can be undertaken to influence policy actions, reform governance, and model sustainable community-based heritage approaches to positively impact heritage in Nigeria. As a part of the chapter, the author also discusses the limitations of the study, recommendations for future work, and a concluding remark on the cultural heritage of Nigeria which pivots on the sector's potential for sustainable tourism development. Using in-depth qualitative research, the study investigated the tourism potential and conservation of Nigeria's tangible cultural heritage in five key heritage sites which are, National Museum Benin City, Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, Sukur

Cultural Landscape, Yankari Game Reserve, and Ogbunike Cave. This study investigated how the management of heritage and organizational systems determine the sustainability and tourism potential of Nigeria's cultural heritage landscape. The study was anchored on Functionalism Theory and Heritage Management Theory, which identified pattern of co-existing resilience and fragility within the Nigerian cultural heritage sector. Where on one hand, heritage sites remain central to the country's cultural identity, community cohesion, and national pride, on the other hand, these heritage sites are constrained by chronic underfunding, weak institutional coordination, inadequate infrastructure, and security challenges.

Using NVivo qualitative data analysis, the data for the 5 case study locations produced 6 main themes as follows, *Site Management, Visitor Experience and Tourism, Community Engagement, Core Tensions and Aspirations, Stakeholder Collaboration, and Funding and Resources*. *Visitor Experience (21%) and Site Management (30%)* were the most important of these priorities and presented an effective case for the need for professional management and improved site facilities in the country's many cultural heritage sites. These gaps in management and facilities were pronounced in the heritage sites. Community participation and traditional custodianship were also found through the study to be robust cultural strengths.

The study findings also revealed that community participation and traditional custodianship remain strong cultural assets. However, participation varied widely from genuine community-led governance in Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Sukur Cultural Landscape to marginal involvement in Ogbunike Cave and Yankari Game Reserve indicating that the heritage sites sustainability depends on inclusive and equitable community roles.

At the institutional level, interviews with heritage managers and government stakeholders revealed how fragmented policy implementation, uncoordinated heritage sites management led to "policy evaporation," where well-drafted heritage management frameworks failed to translate into on-site results. Similarly, documentary evidence and UNESCO records from the study confirmed that international recognition of some of the heritage sites into World Heritage Site listings did not automatically translate into better funding or tourism growth at these Nigerian heritage sites, particularly in the cases of Sukur Cultural Landscape and Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove.

The cross-case comparative analysis (*Section 4.5*) established that the constraints which consistently limit most Nigeria's heritage sites such as financial deficits, poor infrastructure, and weak coordination and policy implementation were institutional and mirrors the country's national tourism trends between 2000 and 2025. This observed stagnation of international tourist arrivals, combined with dominance of low yield "visiting friends and relatives" tourism significantly limited the potential of Nigeria's heritage assets to contribute meaningfully to the country's economic development.

In spite of these identified structural weaknesses that affect the surveyed Nigerian heritage sites, the findings also highlighted signs of resilience and opportunity such as cultural pride among local custodians, youth-led heritage initiatives, and emerging partnerships between

government agencies and NGOs that can help improve the sustainability of the sites. With sufficient resources, participatory site management, and sustainable tourism, these could translate into transforming Nigeria's cultural heritage sector into a catalyst for preservation and development, a reshaping of the country's cultural landscape. Simply put, the findings of the study unveil a system balancing potential and constraint, where valuable cultural values remain locked up by institutional shortcomings. These are the grounds for the critical analysis and theoretical insights to be developed as this chapter progresses.

## 5.2 Discussions

A qualitative approach was used to provide a full and comprehensive understanding of the strategies and obstacles at Nigeria's cultural heritage sites, which meant that the study successfully addressed its research objectives. The study was guided by four central research objectives outlined in *section 2.3* which includes;

- (1) To *understand* the strategies for preserving and promoting Nigeria's heritage sites;
- (2) To *identify* the challenges impeding their tourism development;
- (3) To *assess* the effectiveness of their current management systems;
- (4) To *explore* the role of community and stakeholder participation in conservation and heritage governance.

The use of surveys, interviews, and focus groups were employed to address the research objectives and offer a robust rich study methodology. Whilst the questionnaire surveys identified broad priorities from public perspective needed in addressing visitors and residents' satisfaction and expectation of the cultural heritage sites this helped to address *the research objective 2 and 3*, which aimed to "identify the challenges impeding their tourism development" and "assess the effectiveness of their current management systems" from the perspective of both visitor and the public respectively. On the other hand, the interviews and focus group discussion with heritage managers, local custodians and other relevant stakeholders added a much-needed context and nuance on institutional gaps and thus addressed *the research objective 1 and 4* which sought to "understand the strategies for preserving and promoting Nigeria's heritage sites" and "explore the role of community and stakeholder participation in conservation and heritage governance" respectively. For example, the questionnaire survey responses alone ranked site management and visitor experience as top problems, whereas heritage staff interviews revealed that many of these issues facing the heritage sites stem from chronic underfunding and policy gaps. The strength of this research approach lies in such triangulation which enabled a cross-validation of the study findings across the various methods. Similarly, the NVivo results summary showed that the same themes dominated in both datasets, highlighting a uniformity or centrality in research results.

A notable surprise and somewhat counterintuitive from the analysis was that “Funding and Resources” was the least-frequently coded theme, even though most respondents made clear that it influences other challenges faced at the heritage sites affects most other problems like the stakeholders when interviewed were not always forthcoming with their responses on the subject of finance when answering open surveys, but when asked pointed questions, they specified budget deficiencies as the source of poor heritage site upkeep, lack of staffing, and insufficient programming. Aside from this observation, there were a few hard-nosed tensions that arose in the findings. To start with, there existed a visible disconnect between community ambitions and institutional praxis where local inhabitants, particularly the youth who vehemently asserted their heritage identity, but who complained that institutional agents sometimes ignore or even abuse that community agency, such that the host communities to heritage sites became disgruntled that their involvement is not efficiently leveraged by governments or site managers.

This is a result, on the one hand reveals a dissonance between policy intent, which on the surface promises to promote participation, and everyday practice on the ground. It is also the result of limited resources creating functional constraints, for instance, between what one would like to do in conservation action and what one can actually implement. The design of the study included some useful methodological virtues. Of most significance, the various five cultural heritage sites featured, such as an urban museum, a sacred grove, an isolated cultural landscape, a wildlife reserve, and a cave, gave a great view of the extent of cultural heritage in Nigeria. The huge sample size of the data set of (605 respondents) with even gender and age distribution (*see Table 4 in Ch. 4*) gave utmost confidence and research reliability to the study results. Furthermore, by tagging all research data texts with the NVivo analytical software, which offers clear thematic nodes, the study ensured consistency in analysis and research outcome .

Lastly, the use of the iterative Braun & Clarke esteemed thematic framework om in research analysis generated trustworthiness through reflective coding choices. Nevertheless, critically reflecting on the research outcome we identified a number of research limitations. Heavy dependence on qualitative approaches resulted in findings that are rich but not statistically generalizable to other Nigerian heritage sites contexts although it provides quite enough sizeable data overall. The five chosen cultural heritage sites were among the most well-known in Nigeria, and however their identified problems might not reflect more niche relate heritage sites or intangible heritage. In addition, while the study engaged a relatively large number of respondents, only 12.6% were actual tourists to the heritage sites, and about 3.1% of the respondents were heritage site managers or staff. This formed a small part of the whole and could skew the perception of local residents, who made up over 80% of the respondents.

However, these points do limit the study. The recorded evidence, despite a few gap meaningfully reflected the lived experiences and perceptions that the study set out to investigate, and in so doing provided some expected and some unexpected insights about the contemporary condition of Nigeria’s tangible cultural heritage

### 5.3 Original Contributions to Theory, Policy, and Practice

This study makes original contribution across theoretical, policy, and practical framework on perspectives on Nigerian cultural heritage sites and illustrates reflexivity about their role as social institutions. It advocates for the rethinking of heritage management to reflect the local realities. It integrates classical sociology and contemporary management theory to argue that heritage functions are stabilizing and mutable. It points out that governance gaps can transform culture and heritage from social assets to discord social threats.

#### 5.3.1 Contribution to Functionalism Theory

The empirical findings in this study offered strong support for functionalist perspectives on heritage studies. Functionalism theory which the study's theoretical framework anchored on posits that cultural institutions and practices serve social functions such as reinforcing shared identity, norms, and social cohesion and thus should offer benefits to their host communities. Indeed, at every heritage site surveyed in this study the data showed that cultural heritage is viewed by community members as both symbolic and functional to their identity and therefore should benefit their common interest.

For example, participants at Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Sukur Cultural Landscape explicitly tied their heritage sites to collective identity and continuity as highlighted by some respondents at both heritage sites they stated "*The Sacred Grove is spiritually and culturally special to our people. It's where our traditions happen, and I take great pride in being a part of its history*"; *Sukur is not just our home: it's our heritage. That's where our great, great grandparents resided, and it is our responsibility to keep and preserve it*". These expressions demonstrate how Heritage is something that local populations ascribe meaning to. The past is kept alive through festivals, rituals, storytelling, and caretaking. In the study sites, custodians often described their work as continuing ancestral duties, which shows social ties. This positive and dynamic role of local community members (as reflected in cultural pride and grassroots action) takes functionalism a step further by focusing on the agency of heritage-bearers. Though cultural preservation is heritage's manifest function, its latent functions are provision of livelihood for its host communities and political capital. However, this research study also identified dysfunction in the heritage system. Weak governance, underfunding, and infrastructure abandonment weaken heritage's ability to integrate, which creates, at times, conflict between government institutions and local communities.

However, as observed from the research results, top-down models of governance have been ineffective in sites like Ogbunike Cave, mostly resulting in policy resistance by the custodian community with government strategies at times failing to include indigenous knowledge systems critical for the conservation of the site. The case of Ogbunike Cave identifies the imperative for synergistic governance across state and custodian communities, illustrating how

breakdowns in synergistic planning can hinder social cohesion and disrupt heritage site management. Documenting these tensions, the study builds on functionalist theory by demonstrating that the lack of inclusive sustained support is what collapses heritage systems.

The study uniquely adds to functionalism views by demonstrating that cultural heritage sites in Nigeria integrate, in traditional heritage functionalist terms, adaptive modern functions, and revealing the risk of dysfunction from 'incomplete' formal support. The study thus represents the rethinking of the functionalist perspective on African heritage, where cultural heritage sites are also sacred, sourced from community development, and serve community development functions. In effect, our study findings affirm that heritage legitimates identity, cohesion, and continuity in Nigerian society and add empirical weight to functionalist explanations of cultural heritage.

### **5.3.2 Contribution to Heritage Management Theory**

This research advances heritage management theory through the foundation on the day-to-day lives of Nigerian societies. Previous academic writing in heritage management is oriented towards institutional frameworks, professional conservation, and UNESCO standards. However, based on this study's standpoint analytically reveal the need to rethink management of heritage sites in developing countries like Nigeria so as to incorporate local agency, governance dispersion, and conflict between heritage managing institutions and locals.

Secondly, the research highlights that heritage management in Nigeria is pluralistic in nature. Sites such as Ogbunike Cave point out multiple levels of overlapping jurisdiction between the traditional custodians, local government, and federal government bodies. This fragmentation negates the implication of expert-led, centralized models of management. Instead, management turns out to be negotiated among different actors with conflicting interests. In documenting these dynamics, the research provides empirical evidence for the polycentricity of heritage governance in the developing world.

Also, the research contributes to community-based heritage management discourses. In Sukur and Òşun-Osogbo for instance we saw how intense level of community participation portrays a bottom-up framework where custodianship at the local level is the preserve. This vindicates theorists such as Aas, Ladkin, and Fletcher <sup>145</sup>, who advocate for participatory forms of heritage management. Nevertheless, the research also identifies shortcomings where participation is often lacking institutional support and being symbolic rather than substantive. In essence, the research concludes on the need to balance community agencies with state resources and international frameworks.

Going forward, the study challenges the role of tourism in theory on heritage management. As much as global models give premium to heritage tourism as development strategy, Nigerian

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<sup>145</sup> Aas, C., Ladkin, A., & Fletcher, J. (2005). Stakeholder collaboration and heritage management. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32(1), 28–48.

evidence shows that tourism can exacerbate degradation and commodification in the absence of adequate infrastructure and protection. For example, lack of control of visitor activity at Ogbunike Cave short circuits conservation goals. This can also be seen in Ọ̀sun-Osogbo Sacred Grove where mass tourism during annual festival seasons creates pressure and vandalism threats on the sculptures at the site. The above example on complex heritage tourism dynamics therefore dispels the oversimplified claims that tourism systematically boosts heritage management, instead demonstrating the need for contextualized tourism planning. In essence, this research extends theory on heritage management by linking it to developmental issues directly. Infrastructure deficits, gaps in governance, and funding gaps are some of the ways in which heritage cannot be managed in isolation from wider national development paradigms. Heritage management in Nigeria therefore requires integration with infrastructure policy, education policy, and community development policy. This contribution extends theoretical debate by positioning heritage management within realities in Global South contexts of developing and underdeveloped nations, where constrained resources determine what is possible.

### **5.3.3 Contribution to Practical Strategies at Heritage Sites**

Through employing multiple methods of research, there was good evidence for the necessity of practical heritage management and tourism development. The triangulated information from the surveys, interviews, and focus groups indicated both the major problems and the possible answers. The site personnel and local people suggested a number of measures, such as establishing equitable management committees, training local guides, and enhancing site interpretation. Also, cooperation with the Benin City National Museum staff provided worthwhile recommendations like capacity-building workshops to enhance practices in heritage management. This staff exemplified training local creatives on cultural art by involving local artisans in the museum's laboratory as training co-craftsmen on safe artifact handling.

As stated by Timothy and Nyaupane, (2009)<sup>146</sup>, studies on the integration of heritage in vocational training and schooling provides a path towards societal developmental and cultural resilience. Along the same lines, all respondents from the surveyed five heritage sites stressed the importance of empowering younger generations with skills in heritage conservation, entrepreneurship and tourism services. The type of evidence involving the reform of governance for improved management is also noted. Current governance fragmentation shows evidence of weakening accountability and the flow of resources. To resolve the goal, a statement directed by Ndoro and Wijesuriya (2015)<sup>147</sup>, in his study emphasized the establishment of jurisdictional responsibilities and the formation of site management

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<sup>146</sup> Timothy, D.J., & Nyaupane, G.P. (2009). *Cultural Heritage and Tourism in the Developing World: A Regional Perspective* (1st ed.). p.1-314 Routledge.

<sup>147</sup> Ndoro, W., & Wijesuriya, G. (2015). *Heritage management and conservation: From colonization to globalization. Global Heritage: A Reader, First Edition.* 131-149.

committees which include community members. Functionally, this would address fragmentation.

Also required is infrastructure-sensitive conservation planning as noted in the study. Inadequate connectivity, visitor infrastructure, safety concerns, and road connectivity were noted as usual challenges. Dedicated investment can overcome these through a judicious balance between accessibility and conservation. Cost-saving options are green infrastructure, phased planning, and public-private partnerships according to the study by Bello and Okechukwu (2023)<sup>148</sup>. Of most importance is that the study addresses methods for the sustainable tourism development. Management should aim for a quality experience and respectful interpretation of heritage rather than focusing on the quantity of visitors and controlling visitor movement should be a priority. Guided tours, cultural activities, and storytelling can greatly enhance the understanding of visitors and can be done without jeopardizing the integrity of the heritage. Hence, the report stresses the significance of ownership of the heritage by the communities. The operational strategies should ensure that the communities are not just beneficiaries, but also active custodians and decision-makers. Hence, the practical side of this study reposes in the interlinkage of empirical data with action plans that address governance reforms, community empowerment, infrastructure development, and sustainable tourism focused on the empirical interlinkage of data with action plans.

With this, the research also provides a clear roadmap for heritage stakeholders wanting to develop the cultural heritage industry in Nigeria. In the same vein, tourist feedback highlighted the need for better visitor amenities and infrastructure. Survey findings indicated that training and partnerships were needed, and managers independently echoed this in interviews. In effect, the study demonstrates that listening to all stakeholder groups (and coding their responses) revealed multi-faceted solutions. Thus, the research contributes to practice by offering an evidence-based roadmap any effective conservation or tourism plan must simultaneously address management capacity, community empowerment, and visitor needs as grounded in the study's coded findings.

### **5.3.4 Policy Implications**

One of the major reoccurring challenges faced by most Nigerian cultural heritage sites as indicated in the study findings is the fragmentation of institutional responsibilities and weak policy implementation which both results in significant policy implications. Thus, these policy implications become fundamental drivers of the conservation and tourism failures evident across Nigeria's heritage sites. Factors such as fragmented mandates, intermittent financing, and an absence of coherent cross-sectoral frameworks translate national policy commitments

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<sup>148</sup> Bello, D. L. A., & Okechukwu, D. I. A. (2023). Navigating the Legal Landscape of Sustainable Tourism in Africa: Balancing Economic Growth and Cultural Preservation in the 21st Century. *Journal of Arts and Sociological Research*. Vol (19) 1-12.

(NCMM mandate, UNESCO engagements) into limited local action as reveal in (*see Chapters 2–4*).

The consequences resulting from these policy implication are thus predictable resulting in confused accountability, reactive rather than planned heritage management, and communities becoming de-facto custodians without legal protection, technical support, or stable revenues. For example, the transfer and re-transfer of management responsibility at Yankari Game Reserve (*see Section 4.3.4*) produced governance lacunae that undermined ranger deployment and anti-poaching capacity; Sukur Cultural Landscape’s UNESCO listing did not bring commensurate infrastructure investment (*see Section 4.3.3*); and Ogbunike Cave’s blurred federal–state responsibilities left basic visitor services and fee governance unresolved (*see Section 4.3.5*). These case-level failures mirror national patterns of policy evaporation and underfunding (*see Section 4.9*). In direct response to these institutional failures, the following section outlines a series of evidence-based policy recommendations.

## **5.4 Evidence-Based Policy Recommendations**

The evidence from the study finding on Nigerian heritage site confirms the need for policy renewal and institutional reform at the government level. A starting point to this would be the establishment of a centralized system for the administration of heritage with clearly demarcated lines of jurisdiction among the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), the UNESCO liaison offices, and state cultural departments. At this stage, coordination would prevent duplication and ensure systematic attention to site-specific needs. Policy should also emphasize legal enforcement of heritage protection legislation. Most of the case study sites were affected by encroachment, vandalism, and unregulated tourism due to the failure to enforce existing laws. Levying harsh punishment on unauthorized construction near heritage sites, illegal excavation of sacred groves, or custodian slackness can invoke deterrents. Additional policies can also aid, such as declaring buffer zones to safeguard sites at risk and incorporating heritage into common town planning and environmental regulations. Because of this, the policy ideas below are very important for government policies to follow if Nigerian heritage sites are to be managed well.

### **5.4.1 Targeted Policy Recommendations for Government Agencies**

- I. Increase and stabilize funding:** Since underfunding of the heritage sites was a key underlying issue at all surveyed sites, government institutions ought to increase and standardize financial support to the heritage sector in Nigeria. This involves routine maintenance and capital expenditures to assist in the upgrading of such essentials as visitor centers, heritage site facilities, roads and security. For instance, the concerned

governing bodies can earmark a predetermined percentage of tourism income for site preservation to ensure projects are not up for grabs every year during budget reductions.

**II. Strengthen interagency coordination:** With having found from the research finding that the majority of the heritage sites existing governance arrangements are fragmented, with overlapping mandates being noted in culture, tourism, environment, and local governments. A central policy action that will provide the much-needed solution to this fragmented governance at some heritage sites is to create a unified heritage commission or task force that streamlines responsibilities and reduces bureaucratic duplication. This body could bridge the gaps between management at national and local levels, ensuring consistency in site management and enforcement of protection laws and other relevant heritage policies.

**III. Improve enforcement and regulatory frameworks:** Regardless of the policies on paper (e.g. site buffer zones, heritage protection acts), the study finding underlined a gap in weak policy enforcement at most heritage sites. Therefore, the government should tighten oversight of heritage laws, for example by training and deploying more site managers and reserve rangers, and by engaging local custodians in official security regulatory roles. Clear guidelines should be issued to balance tourism with preservation for example, managing crowd sizes at heritage festivals, as in the case of Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove where the site managers have struggled to do so during big cultural festivals such as the Òşun festival as overcrowding issues have sometimes led to vandalism of sculptures at the heritage site (see fig 34).

**IV. Leverage international status and partnerships:** Sites like Òşun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Sukur Cultural Landscape have UNESCO recognition, but most respondents noted that tangible benefits have been limited. Policy makers should therefore capitalize on these statuses to attract grants, technical assistance, and research collaborations. For example, investing staff time in the preparation of competitive global funding proposals might be used to free up money for upgrading infrastructure at these sites, which cannot currently be afforded by domestic budgets.

#### **5.4.2 Capacity-Building Proposals for Local Custodians and Communities**

Based on the study's result, However, they are frequently deprived of the resources, training, and credit necessary to properly maintain their sites. Evidence from the study underscores that although custodianship is entrenched at locations like the Sukur Cultural Landscape and Ogbunike Cave, government backing is minimal. By contrast, Òşun-Osogbo

Sacred Grove demonstrates the perils of commercial overreaching and cultural dilution if there is lack of participation by local stakeholders in decision-making and benefit-sharing. Capacity building must therefore place a strong emphasis on empowering communities as custodians and directly as beneficiaries of heritage.

Hence, the following Local Community and Custodian Capacity-Building Proposals are urgent and necessary.

- I. Training and skills development:** Findings indicated that the local communities at the heritage sites always felt the need for capacity-building. The government and NGOs should fund training programs in host community small business development, tour guiding, heritage custodianship, and heritage interpretation for the locals at host communities. The Benin city National Museum is one such good example where local craftsmen were given training in artifact conservation which can be replicated in other sites. This gives the local people the capacity to actively participate in site operating activities as site interpreters or conservation assistants and hence enhances community ownership.
- II. Community inclusion in management:** The research indicated that individuals residing around the sites envision themselves as caretakers. Therefore, pertinent government officials should formalize channels of local representation, for instance, through site management committees comprising community leaders, youth groups, women's associations, etc. These organizations could undertake the design of revenue-generating cultural programs and activities, thereby bolstering the system's transparency and citizen confidence.
- III. Support for community-led initiatives:** The findings revealed that some communities at sites such as the Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, Ogbunike Cave, and Sukur Cultural Landscape, practicing site custodianship and site preservation, were involved in festival participation, shrine upkeep, and ecological patrols. The government is called upon to support such communities because government-sponsored initiatives provide funds and micro-loans to support community grassroots projects. For example, communities could be supported to safely hold heritage festivals and even helped to form community-owned cooperatives to sell handicrafts and keep the economic value in their locality. Stakeholders, in addition to our research findings, asked for exactly this type of support through training, revenue sharing, and community-level recognition. Such initiatives ensure that local people actively participate in sustaining their heritage, rather than merely spectating.

### 5.4.3 Strategic Actions for Improved Funding and Infrastructure

Chronic underfunding and neglected infrastructure remained a common issue across all five case study locations. Government budgets are still too low, donor funding is inconsistently provided, and tourism revenue reinvestment remains weak. Conservation, the quality of the experience for visitors, and the local benefits are all compromised. There is a need to break the cycle of funding, planning, and infrastructure challenges, thus the need for the following strategic steps to improve funding and planning for Nigeria's cultural heritage sites.

**I. Diversify funding sources:** Increasing budgets from the government should be complemented by securing private and foreign funding opportunities. Public-private arrangements can be made for visitor amenities such as accommodation, meals, and recreational facilities that are made available at the heritage sites. A portion of the revenue generated from tourism tolls and concessions could be earmarked for the upkeep of heritage sites. Stakeholders viewed conventional funding as unpredictable, thus the importance of new funding sources as revealed in the NVivo study.

**II. Phased infrastructure upgrades:** With regard to local stakeholders, the suggested approach to tackling the major improvements needed to access roads, sanitation, signage, and the visitor centers will be phased. Ogbunike Cave respondents, for example, suggested the upgrading of access roads and improvement of the walkways. The relevant institution might then focus on affordable quick wins, such as improving signage and toilet facilities while tackling long-term plans, road access improvements, enlarging the museums, and building guest houses for visitors. The long-term plans could be funded by tourist taxes and grants, as suggested by respondents to our surveys, both local and tourist.

**III. Maintain and publicize heritage budgets:** Publicize and maintain heritage budgets: Budgets that are overly transparent can to some degree backfire if holders of the budgets are not trusted to execute the plans they put forth. Trusting the public will develop as they see annual reports detailing project outcomes and heritage budgets spent. Trust is gained multiplicatively by allowing local communities and visitors to monitor the site development workflow and financials within communities using tools like scorecards. Such tracking is useful scope for tracking illicit fund use aimed at site decommissioning. Monitoring and tracking can help the relevant authorities to streamline poorly developed facilities that were raised as a concern across many of our sites.

## **5.5 Limitations of the Study and Methodological Reflections**

Every research study, no matter how well established, has some constraints limiting the scope of the study and the interpretation of the results. This study on Nigeria's cultural heritage preservation and tourism development is no exception. While it adds to the understanding of the intersections of heritage conservation with community participation and sustainable tourism, it had some limitations which were conceptual, methodological, and practical. These limitations need to be addressed to understand thoroughly the value and boundaries of the study. Additionally, the identification of these limitations provides a compass which narrows the range of interpretation and future research opportunities which seeks to build or test the findings of the current study in order to expand and authenticate it. Thus, the main limitations of the research are presented in the following paragraphs.

### **5.5.1 Conceptual and Theoretical Limitations**

The range of theoretical frameworks was a limitation. The study was predominantly based on the theory of Functionalism and the Heritage Management Models and incorporated other perspectives to a lesser extent, like Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), and Community-Based Tourism (CBT) practices, as the results evolved. While these frameworks are extensively familiar and provide a wealth of interpretative lenses, they limit the analysis to specific dimensions of the heritage-tourism interactions. Other frameworks such as political ecology, postcolonial theory, and critical heritage studies would better incorporate analyses of cultural identity, asymmetrical power relations, and debates around authenticity and would be equally pertinent.

Besides, the study has attempted to reconcile functionalist approaches (which place emphasis on the integrative roles of heritage within the social order) and the more critical approaches (which highlight dissonance, conflict, and exclusion). Nevertheless, the functionalist stance does seem to have a bit tendency to overgeneralize social life in a community by presenting heritage as a cohesive element in situations of social division, elite capture, and social fragmentation. This conflict points to the difficulty in balancing diverse theoretical traditions in one study. Moreover, although TALC was helpful in tracing the development trajectories of surveyed cultural heritage sites, it risked imposing a linear model that does not fully account for non-linear or context-specific patterns of growth and decline.

Similarly, while the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework foregrounded the importance of local cultural assets and resilience, it tended to underplay the bigger structural inequalities and policy constraints that limit community agency. The CBT approach, though useful in emphasizing participation, often idealized “community” as a unified entity, overlooking

internal divisions and the influence of external actors. Furthermore, another conceptual limitation was focus on five prominent cultural heritage sites in Nigeria.

While varied in their cross-section from sacred groves, wildlife reserve, cave to archaeological landscapes no conclusions can be generalized across Nigeria's wide cultural landscape. Locations in the far northern region of the country, for example, with different sociopolitical and religious dynamics, would have dynamics vastly different from those examined here.

### **5.5.2 Methodological and Data Limitations**

The study was founded upon a high percentage of qualitative surveys/interviews, observational fieldwork, and documentary analysis. While this methodology was apt for collating rich understanding, it was riddled with its own shortcomings. Initially, sampling limitations reduced the variety of voices expressed. Albeit efforts to speak with different stakeholders' government officials, local custodians, members of society, and visitors, the percentage of representation for women, youth, and marginalized groups was disproportionate. Restrictions on cultural participation in some case study heritage sites limited female voice representation, which may bias outcomes toward dominant male narratives.

Secondly, quantitative good data was out of reach. Government budgets, visitor numbers, and accounts often were not in existence, lacked completion, or were thinly documented. This limited the ability of the research to validate qualitative results with a solid numerical evidence. For instance, claims of underfunding or visitor growth usually relied on stakeholder view rather than validated statistics.

Third, time constraints were imposed on longitudinal intensity. Fieldwork took place over a particular time period, allowing just a snapshot of heritage dynamics to be accessed. Seasonal variations increased visitor numbers during festivals at sites like Òṣun-Osogbo Sacred Grove or long-term trends especially, like infrastructure decay over decades are not available. A longitudinal study would have provided greater insight into evolving site trajectories.

Fourth, remote interviewing sometimes curtailed opportunities for participant observation. In addition, disruptions related to the security in the northern part of Nigeria at sites like Yankari Game Reserve and Sukur Cultural Landscape changed patterns of visits, and resident engagement, which could bias the findings. Lastly, comparative methodological complications arose. Though the five case study sites possessed general thematic concerns, cross-case comparisons were complicated by their unique histories, geographies, and cultural meanings. Attempts to make analytical categories uniform occasionally led to reducing local specifics.

### **5.5.3 Researcher Reflections and Analytical Stance**

A critical limitation relates to the researcher's positionality. My positionality influenced this qualitative study. Being an academic Nigerian made it easier for me to access and build trust relationships with community custodians and elders. However, my initial expectations regarding the value of heritage for tourism could have influenced how I posed questions and interpreted responses. Inequities of power were also significant. People from the community might have downplayed certain conflicts or emphasized cultural pride in some positive aspects of their self presentation. Government officials often overstated their narrative of success while downplaying their failures. My positionality and relationship with the participants influenced what people chose to share with me.

Another challenge was the ability to move freely across emic and etic stances in my writing. I sought to engage with local meanings while tying them to larger theoretical arguments. Trouble arose when local and, especially, religious explanations for places like the Osogbo Sacred Grove, Ogbunike Cave, and Sukur Cultural Landscape did not fit into the so-called "sustainable tourism" boxes. Language posed challenges. The interviews conducted in English and other indigenous languages resulted in the loss of some idioms, proverbs, and folktales in translation, thereby compromising the narrative depth and the cultural symbolism of local stories.

### **5.5.4 Methodological Reflections and Lessons Learned**

The challenges highlighted lessons for future research. The need for triangulation stood out: combining qualitative methods with quantitative ones, like GIS mapping or some sort of visitor movement tracking, would provide stronger evidence. Long-term and transcultural comparisons can demonstrate how and where heritage fluctuates over time in any place. Future work can be inclusive of women, young people, and more marginalized voices. Researchers must remain vigilant regarding the "imperial gaze" that has the power to inform interpretation. Practicing reflexivity, for example, giving early results to local communities to gain feedback, will reduce bias. Though these limitations are present, they do not undercut the value of the study; rather, they serve to contextualize its contributions. Conceptual framing was limited by theoretical decisions, methodological constraints shaped data validity, and positionality within research impacted interpretation. Yet these same factors also mark potential avenues for methodological enhancement, and theoretical and more comprehensive practice in future scholarship on heritage. By recognizing these limits, the study positions itself openly within the developing body of cultural heritage and sustainable tourism literature in Nigeria and internationally.

## **5.6 Suggestions for Future Research in Cultural Heritage and Tourism**

Following this research's outcomes, subsequent studies might take a number of avenues. Quantitative questionnaires might be given at additional heritage sites or on the national level to cross-test for the prevalence of problems such as funding deficits, as having been marked elsewhere in heritage sites. Comparative analysis with other nations in Africa might determine which challenges are unique to Nigeria's governance environment and which are more relevant. Investigation of intangible heritage (oral tradition, crafts, performance arts) tourism has been overlooked in this instance and should be considered. Long-term studies could evaluate the impact of reforms, such as new community initiatives or public works projects, on preservation in the long term. Further, studies may examine electronic and marketing strategies for heritage tourism (e.g., the role of social media or virtual tours) in areas that are of growing importance but were not addressed in this qualitative research investigation. Lastly, given the focus on community, participatory action research may be beneficial: having community members as co-researchers to pilot and iterate interventions would further the spirit of collaboration displayed in this study. Thus, the study highlights eight key areas for future research.

### **5.6.1 Longitudinal and Comparative Studies of Heritage Site Trajectories**

Future studies should undertake longitudinal investigations tracking changes at heritage sites through the years. This research was worth its weight in gold in terms of documenting a snapshot but could not record change over decades, festival cycles, or policy regimes. Plotting site development over 10–20 years would show how visitor increase, climate change, or infrastructural decay contribute to heritage resilience. Equally, comparative studies between Nigerian regions or within African states would ascertain the extent to which exhibited challenges like underfunding, elite capture, or fragmentation of governance are general or site-specific. Comparing cases with Lalibela (Ethiopia), Great Zimbabwe, and Robben Island would position Nigerian heritage in larger African discourses on preservation and tourism growth.

### **5.6.2 Quantitative Data and Mixed-Methods Approaches**

More robust quantitative evidence is necessary for understanding the economics of heritage, the impact of visitors, and the surrounding environment. Integrating into different fields of study will advance the research. Visitor studies (using ticket data, GPS, route tracking, and how long they stay), Economic assessment (heritage tourism's economic impact on local communities and on the national GDP), and the impact of tourism on the environment (erosion, waste, vegetation, and flow of waste). Research designs using mixed methods of surveys, ethnography, and GIS. Mixed methods will triangulate the evidence and mitigate the data

scarcity that is prevalent in the research. Such designs would also make heritage studies more relevant to policy, providing empirical data in addition to the narratives of the communities.

### **5.6.3 Governance, Policy, and Institutional Capacity**

The study identified lack of policy enforcement and integrated governance as the core problems. Future research needs to delve into the institutional interplay of political will, bureaucracies, and the laws governing the heritage sector. The focus could be on the following:

- I. How do federal, state, and local authorities coordinate or fail to coordinate heritage policy?
- II. What role do traditional custodians play within formal governance structures?
- III. How do international frameworks (UNESCO conventions, African Union policies) influence local heritage management?

### **5.6.4 Heritage, Technology, and Digital Futures**

Heritage and digital technology studies can be applied to most new fields. Later research can focus on aspects of digital documentation like 3D scanning, virtual visits, and augmented reality. Social media narratives sharing heritage and stories of tourists, influencers, and young people. Lastly, there is digital repatriation, where communities receive the digital copies of the objects and the originals stay in other countries. They can enhance the global mainstream focus and educational use of Nigerian heritage, but also raise issues of authenticity, equity, and control. Future studies should examine critically digital heritage and whether it truly democratizes access to resources or exacerbates the inequity of tech access among the digital rich and the poor.

### **5.6.5 Climate Change, Environmental Pressures, and Sustainability**

Floods, desertification, and unplanned urban sprawl pose environmental sustainability threats to heritage sites. Future research should integrate climate change and environmental science with heritage studies, focusing on:

- i. Community-led adaptation strategies, such as sacred groves as buffers against erosion.
- ii. Linking heritage studies with sustainability science would position Nigerian research within global climate debates while offering practical strategies for resilience.
- iii. The carbon footprint of heritage tourism and mitigation measures.
- iv. Vulnerability assessments of site exposure to climate hazards.

### **5.6.6 Theoretical and Epistemological Innovations**

The theoretical foundations of African heritage studies remain to be pursued. This study employed functionalism, the TALC model, and sustainable-livelihoods frameworks. However, future scholars might analyze the 'western' heritage discourse using postcolonial and decolonial theories. Political ecology can be used to study the environment and culture interdependence. Critical heritage studies can be used to analyze the contradictions of authenticity, commodification, and identity politics.

In theory construction, African epistemologies should include indigenous knowledge systems, oral traditions, and spiritual traditions. This inclusion would be the balancing of the Eurocentric dominance and enrich the global discourse

### **5.6.7 Methodological Innovations**

There are also new possibilities in the methodology for future studies. Communities can be engaged in heritage landscape visualization using participatory mapping, combined with GIS. Ethnographic filmmaking and other visual methodologies can be integrated to document the performance and ritual aspects of research. In this area of studies, additional thorough research intervention impacts such as interventions training workshops, online campaigns, and documenting their heritage landscapes will also be necessary. While establishing heritage scholarship, the research will be more impactful on policy and practice to this. In this regard, studies addressing Nigerian cultural heritage will need to expand their research on regions, periods, and intercultural comparisons and scholarship on broader issues such as gender, youth, governance, and climate.

It also needs to use varied methods, such as quantitative, participatory, and digital methods, to fit into changing heritage frameworks. The suggested theoretical model and the lacuna this research seeks to reconcile research and practice for more sustainable heritage management. Ultimately, Nigeria's cultural dynamism is an issue of research that relates local realities to global challenges in order to secure cultural assets, celebrate them, and apply them to inclusive development.

## **5.7 Final Reflections and Outlook for Nigeria's Cultural Heritage Sector**

This research augments the understanding of the practical and theoretical aspects of Nigeria's heritage industry. It shows how deeply Nigerians value their heritage sites and how they view tourism prospects, even with budgetary constraints, poor governance, and infrastructural challenges. The research confirms that identity and heritage are interrelated and that management models need to empower people while efficiently utilizing available

resources. From a policy perspective, the study offers a definitive, evidence-based blueprint for budgets reform and enhancing stakeholder cooperation toward ensuring heritage sites attain sustainability. Depending on what happens if these proposals are taken up, the future of Nigeria's cultural heritage is both bright and forward-looking.

This was quite clear in the five heritage sites studied in the research. With government, community, and partners harmonizing to fill these gaps identified with increased funding, enhanced management, and empowering custodians. Nigeria's cultural heritage sector would flourish. This would not only retain the nation's deep history and identity but will also drive national development through developing sustainable tourism. Globally, this research presents Nigeria as being ready to be involved in international discourses on how culture can be conserved (e.g. UNESCO platforms) through the presentation of real, grassroots evidence of what is working and what is not. Lastly, the protection of Nigeria's cultural heritage entails both upholding its social purposes and restructuring its government the observations here set the course for achieving both simultaneously.

### **5.7.1 Summary of Core Insights**

Several key insights emerged from the five case study locations covered in this study.

1. Community identity and pride remain at the core of Nigeria's cultural heritage, with heritage sites acting as centers of belonging and cultural continuity.
2. Governance problems of duplication of power and non-enforcement undermine site sustainability.
3. Tourism potential remains unexploited, with tourism infrastructures and advertising campaigns below world standards.
4. External drivers; climate change, urban expansion, and globalization impact site integrity with growing threat.

### **5.7.2 Theoretical Reflections**

Theoretically, the research affirmed that Euro-American heritage management theories like Butler's TALC, Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, among others, embraced within this research are still valid but need to be modified to fit Nigerian cultural heritage reality. The functionalist approach, in which social cohesion is emphasized, was affirmed through the discovery that festivals and places of worship continue to unite people. However, Euro-American-based theory underestimates institutional vulnerability, elite distraction, and informality that weaken African heritage management. This puts emphasis on African-centered epistemologies prioritizing indigenous knowledge, spiritual traditions, and world heritage constructs.

This model will assist in the re-balancing of the world knowledge hierarchy in African heritage studies, and in the process, alter the stereotypical account of African cultural terrain as non-complex and primitive societies, which has been erroneously propagated over the last century, and in the process enables the development of hybrid frameworks whereby universal notions such as conservation, authenticity, and sustainability are re-interpreted in terms of locally situated meanings and experiences. This theoretical shift will affect the general appeal for epistemic decolonization within heritage studies, such that theory and models are not simply exported from the Global North to the South but are critically remade to suit the nuances of African heritage realities.

The future of Nigeria's cultural heritage does not lie just with state agencies. Custodians, grassroots associations, women's groups, youth networks, and traditional leaders are already contributing to the day-to-day preservation. In order to consolidate their contribution, policy directions should involve enhanced capacity-building to enable custodians to be masters of tourism, negotiate effectively with state actors, and interact with digital technologies; adopt inclusive models of participation under which marginalized voices particularly women and youth are not left behind in decision-making; and develop community benefits such as revenue-sharing schemes and the creation of employment opportunities in a bid to induce local support. Making these participatory models institutionalized can make cultural heritage a sustaining development driver.

A global outlook anticipates a higher reliance on digital forms of heritage such as 3D documentation, virtual tours, and augmented reality. Tools of digitization can be adopted to convert fragile cultural heritage items and heritage properties into digital formats, broaden global access and diaspora involvement, and educate Nigerian youth through interactive experience platforms. However, issues of authenticity, ownership, and digital underclass will need to be addressed before these models can be adopted. Collaboration with universities, tech firms, and UNESCO will enable Nigeria to address infrastructural gaps and take a leadership stance in the digital heritage world.

Without a doubt, climate change is the biggest long-term threat to Nigerian intangible cultural heritage sites. Rising temperatures, flooding, and land degradation threatens sacred groves, archaeological sites, and traditional structures. The prospects call for immediate research and policy consideration of climate-heritage interplay, such as mapping of vulnerable heritage sites in danger; community-driven adaptation, i.e., planting of trees or soil erosion control; and mainstreaming heritage into Nigeria's climate action obligations. Sustainable heritage management will increasingly entail the management of ecosystems in addition to cultural sites and monuments.

Tourism is perhaps the most realistic path to sustainability for heritage. Nigerian heritage sites have yet to unlock their potential in economic terms. The future calls for investment in infrastructure (roads, visitor information centers, and sanitation); branding and promotion, inserting Nigerian heritage into local and international circuits of tourism; and diversification

of experience from performance and festival to eco-cultural packages appealing to international visitors. Learning from local credible African heritage sites such as Lalibela or Robben Island, Nigeria needs to rethink heritage tourism as an afterthought, but a focal point of national development policy.

With the correct institutional reforms, Nigeria can, in the near future, be one of the leaders in the management of heritage on the African continent. Nigeria possesses one of the richest cultural heritage capital in Africa, with cultural heritage sites including the Nok terracotta, the Great Benin Wall, and the Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove. Nigeria can become a case study in Afrocentric heritage management under the global management of heritage by international treaties and through indigenous knowledge systems, even though this may require more innovative management of the heritage sites and global diplomatic relations which support the restitution of heritage artifacts and recognition of heritage resources, intangible heritage and equitable partnerships with global players. More innovative management of heritage sites, global diplomatic relations that support the restitution of artifacts and recognition of intangible heritage, and equitable partnerships with global players will allow Nigeria to become a case study of Afrocentric heritage management.

### **5.7.3 Conclusion**

This study concludes by reiterating that Nigeria's cultural heritage remains an irreplaceable cultural resource and represents a valuable development asset for the country. The research evidence presented over the course of the identifies specific challenges facing most of the tangible cultural heritage sites across Nigeria such as funding shortfalls, weak policy enforcement and fragmented coordination at the site level. These issues continue to limit the nation's heritage and tourism development. The research findings revealed that in spite of Nigerian heritage sites being deeply revered by her people as anchor of their cultural identity, they still operate far below their capacity due to inherent institutional neglect and a lack of strategic heritage support system that can help the heritage sites thrive. These observations thus place the Nigeria cultural heritage landscape at a critical point where cultural identity, livelihoods, and the desire for sustainable development intersect. To harness tourism growth potential through her heritage resources, Nigeria's cultural heritage will need intentional political will and strategic prioritization toward sustainable heritage management to attain international best practices.

Nevertheless, with her diverse rich culture and untapped heritage tourism industry, Nigeria can outcompete regional African peers by adopting measurable, accountable reforms such as predictable financing mechanisms, coordinated and transparent management arrangements, targeted capacity-building for local custodians, climate-sensitive site protection, and marketing of her cultural product to the global audience. Most importantly, for reforms to work, and for local communities to participate as active co-managers and not just passive recipients' reforms

are needed that redistribute power and profits. This approach will contribute positively to ethics and pragmatism by de-escalating conflict, enhancing stewardship, and ensuring heritage investments are sustainable and attractive to private and international partners.

The research data obtained in this study will assist policy reform, participatory management, and impact-driven frameworks which are vital for academic researchers and heritage practitioners. The opportunity to convert Nigeria's cultural heritage resources into an asset for tourism development is timely and feasible. This potential will only be realized if government authorities, heritage managers, and all stakeholders act in a coordinated, transparent, and accountable manner. Nigeria's cultural heritage landscape has the potential to epitomize Afrocentric stewardship and modern cultural tourism and can drive local and national development. On the contrary, a continued neglect would continue to erode her cultural depth and also foreclose significant socio-cultural opportunities.

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# Appendix A

## Survey Forms Used Across the Five Case-Study Heritage Sites

### Case Study Site 1: National Museum Benin City Survey Forms

**National Museum Benin City Semi Structured Interview**

**National Museum Benin City Semi Structured Interview**

**Questions for Stakeholders**

(E.g. Heritage Managers, Community Leaders, Government Officials, and Tourism Operators)

**Section 1: Background Information:**

- Can you provide a brief overview of the National Museum Benin, highlighting its historical and cultural significance?
- How long have you been involved in managing the National Museum Benin, and what motivated you to work in this field?

**Section 2: Current State of Tourism:**

- What is the current level of tourist activity at the National Museum Benin?
- Can you identify the primary demographic of visitors, both domestic and international?
- Are there any specific challenges or obstacles that hinder the growth of tourism at the National Museum Benin?

**Section 3: Cultural Preservation:**

- How does the National Museum Benin contribute to the preservation of Nigeria's cultural heritage?
- What initiatives or strategies are in place to safeguard and promote the cultural artifacts housed in the museum?

**Section 4: Community Engagement:**

- How does the National Museum Benin engage with the local community to promote cultural awareness and involvement?
- In what ways does the museum collaborate with local businesses and organizations to enhance the overall tourist experience?

**Section 5: Tourism Development Potential:**

- From your perspective, what untapped opportunities exist for tourism development at the National Museum Benin?
- Are there any plans or ongoing projects aimed at attracting more tourists to the Museum?
- How can the government or other stakeholders support and contribute to the growth of tourism at the National Museum Benin?

**Closing 6:** Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the National Museum Benin, its cultural significance, or the potential for tourism development?

*Semi Structured Interview Form for Site managers*

**Questionnaire Survey**

**National Museum Benin City**

**Demographic Information :**

- Age:**
  - 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55 and above
- Occupation:**
  - Artist
  - Historian
  - Student
  - Trader/Business Person
  - Other (please specify)
- How long have you been associated with the National Museum in Benin City?**

**Section A: History of National Museum Benin City**

- Can you provide insights into the historical artifacts and cultural significance housed in the National Museum?**
  - Open-ended response
- How has the museum contributed to preserving the cultural heritage of Benin City?**

**Section B: Perceptions and Expectations**

- How do you think tourism impacts the National Museum and the local community?**
  - Positive
  - Neutral
  - Negative
- Are there specific challenges or benefits that have arisen due to the museum's interaction with tourists?**
- What initiatives or changes would you suggest to improve the museum experience for both visitors and the local community?**

*Questionnaire Survey Form for Locals*

**Tourist Questionnaire Survey**

**National Museum Benin City**


**Demographic Information :**

- Age:**
  - 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55 and above
- Gender:**
  - Male
  - Female
  - Other (please specify)
- Nationality:**
- Have you visited Nigeria before?**
  - Yes
  - No
- How did you learn about the National Museum Benin City, and what motivated you to visit?**
- Can you share your impressions of the historical artifacts and cultural significance housed in the National Museum?**
- Based on your visit, what suggestions do you have to enhance the overall tourist experience at the National Museum Benin City while respecting and preserving its cultural heritage?**
- How would you rate your overall experience at the cultural heritage sites you visited in Nigeria?**
  - Excellent
  - Good
  - Average
  - Poor

*Questionnaire Survey Form for Tourists*

## Case Study Site 2: *Ọṣun Osogbo Sacred Grove Survey Forms*

**Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove Semi-Structured Interview**

 University of Lagos  
Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove

**Questions for Stakeholders**

(E.g. Heritage Managers, Community Leaders, Government Officials, and Tourism Operators)

**Section 1: Background Information:**

- Can you provide a brief overview of the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove Heritage Site, emphasizing its history and cultural significance?
- How long have you been involved in managing the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove, and what motivated you to work in this field?

**Section 2: Current State of Tourism:**

- What are the primary challenges you currently face in managing tourism at the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove?
- Does these challenges impact the overall visitor experience and the site's ability to attract and retain tourists?

**Section 3: Cultural Preservation:**

- Maintaining cultural heritage often involves balancing preservation with the demands of tourism. What challenges arise in striking this balance at the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove?

**Section 4: Community Engagement:**

- How do you engage with the local community and various stakeholders in managing the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove to promote cultural awareness and involvement?
- What challenges and opportunities do [his engagement present for tourism development?

**Section 5: Tourism Development Potential:**

- What kind of support, if any, do you receive from the government and other institutions in managing the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove?
- How does this support impact your ability to address challenges and enhance tourism?

**Section 6: Visitor Experience and Education:**


- Are there challenges that impact the overall visitor experience?
- Are there any plans or strategies in place to improve the quality of the tourist experience?

**Closing 6:** Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the challenges in managing the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove, their impact on cultural preservation, and the potential for tourism development?

*Semi Structured Interview Form for Site managers*

**Questionnaire Survey**

**Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove**

 University of Lagos  
Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove

**Demographic Information :**

- Age:**
  - 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55 and above
- Occupation:**
  - Artist
  - Teacher
  - Student
  - Trader/Business
  - Other (Pls specify)
- How long have you known about the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove?

**Section A: History and Cultural Significance of Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove**

- Can you recall a specific event or tradition at the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove that stands out in your memory and has personal or community significance?
- In your opinion, how has the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove contributed to preserving the cultural heritage and traditions of its locality?


**Section B: Perceptions and Expectations**

- If you could showcase one aspect of the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove to a tourist, what would it be, and why?
- From your perspective, what specific challenges or benefits have arisen due to the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove's interaction with tourists?
- What exciting activities or changes would you suggest to make the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove experience more enjoyable for both visitors and the local community, considering its unique cultural and spiritual context?

*Questionnaire Survey Form for Locals*

**Tourist Questionnaire Survey**

**Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove**

 University of Lagos  
Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove


**Demographic Information :**

- Age:**
  - 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55 and above
- Gender:**
  - Male
  - Female
  - Other (please specify)
- Nationality:**
- Have you visited Nigeria before?**
  - Yes
  - No
- How did you learn about the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove, and what motivated you to visit?**
- Can you share your impressions of the historical and cultural significance of the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove?**
- Based on your visit, what suggestions do you have to enhance the overall tourist experience at the Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove while respecting and preserving its cultural heritage?**
- How would you rate your overall experience at the cultural heritage sites you visited in Nigeria?**
  - Excellent
  - Good
  - Average
  - Poor

*Questionnaire Survey Form for Tourists*

Case Study Site 3: Sukur Cultural Landscape Survey Form.

**Questionnaire Survey  
Sukur Cultural Landscape**

 Università degli Studi della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli

**Demographic Information :**

1. **Age:**

- 18-24                      • 25-34                      • 35-44
- 45-54                      • 55 and above

2. **Occupation:**

- Artist                      • Teacher                      • Student
- Trader/Business                      • Other (Pls specify)

3. How long have you been residing in the vicinity of the Sukur Cultural Landscape?

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**Section A: Embracing the Rich Heritage of Sukur Cultural Landscape**

4. Can you share your insights into the historical significance and cultural richness of the Sukur Cultural Landscape?

5. In your opinion, how has the Sukur Cultural Landscape contributed to preserving the cultural heritage and traditions of the region?

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**Section B: Perception of Tourism Impact**


6. How do you think tourism impacts the Sukur Cultural Landscape and the local community?

- Positive    • Neutral    • Negative

7. From your perspective, are there specific challenges or benefits that have arisen due to the Sukur Cultural Landscape's interaction with tourists?

8. What initiatives or changes would you suggest to enhance the overall experience for both visitors and the local community at the Sukur Cultural Landscape?

**Questionnaire Survey  
Sukur Cultural Landscape**

 Università degli Studi della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli

**Demographic Information :**

1. **Age:**

- 18-24                      • 25-34                      • 35-44
- 45-54                      • 55 and above

2. **Occupation:**

- Artist                      • Teacher                      • Student
- Trader/Business                      • Other (Pls specify)

3. How long have you been residing in the vicinity of the Sukur Cultural Landscape?

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**Section A: Embracing the Rich Heritage of Sukur Cultural Landscape**

4. Can you share your insights into the historical significance and cultural richness of the Sukur Cultural Landscape?

5. In your opinion, how has the Sukur Cultural Landscape contributed to preserving the cultural heritage and traditions of the region?

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**Section B: Perception of Tourism Impact**

6. How do you think tourism impacts the Sukur Cultural Landscape and the local community?

- Positive    • Neutral    • Negative


7. From your perspective, are there specific challenges or benefits that have arisen due to the Sukur Cultural Landscape's interaction with tourists?

8. What initiatives or changes would you suggest to enhance the overall experience for both visitors and the local community at the Sukur Cultural Landscape?

*Semi Structured Interview Form for Site managers*

*Questionnaire Survey Form for Locals*

**Tourist Questionnaire Survey  
Sukur Cultural Landscape**

 Università degli Studi della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli

**Demographic Information :**

1. **Age:**

- 18-24                      • 25-34                      • 35-44
- 45-54                      • 55 and above

2. **Gender:**

- Male                      • Female
- Other (please specify)

3. **Nationality:**

4. **Have you visited Nigeria before?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

5. **How did you learn about the Sukur Cultural Landscape, and what motivated you to visit?**

6. **Can you share your impressions of the historical and cultural significance of the Sukur Cultural Landscape?**

7. **Based on your visit, what suggestions do you have to enhance the overall tourist experience at the Sukur Cultural Landscape while respecting and preserving its unique cultural and historical context?**

8. **How would you rate your overall experience at the cultural heritage sites you visited in Nigeria?**

- Excellent                      • Good
- Average                      • Poor


*Questionnaire Survey Form for Tourists*

## Case Study Site 4: Yankari Game Reserve Survey Forms

### Yankari Game Reserve Semi-Structured Interview

Questions for Stakeholders

(E.g. Heritage Managers, Community Leaders, Government Officials, and Tourism Operators)



**Section 1: Background Information:**

- Can you provide a brief overview of the Yankari Game Reserve, emphasizing its history and ecological significance?
- How long have you been involved in managing the Yankari Game Reserve, and what motivated you to work in this field?

**Section 2: Current State of Tourism:**

- What are the primary challenges you currently face in managing tourism at the Yankari Game Reserve?
- Does these challenges impact the overall visitor experience and the reserve's ability to attract and retain tourists?

**Section 3: Ecological Preservation:**

- Preserving natural ecosystems often involves balancing conservation with the demands of tourism. What challenges arise in striking this balance at the Yankari Game Reserve?

**Section 4: Community Engagement:**

- How do you engage with the local community and various stakeholders in managing the Yankari Game Reserve to promote environmental awareness and involvement?
- What challenges and opportunities does this engagement present for tourism development?

**Section 5: Tourism Development Potential:**

- What kind of support, if any, do you receive from the government and other institutions in managing the Yankari Game Reserve?
- How does this support impact your ability to address challenges and enhance tourism?

**Section 6: Visitor Experience and Education:**


- Are there challenges that impact the overall visitor experience at the Yankari Game Reserve?
- Are there any plans or strategies in place to improve the quality of the tourist experience?

**Closing 7:** Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the challenges in managing the Yankari Game Reserve, their impact on ecological preservation, and the potential for tourism development?

*Semi Structured Interview Form for Site managers*

### Questionnaire Survey

#### Yankari Game Reserve



**Demographic Information:**

- Age:**
  - 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55 and above
- Occupation:**
  - Artist
  - Teacher
  - Student
  - Trader/Business
  - Other (Pls specify)
- How long have you been residing in the vicinity of the Yankari Game Reserve?

**Section A: Knowledge and Awareness of Yankari Game Reserve**

- Can you share your insights into the natural wonders and wildlife diversity found in the Yankari Game Reserve?
- In your opinion, how has the Yankari Game Reserve contributed to preserving the ecological heritage of the region?


**Section B: Perception of Tourism Impact**

- How do you think tourism impacts the Yankari Game Reserve and the local community?
  - Positive
  - Neutral
  - Negative
- From your perspective, are there specific challenges or benefits that have arisen due to the Yankari Game Reserve's interaction with tourists?
- What initiatives or changes would you suggest to enhance the overall experience for both visitors and the local community at the Yankari Game Reserve?

*Questionnaire Survey Form for Locals*

### Tourist Questionnaire Survey

#### Yankari Game Reserve



**Demographic Information :**

- Age:**
  - 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55 and above
- Gender:**
  - Male
  - Female
  - Other (please specify)
- Nationality:**
- Have you visited Nigeria before?
  - Yes
  - No
- How did you learn about Yankari Game Reserve, and what motivated you to visit?
- Can you share your impressions of the natural beauty and wildlife diversity within Yankari Game Reserve?
- In your opinion, how does Yankari Game Reserve contribute to wildlife conservation and environmental awareness?
- Based on your visit, what suggestions do you have to enhance the overall tourist experience at Yankari Game Reserve while maintaining its ecological balance and preserving its unique biodiversity?
- How would you rate your overall experience at the cultural heritage sites you visited in Nigeria?
  - Excellent
  - Good
  - Average
  - Poor


*Questionnaire Survey Form for Tourists*

## Case Study Site 5: Ogbunike Cave Survey Forms

**Ogbunike Cave Semi-Structured Interview**

**Questions for Stakeholders**

(E.g. Heritage Managers, Community Leaders, Government Officials, and Tourism Operators)



University  
of Lagos  
Lagos, Nigeria

**Section 1: Background Information:**

a) Can you provide a brief overview of Ogbunike Cave, emphasizing its history and cultural significance?

b) How long have you been involved in managing Ogbunike Cave, and what motivated you to work in this field?

**Section 2: Current State of Tourism:**

a) What are the primary challenges you currently face in managing tourism at Ogbunike Cave?

b) How do these challenges impact on the overall visitor experience and the site's ability to attract and retain tourists?

**Section 3: Cultural Preservation:**

a) Maintaining cultural heritage often involves balancing preservation with the demands of tourism. What challenges arise in striking this balance at Ogbunike Cave?

**Section 4: Community Engagement:**

a) How do you engage with the local community and various stakeholders in managing Ogbunike Cave to promote cultural awareness and involvement?

b) What challenges and opportunities do this engagement present for tourism development?

**Section 5: Tourism Development Potential:**

a) What kind of support, if any, do you receive from the government and other institutions in managing Ogbunike Cave?

b) How does this support impact your ability to address challenges and enhance tourism?

**Section 6: Visitor Experience and Education:**

a) Are there challenges that impact the overall visitor experience at Ogbunike Cave?


b) Are there any plans or strategies in place to improve the quality of the tourist experience?

**Closing 6:** Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the challenges in managing Ogbunike Cave, their impact on cultural preservation, and the potential for tourism development?]

*Semi Structured Interview Form for Site managers*

**Questionnaire Survey**

**Ogbunike Cave**



University  
of Lagos  
Lagos, Nigeria

**Demographic Information :**

1. **Age:**

• 18-24      • 25-34      • 35-44  
• 45-54      • 55 and above

2. **Occupation:**

• Artist      • Teacher      • Student  
• Trader/Business      • Other (Pls specify)

3. **How long have you known about the Ogbunike Cave?**

**Section A: Embracing the Rich Heritage of Sukur Cultural Landscape**

4. **Can you share your insights into the historical significance and cultural richness of the Ogbunike Cave?**

5. **In your opinion, how has the Ogbunike Cave contributed to preserving the cultural heritage and traditions of the region?**

**Section B: Perception of Tourism Impact**

6. **How do you think tourism impacts the Ogbunike Cave and the local community?**

• Positive    • Neutral    • Negative


7. **From your perspective, are there specific challenges or benefits that have arisen due to the Ogbunike Cave's interaction with tourists?**

8. **What initiatives or changes would you suggest to enhance the overall experience for both visitors and the local community at the Ogbunike Cave?**

*Questionnaire Survey Form for Locals*

**Tourist Questionnaire Survey**

**Ogbunike Cave**



University  
of Lagos  
Lagos, Nigeria

**Demographic Information :**

1. **Age:**

• 18-24      • 25-34      • 35-44  
• 45-54      • 55 and above

2. **Gender:**

• Male      • Female  
• Other (please specify)

3. **Nationality:**

4. **Have you visited Nigeria before?**

a. Yes  
b. No

5. **How did you learn about the Ogbunike Cave, and what motivated you to visit?**

6. **Can you share your impressions of the historical and cultural significance of the Ogbunike Cave?**

7. **Based on your visit, what suggestions do you have to enhance the overall tourist experience at Ogbunike Cave while ensuring the conservation of its natural beauty and cultural value?**

8. **How would you rate your overall experience at the cultural heritage sites you visited in Nigeria?**

• Excellent      • Good  
• Average      • Poor

*Questionnaire Survey Form for Tourists*

## Appendix B

### 1. Photographic Record of Researcher Site Photos and Consented Respondent Images

#### Case Study Site 1: National Museum Benin City (Researcher Site Photos)



*Field interview: researcher and museum staff*



*The researcher gathering local perspectives at the museum*



*The researcher on-site at the museum*



*The researcher with museum management staff and curator*

**Case Study Site 2: *Ọ̀sun Osogbo Sacred Grove (Researcher Site Photos)***



*The researcher at the Osun-Osogbo grove*



*Field interview: researcher and site staff*



*Examining the Osogbo Grove cultural artworks*



*The researcher with the Osun-Osogbo grove management team*

**Case Study Site 3: Sukur Cultural Landscape (Researcher Site Photos)**



*The researcher at Sukur Community Vernacular Huts*



*The researcher and Site manager undertaking site survey*



*The researcher with Sukur Community Local Women*



*The researcher and Sukur Site Stakeholders*

**Case Study Site 4: Yankari Game Reserve (Researcher Site Photos)**



*The researcher at the entrance of Yankari Game Reserve*



*Field Interview with the reserve site manager*



*The researcher highlighting a deer during the wildlife safari survey*

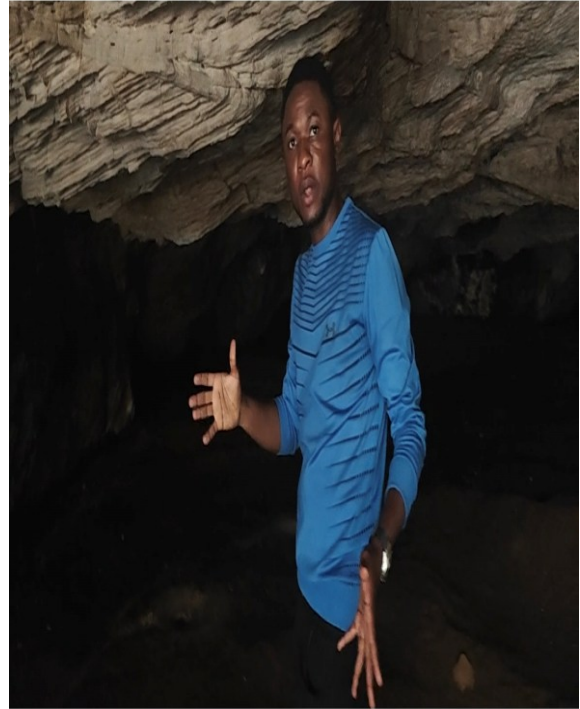


*The researcher with management staff at the reserve*

**Case Study Site 5: Ogbunike Cave (Researcher Site Photos)**



*The researcher at the interior of Ogbunike Cave*



*The researcher examining the cave's geological features.*



*The researcher interviewing the cave's onsite guide*



*Field assessment: researcher and site guide in the cave*

## 2. NVivo Project (Codebook and Node Structure used in the NVivo Analysis)

9/8/2025 10:01 PM

### Coding Summary by Node

# Cultural Heritage in Nigeria: A Study on Preservation and Tourism Potential– NVivo Analysis

9/8/2025 10:01 PM

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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## Node

### Nodes\\Community Engagement

#### Document

#### Internals\\BENIN MUSEUM Interview 1

Yes	0.0787	3
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1	CM	8/10/2025 1:17 AM
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My motivation stems from a deep responsibility to our ancestors. This museum holds our history, the stories of the Oba, the guilds, our spiritual practices. It's vital our children know who they are

2	CM	8/10/2025 1:17 AM
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We host quarterly 'Living Heritage Days', featuring bronze-casting and carving demos by traditional guild members. Our free school workshops reached over 1,500 children last year, pairing guided tours with hands-on craft activities

3	CM	8/10/2025 1:18 AM
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deepening community ties

#### Internals\\BENIN MUSEUM Interview 2

Yes	0.0905	4
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1	CM	8/10/2025 12:52 AM
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fostering a deeper connection between young people and their heritage

2	CM	8/10/2025 12:50 AM
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We also partner with local NGOs to bring the museum into community centers for pop-up exhibits and interactive sessions

3	CM	8/10/2025 12:51 AM
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We also collaborate with the local artisans for crafted Benin indigenous sculpture production.

4	CM	8/10/2025 12:52 AM
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Our hope is to position the museum not only as a tourist destination but as a national learning hub where heritage education empowers the next generation of Nigerians to value, protect, and build on their cultural inheritance

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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**Internals\BENIN MUSEUM Interview 3**

Yes 0.1026 5

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1 CM 8/10/2025 12:33 AM

making our institution a key reference point for scholars and a source of community pride

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2 CM 8/10/2025 12:31 AM

the chance to pass those skills on to local apprentices

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3 CM 8/10/2025 12:32 AM

Community Training Workshops—we bring small groups of local artisans into the lab to learn safe handling and basic preventive techniques

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4 CM 8/10/2025 12:32 AM

We host quarterly ‘Conservation programs’, where community members can watch demos of cleaning and stabilizing artifacts

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5 CM 8/10/2025 12:33 AM

This demystifies our work and sparks local interest in preservation careers

**Internals\BENIN MUSEUM Interview 4**

Yes 0.0802 4

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1 CM 8/10/2025 1:40 AM

helping people connect personally with the artifacts and with Edo heritage

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2 CM 8/10/2025 1:39 AM

Each month I lead free “Kids’ Corner” tours for local families an informal, fun introduction to bronzes and carvings where children handle safe replica pieces

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3 CM 8/10/2025 1:40 AM

I also distribute flyers about our next Living Heritage Day at community centers around the city

---

4 CM 8/10/2025 1:41 AM

Visitors often tell me they leave feeling inspired by Edo artistry and in general Nigerian heritage

## Internals\\Focus Group Discussion Interview 5 osun youth

Yes 0.2367 9

1 CM 8/11/2025 1:26 AM

The Sacred Grove is a place of spiritual connection and cultural significance for our community. It's where traditions come alive, and I feel a deep sense of pride in being part of its legacy.

2 CM 8/11/2025 1:26 AM

Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove represents our cultural identity and the beauty of nature intertwined with spirituality. It's a sanctuary that holds our heritage and beliefs.

Reports\\Coding Summary By Node Report

Page 2 of 137

9/8/2025 10:01 PM

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
			3		CM	8/11/2025 1:26 AM
						The Grove is our heritage site, a symbol of our ancestors' wisdom and our responsibility to preserve it for future generations
			4		CM	8/11/2025 1:26 AM
						Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove is a sacred space that teaches us about our history and the importance of protecting our natural environment
			5		CM	8/11/2025 1:27 AM
						The Grove is where our community gathers for rituals and celebrations, embodying the spirit of our people and our connection to the land.
			6		CM	8/11/2025 1:25 AM
						Community engagement is lacking. Many locals are not actively involved in preserving the Grove, which affects its sustainability and cultural promotion efforts.
			7		CM	8/11/2025 1:24 AM
						We need workshops and cultural programs that teach the community, especially youth, about the Grove's history and the importance of conservation.
			8		CM	8/11/2025 1:24 AM
						By involving local residents in decision-making and providing economic opportunities tied to tourism, we can foster a sense of ownership and pride.
			9		CM	8/11/2025 1:25 AM
						Capacity-building programs for local youth and entrepreneurs can create opportunities for economic growth and cultural promotion, benefiting both the community and visitors.

## Internals\\Focus Group Discussion Interview 5 sukur youth

Yes 0.2495 11

1 CM 8/11/2025 1:11 AM

Sukur is not just our home; it's our heritage. It's where our ancestors lived, and it's our responsibility to protect and promote it.

2 CM 8/11/2025 1:11 AM

Sukur represents our identity and pride. It's a symbol of our resilience as a community and our commitment to preserving our cultural heritage

3 CM 8/11/2025 1:11 AM

Sukur Cultural Landscape is a sacred place that connects us to our roots. It's a source of inspiration and a reminder of our ancestors' wisdom.

4 CM 8/11/2025 1:11 AM

Sukur is where our traditions come alive. It's a privilege to be part of a community that values its history and strives to pass it on to future generations.

5 CM 8/11/2025 1:12 AM

Sukur is our legacy. It's a living testament to our cultural richness and a place where we learn about our past and envision our future.

6 CM 8/11/2025 1:09 AM

The standard of living here needs improvement.

7 CM 8/11/2025 1:08 AM

Education is key. We should organize workshops and cultural programs that teach local youth about Sukur's history and the importance of conservation.

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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8 CM 8/11/2025 1:08 AM

Community empowerment is vital. We need initiatives that empower residents to take ownership of preserving Sukur, whether through volunteerism or entrepreneurship.

9 CM 8/11/2025 1:10 AM

By supporting local businesses and creating cultural tourism experiences, we can boost our economy while showcasing Sukur's heritage.

10 CM 8/11/2025 1:10 AM

improve residents' quality of life

11 CM 8/11/2025 1:09 AM

Capacity-building programs for local youth and entrepreneurs can create opportunities for economic growth and cultural promotion.

### Internals\Ogbunike Cave Interview 1

Yes 0.1559 8

1 CM 8/9/2025 8:58 PM

engaging with the community to ensure that tourism benefits contribute positively to cultural preservation efforts

2 CM 8/9/2025 8:59 PM

Community engagement is integral to our approach

3 CM 8/9/2025 8:59 PM

We collaborate with local leaders

4	CM	8/9/2025 9:01 PM
This engagement fosters community pride in Ogbunike Cave's heritage and promotes sustainable practices that support both cultural preservation and tourism development.		
5	CM	8/9/2025 9:01 PM
Community engagement presents opportunities to build local support for sustainable tourism initiatives and showcase Ogbunike Cave's cultural significance.		
6	CM	8/9/2025 9:04 PM
Challenges include addressing socio-economic disparities and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits among community members		
7	CM	8/9/2025 9:02 PM
By overcoming these challenges, we can foster inclusive tourism development that enriches both visitor experiences and community well-being		
8	CM	8/9/2025 9:02 PM
we aim to uphold its cultural significance and offer enriching experiences that benefit both visitors and local residents.		

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
<b>Internals\Ogbunike Cave Interview 2</b>						
Yes		0.1244	7			
				1	MANU	8/10/2025 9:13 PM
My passion for cultural heritage preservation and my roots in the local community drove me to join this field						
				2	MANU	8/10/2025 9:11 PM
I'm committed to revitalizing this sacred site while ensuring sustainable tourism practices benefit both visitors and our community						
				3	MANU	8/10/2025 9:10 PM
We engage with local leaders and community groups through cultural workshops and collaborative projects aimed at enhancing community involvement.						
				4	MANU	8/10/2025 9:12 PM
fostering local pride and ownership remains a priority.						
				5	MANU	8/10/2025 9:10 PM
Community engagement presents opportunities to align tourism development with local needs and values						
				6	MANU	8/10/2025 9:12 PM
align tourism development with local needs and values.						

7 MANU 8/10/2025 9:13 PM

Challenges include navigating socio-economic disparities and ensuring that community benefits equitably from tourism revenues

### Internals\\Ogbunike Cave Interview 3

Yes 0.0713 3

1 MANU 8/10/2025 8:39 PM

We collaborate with local leaders and community groups to develop cultural events, educational programs, and economic opportunities tied to Ogbunike Cave

2 MANU 8/10/2025 8:40 PM

Engaging the community fosters pride in Ogbunike Cave's heritage and promotes sustainable tourism practices

3 MANU 8/10/2025 8:40 PM

Challenges include socio-economic disparities and the need for equitable tourism benefits distribution

### Internals\\Ogbunike Cave Interview 4

Yes 0.1063 4

1 MANU 8/10/2025 7:36 PM

We actively collaborate with local leaders and community groups to host cultural events and educational programs that highlight Ogbunike Cave's significance.

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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2 MANU 8/10/2025 7:37 PM

Community engagement presents opportunities to foster local pride and ownership of Ogbunike Cave's heritage.

3 MANU 8/10/2025 7:38 PM

Challenges include ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits and addressing socio-economic disparities among community members

4 MANU 8/10/2025 7:36 PM

We are actively developing plans to enhance visitor facilities, expand educational programs, and train local guides to provide informative and enriching cave tours.

### Internals\\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 1

Yes 0.1368 7

1 CM 8/9/2025 10:56 PM

It requires careful planning and community involvement to strike the right balance.

	2	CM	8/9/2025 10:57 PM
We collaborate closely with local priests, community leaders, and cultural organizations to organize festivals, educational programs, and traditional performances.			
	3	CM	8/9/2025 10:58 PM
This engagement fosters pride in cultural heritage and encourages sustainable stewardship of the Grove			
	4	CM	8/9/2025 10:59 PM
Engagement enhances authenticity and local support, vital for sustainable tourism growth.			
	5	CM	8/9/2025 11:00 PM
However, balancing commercial interests with community expectations can be challenging.			
	6	CM	8/9/2025 10:59 PM
It's an opportunity to showcase Yoruba traditions while ensuring economic benefits benefit local communities.			
	7	CM	8/9/2025 10:57 PM
ongoing community engagement, and government support are vital for ensuring the Grove's cultural legacy thrives			

### Internals\\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 2

Yes 0.1160 6

	1	CM	8/9/2025 11:36 PM
It's a delicate task that involves community engagement and sustainable tourism practices			
	2	CM	8/9/2025 11:37 PM
We collaborate closely with local priests, cultural groups, and community leaders to organize annual festivals, educational programs, and volunteer initiatives.			

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
			3		CM	8/9/2025 11:37 PM
These efforts promote cultural awareness and encourage local stewardship of the Sacred Grove						
			4		CM	8/9/2025 11:38 PM
Community engagement enhances the authenticity and sustainability of tourism initiatives						
			5		CM	8/9/2025 11:39 PM
However, challenges include managing conflicting interests and ensuring that economic benefits from tourism activities are shared equitably among local stakeholders						
			6		CM	8/9/2025 11:38 PM

ensuring that economic benefits from tourism activities are shared equitably among local stakeholders.

### Internals\\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 3

Yes 0.1097 5  
1 CM 8/9/2025 9:58 PM

My background in conservation and community development led me here

2 CM 8/9/2025 9:59 PM

We collaborate closely with local chiefs, priests, and community groups to organize cultural festivals, educational workshops, and conservation training programs

3 CM 8/9/2025 10:01 PM

These initiatives foster community pride and ownership in preserving our cultural heritage

4 CM 8/9/2025 10:01 PM

Community engagement strengthens local support for conservation efforts and promotes authentic cultural experiences for visitors.

5 CM 8/9/2025 10:03 PM

ensuring equitable economic benefits and managing conflicting interests require careful negotiation and sustainable tourism practices.

### Internals\\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 4

Yes 0.1151 6  
1 CM 8/10/2025 12:07 AM

promoting Yoruba heritage through cultural events and educational programs

2 CM 8/10/2025 12:08 AM

We collaborate with local artisans, cultural groups, and schools to organize festivals, workshops, and guided tours.

3 CM 8/10/2025 12:09 AM

These initiatives foster community pride and enhance understanding of Yoruba traditions among visitors.

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
			4		CM	8/10/2025 12:09 AM
						Community engagement strengthens local support for conservation efforts and promotes authentic cultural experiences
			5		CM	8/10/2025 12:10 AM
						However, managing community expectations and balancing commercial interests with cultural preservation goals can be challenging.

	6	CM	8/10/2025 12:08 AM
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fostering community partnerships

### Internals\\Sukur Landscape Interview 1

Yes	0.0990	5
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	1	CM	8/11/2025 12:36 AM
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ensuring local community involvement in decision-making processes

	2	CM	8/11/2025 12:37 AM
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We engage through community-led initiatives, capacity-building workshops, and revenue-sharing programs that benefit local residents.

	3	CM	8/11/2025 12:37 AM
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Collaborative efforts empower the community to take pride in Sukur's heritage and actively participate in its conservation.

	4	CM	8/11/2025 12:38 AM
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Community engagement fosters local stewardship of cultural resources and supports sustainable tourism development.

	5	CM	8/11/2025 12:38 AM
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Challenges include addressing socio-economic disparities and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits among community members

### Internals\\Sukur Landscape Interview 2

Yes	0.1196	6
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	1	CM	8/11/2025 12:21 AM
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involving the local community in heritage conservation efforts.

	2	CM	8/11/2025 12:21 AM
--	---	----	--------------------

We engage through community workshops, cultural events, and collaborative projects that empower local residents.

	3	CM	8/11/2025 12:22 AM
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tourism benefits are shared equitably and contribute to community development.

	4	CM	8/11/2025 12:22 AM
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Community engagement presents opportunities to build support for sustainable tourism initiatives and showcase Sukur's cultural heritage

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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	5	CM	8/11/2025 12:23 AM
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Challenges include addressing socio-economic disparities and balancing community interests with tourism development goals.

6 CM 8/11/2025 12:23 AM

offering meaningful cultural experiences that benefit both visitors and local residents.

### Internals\\Sukur Landscape Interview 3

Yes 0.0977 5

1 CM 8/11/2025 12:54 AM

engaging local communities in conservation efforts

2 CM 8/11/2025 12:54 AM

We actively engage with the community through collaborative projects, cultural festivals, and economic initiatives that empower local residents.

3 CM 8/11/2025 12:55 AM

This engagement fosters community pride in Sukur's heritage and encourages sustainable practices that benefit both cultural preservation and tourism development

4 CM 8/11/2025 12:55 AM

Challenges include addressing socio-economic disparities and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits among community members

5 CM 8/11/2025 12:55 AM

we can promote inclusive tourism development that enhances both visitor experiences and community well-being

### Internals\\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 1

Yes 0.0969 5

1 CM 8/10/2025 10:37 PM

We collaborate with local communities through education programs, employment opportunities, and revenue-sharing initiatives.

2 CM 8/10/2025 10:37 PM

We also involve stakeholders in decision-making processes to foster support for conservation efforts

3 CM 8/10/2025 10:38 PM

Engaging communities fosters stewardship of natural resources and cultural heritage.

4 CM 8/10/2025 10:39 PM

challenges include conflicting interests and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits.

5 CM 8/10/2025 10:38 PM

promote sustainable tourism practices that benefit both wildlife and local livelihoods

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
<b>Internals\\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 2</b>						
Yes		0.0844	4			
				1	CM	8/10/2025 2:03 AM
				We engage through educational programs, employment opportunities, and collaborative projects that highlight the benefits of conservation.		
				2	CM	8/10/2025 2:04 AM
				Community support is vital for sustaining long-term conservation efforts		
				3	CM	8/10/2025 2:05 AM
				Challenges include addressing socio-economic needs and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits		
				4	CM	8/10/2025 2:04 AM
				enriching experiences that inspire conservation stewardship and benefit local communities		

### Internals\\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 3

Yes		0.0840	4			
				1	CM	8/10/2025 11:01 PM
				We engage through community workshops, environmental education programs, and partnerships that empower local communities in conservation stewardship		
				2	CM	8/10/2025 11:02 PM
				Collaborative initiatives foster a sense of ownership and promote sustainable livelihoods		
				3	CM	8/10/2025 11:03 PM
				Challenges include addressing socio-economic needs and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits among local stakeholders		
				4	CM	8/10/2025 11:02 PM
				ecotourism could fuel community development and ecological resilience		

### Internals\\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 4

Yes		0.0976	4			
				1	CM	8/10/2025 10:03 PM
				My motivation comes from growing up near wildlife corridors seeing habitat loss firsthand		
				2	CM	8/10/2025 9:59 PM
				We engage through community outreach programs, employment opportunities, and partnerships that support local livelihoods and conservation efforts.		
				3	CM	8/10/2025 10:01 PM

Community engagement presents opportunities to build support for sustainable tourism initiatives and foster local stewardship of natural resources

9/8/2025 10:01 PM

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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4 CM 8/10/2025 10:02 PM

Challenges include addressing socio-economic needs and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits

## Nodes\Community Engagement\Community Benefits and Impacts

### Document

#### Internals\BENIN MUSEUM Interview 1

No 0.0385 2

1 CM 8/10/2025 1:17 AM

My motivation stems from a deep responsibility to our ancestors. This museum holds our history, the stories of the Oba, the guilds, our spiritual practices. It's vital our children know who they are

2 CM 8/10/2025 1:18 AM

deepening community ties

#### Internals\BENIN MUSEUM Interview 2

No 0.0525 2

1 CM 8/10/2025 12:52 AM

fostering a deeper connection between young people and their heritage

2 CM 8/10/2025 12:52 AM

Our hope is to position the museum not only as a tourist destination but as a national learning hub where heritage education empowers the next generation of Nigerians to value, protect, and build on their cultural inheritance

#### Internals\BENIN MUSEUM Interview 3

No 0.0355 2

1 CM 8/10/2025 12:33 AM

making our institution a key reference point for scholars and a source of community pride

2 CM 8/10/2025 12:33 AM

This demystifies our work and sparks local interest in preservation careers

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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### Internals\\BENIN MUSEUM Interview 4

No	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
	0.0325	2	1	CM	8/10/2025 1:40 AM

helping people connect personally with the artifacts and with Edo heritage

			2	CM	8/10/2025 1:41 AM
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Visitors often tell me they leave feeling inspired by Edo artistry and in general Nigerian heritage

### Internals\\Focus Group Discussion Interview 5 sukur youth

No	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
	0.0391	3	1	CM	8/11/2025 1:09 AM

The standard of living here needs improvement.

			2	CM	8/11/2025 1:10 AM
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By supporting local businesses and creating cultural tourism experiences, we can boost our economy while showcasing Sukur's heritage.

			3	CM	8/11/2025 1:10 AM
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improve residents' quality of life

### Internals\\Ogbunike Cave Interview 1

No	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
	0.0994	4	1	CM	8/9/2025 9:01 PM

This engagement fosters community pride in Ogbunike Cave's heritage and promotes sustainable practices that support both cultural preservation and tourism development.

			2	CM	8/9/2025 9:01 PM
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Community engagement presents opportunities to build local support for sustainable tourism initiatives and showcase Ogbunike Cave's cultural significance.

			3	CM	8/9/2025 9:02 PM
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By overcoming these challenges, we can foster inclusive tourism development that enriches both visitor experiences and community well-being

			4	CM	8/9/2025 9:02 PM
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we aim to uphold its cultural significance and offer enriching experiences that benefit both visitors and local residents.

### Internals\\Ogbunike Cave Interview 2

No	Coverage	Number Of Coding References
	0.0348	2

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1 MANU 8/10/2025 9:11 PM

I'm committed to revitalizing this sacred site while ensuring sustainable tourism practices benefit both visitors and our community

9/8/2025 10:01 PM

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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2 MANU 8/10/2025 9:12 PM

fostering local pride and ownership remains a priority.

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### Internals\Ogbunike Cave Interview 3

No 0.0210 1

1 MANU 8/10/2025 8:40 PM

Engaging the community fosters pride in Ogbunike Cave's heritage and promotes sustainable tourism practices

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### Internals\Ogbunike Cave Interview 4

No 0.0203 1

1 MANU 8/10/2025 7:37 PM

Community engagement presents opportunities to foster local pride and ownership of Ogbunike Cave's heritage.

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### Internals\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 1

No 0.0550 3

1 CM 8/9/2025 10:58 PM

This engagement fosters pride in cultural heritage and encourages sustainable stewardship of the Grove

2 CM 8/9/2025 10:59 PM

Engagement enhances authenticity and local support, vital for sustainable tourism growth.

3 CM 8/9/2025 10:59 PM

It's an opportunity to showcase Yoruba traditions while ensuring economic benefits benefit local communities.

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### Internals\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 2

No 0.0371 2

1 CM 8/9/2025 11:38 PM

Community engagement enhances the authenticity and sustainability of tourism initiatives

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2 CM 8/9/2025 11:38 PM

ensuring that economic benefits from tourism activities are shared equitably among local stakeholders.

9/8/2025 10:01 PM

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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### Internals\\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 3

No 0.0413 2

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1 CM 8/9/2025 10:01 PM

These initiatives foster community pride and ownership in preserving our cultural heritage

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2 CM 8/9/2025 10:01 PM

Community engagement strengthens local support for conservation efforts and promotes authentic cultural experiences for visitors.

### Internals\\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 4

No 0.0441 2

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1 CM 8/10/2025 12:09 AM

These initiatives foster community pride and enhance understanding of Yoruba traditions among visitors.

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2 CM 8/10/2025 12:09 AM

Community engagement strengthens local support for conservation efforts and promotes authentic cultural experiences

### Internals\\Sukur Landscape Interview 1

No 0.0434 2

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1 CM 8/11/2025 12:38 AM

Community engagement fosters local stewardship of cultural resources and supports sustainable tourism development.

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2 CM 8/11/2025 12:38 AM

Challenges include addressing socio-economic disparities and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits among community members

### Internals\\Sukur Landscape Interview 2

No 0.0602 3

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1 CM 8/11/2025 12:22 AM

tourism benefits are shared equitably and contribute to community development.

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2 CM 8/11/2025 12:22 AM

Community engagement presents opportunities to build support for sustainable tourism initiatives and showcase Sukur's cultural heritage

3 CM 8/11/2025 12:23 AM

offering meaningful cultural experiences that benefit both visitors and local residents.

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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### Internals\Sukur Landscape Interview 3

No 0.0438 2

1 CM 8/11/2025 12:55 AM

This engagement fosters community pride in Sukur's heritage and encourages sustainable practices that benefit both cultural preservation and tourism development

2 CM 8/11/2025 12:55 AM

we can promote inclusive tourism development that enhances both visitor experiences and community well-being

### Internals\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 1

No 0.0335 2

1 CM 8/10/2025 10:38 PM

Engaging communities fosters stewardship of natural resources and cultural heritage.

2 CM 8/10/2025 10:38 PM

promote sustainable tourism practices that benefit both wildlife and local livelihoods

### Internals\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 2

No 0.0337 2

1 CM 8/10/2025 2:04 AM

Community support is vital for sustaining long-term conservation efforts

2 CM 8/10/2025 2:04 AM

enriching experiences that inspire conservation stewardship and benefit local communities

### Internals\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 3

No 0.0305 2

1 CM 8/10/2025 11:02 PM

Collaborative initiatives foster a sense of ownership and promote sustainable livelihoods

2 CM 8/10/2025 11:02 PM

ecotourism could fuel community development and ecological resilience

9/8/2025 10:01 PM

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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### Internals\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 4

No 0.0292 1

1 CM 8/10/2025 10:01 PM

Community engagement presents opportunities to build support for sustainable tourism initiatives and foster local stewardship of natural resources

### Nodes\Community Engagement\Community Challenges and Tensions

#### Document

### Internals\Focus Group Discussion Interview 5 osun youth

No 0.0272 1

1 CM 8/11/2025 1:25 AM

Community engagement is lacking. Many locals are not actively involved in preserving the Grove, which affects its sustainability and cultural promotion efforts.

### Internals\Ogbunike Cave Interview 1

No 0.0232 1

1 CM 8/9/2025 9:04 PM

Challenges include addressing socio-economic disparities and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits among community members

### Internals\Ogbunike Cave Interview 2

No 0.0335 2

1 MANU 8/10/2025 9:12 PM

align tourism development with local needs and values.

2 MANU 8/10/2025 9:13 PM

Challenges include navigating socio-economic disparities and ensuring that community benefits equitably from tourism revenues

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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**Internals\Ogbunike Cave Interview 3**

No		0.0200	1	1	MANU	8/10/2025 8:40 PM
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Challenges include socio-economic disparities and the need for equitable tourism benefits distribution

**Internals\Ogbunike Cave Interview 4**

No		0.0255	1	1	MANU	8/10/2025 7:38 PM
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Challenges include ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits and addressing socio-economic disparities among community members

**Internals\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 1**

No		0.0159	1	1	CM	8/9/2025 11:00 PM
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However, balancing commercial interests with community expectations can be challenging.

**Internals\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 2**

No		0.0320	1	1	CM	8/9/2025 11:39 PM
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However, challenges include managing conflicting interests and ensuring that economic benefits from tourism activities are shared equitably among local stakeholders

**Internals\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 3**

No		0.0253	1	1	CM	8/9/2025 10:03 PM
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ensuring equitable economic benefits and managing conflicting interests require careful negotiation and sustainable tourism practices.

**Internals\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 4**

No		0.0259	1	1	CM	8/10/2025 12:10 AM
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However, managing community expectations and balancing commercial interests with cultural preservation goals can be challenging.

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9/8/2025 10:01 PM

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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### Internals\Sukur Landscape Interview 2

No		0.0244	1
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1	CM	8/11/2025 12:23 AM
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Challenges include addressing socio-economic disparities and balancing community interests with tourism development goals.

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### Internals\Sukur Landscape Interview 3

No		0.0222	1
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1	CM	8/11/2025 12:55 AM
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Challenges include addressing socio-economic disparities and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits among community members

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### Internals\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 1

No		0.0191	1
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1	CM	8/10/2025 10:39 PM
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challenges include conflicting interests and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits.

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### Internals\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 2

No		0.0220	1
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1	CM	8/10/2025 2:05 AM
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Challenges include addressing socio-economic needs and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits

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### Internals\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 3

No		0.0251	1
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1	CM	8/10/2025 11:03 PM
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Challenges include addressing socio-economic needs and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits among local stakeholders

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Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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**Internals\\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 4**

No		0.0212	1	1	CM	8/10/2025 10:02 PM
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Challenges include addressing socio-economic needs and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits

**Nodes\\Community Engagement\\Community Involvement Activities**

**Document**

**Internals\\BENIN MUSEUM Interview 1**

No		0.0401	1	1	CM	8/10/2025 1:17 AM
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We host quarterly 'Living Heritage Days', featuring bronze-casting and carving demos by traditional guild members. Our free school workshops reached over 1,500 children last year, pairing guided tours with hands-on craft activities

**Internals\\BENIN MUSEUM Interview 2**

No		0.0380	2	1	CM	8/10/2025 12:50 AM
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We also partner with local NGOs to bring the museum into community centers for pop-up exhibits and interactive sessions

				2	CM	8/10/2025 12:51 AM
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We also collaborate with the local artisans for crafted Benin indigenous sculpture production.

**Internals\\BENIN MUSEUM Interview 3**

No		0.0670	3	1	CM	8/10/2025 12:31 AM
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the chance to pass those skills on to local apprentices

				2	CM	8/10/2025 12:32 AM
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Community Training Workshops—we bring small groups of local artisans into the lab to learn safe handling and basic preventive techniques

				3	CM	8/10/2025 12:32 AM
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We host quarterly 'Conservation programs', where community members can watch demos of cleaning and stabilizing artifacts

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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### Internals\\BENIN MUSEUM Interview 4

No 0.0477 2

1 CM 8/10/2025 1:39 AM

Each month I lead free "Kids' Corner" tours for local families an informal, fun introduction to bronzes and carvings where children handle safe replica pieces

2 CM 8/10/2025 1:40 AM

I also distribute flyers about our next Living Heritage Day at community centers around the city

### Internals\\Focus Group Discussion Interview 5 osun youth

No 0.0798 3

1 CM 8/11/2025 1:24 AM

We need workshops and cultural programs that teach the community, especially youth, about the Grove's history and the importance of conservation.

2 CM 8/11/2025 1:24 AM

By involving local residents in decision-making and providing economic opportunities tied to tourism, we can foster a sense of ownership and pride.

3 CM 8/11/2025 1:25 AM

Capacity-building programs for local youth and entrepreneurs can create opportunities for economic growth and cultural promotion, benefiting both the community and visitors.

### Internals\\Focus Group Discussion Interview 5 sukur youth

No 0.0806 3

1 CM 8/11/2025 1:08 AM

Education is key. We should organize workshops and cultural programs that teach local youth about Sukur's history and the importance of conservation.

2 CM 8/11/2025 1:08 AM

Community empowerment is vital. We need initiatives that empower residents to take ownership of preserving Sukur, whether through volunteerism or entrepreneurship.

3 CM 8/11/2025 1:09 AM

Capacity-building programs for local youth and entrepreneurs can create opportunities for economic growth and cultural promotion.

### Internals\\Ogbunike Cave Interview 1

No 0.0332 3

1 CM 8/9/2025 8:58 PM

engaging with the community to ensure that tourism benefits contribute positively to cultural preservation efforts

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2 CM 8/9/2025 8:59 PM

Community engagement is integral to our approach

9/8/2025 10:01 PM

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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3 CM 8/9/2025 8:59 PM

We collaborate with local leaders

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### Internals\Ogbunike Cave Interview 2

No 0.0457 2

1 MANU 8/10/2025 9:10 PM

We engage with local leaders and community groups through cultural workshops and collaborative projects aimed at enhancing community involvement.

2 MANU 8/10/2025 9:10 PM

Community engagement presents opportunities to align tourism development with local needs and values

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### Internals\Ogbunike Cave Interview 3

No 0.0301 1

1 MANU 8/10/2025 8:39 PM

We collaborate with local leaders and community groups to develop cultural events, educational programs, and economic opportunities tied to Ogbunike Cave

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### Internals\Ogbunike Cave Interview 4

No 0.0603 2

1 MANU 8/10/2025 7:36 PM

We actively collaborate with local leaders and community groups to host cultural events and educational programs that highlight Ogbunike Cave's significance.

2 MANU 8/10/2025 7:36 PM

We are actively developing plans to enhance visitor facilities, expand educational programs, and train local guides to provide informative and enriching cave tours.

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### Internals\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 1

No 0.0658 3

1 CM 8/9/2025 10:56 PM

It requires careful planning and community involvement to strike the right balance.

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2 CM 8/9/2025 10:57 PM

We collaborate closely with local priests, community leaders, and cultural organizations to organize festivals, educational programs, and traditional performances.

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3 CM 8/9/2025 10:57 PM

ongoing community engagement, and government support are vital for ensuring the Grove's cultural legacy thrives

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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### Internals\\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 2

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No 0.0666 3

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1 CM 8/9/2025 11:36 PM

It's a delicate task that involves community engagement and sustainable tourism practices

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2 CM 8/9/2025 11:37 PM

We collaborate closely with local priests, cultural groups, and community leaders to organize annual festivals, educational programs, and volunteer initiatives.

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3 CM 8/9/2025 11:37 PM

These efforts promote cultural awareness and encourage local stewardship of the Sacred Grove

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### Internals\\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 3

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No 0.0430 2

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1 CM 8/9/2025 9:58 PM

My background in conservation and community development led me here

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2 CM 8/9/2025 9:59 PM

We collaborate closely with local chiefs, priests, and community groups to organize cultural festivals, educational workshops, and conservation training programs

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### Internals\\Osun Sacred GROOVE Interview 4

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No 0.0451 3

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1 CM 8/10/2025 12:07 AM

promoting Yoruba heritage through cultural events and educational programs

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2 CM 8/10/2025 12:08 AM

We collaborate with local artisans, cultural groups, and schools to organize festivals, workshops, and guided tours.

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3 CM 8/10/2025 12:08 AM

### Internals\\Sukur Landscape Interview 1

No	0.0556	3			
			1	CM	8/11/2025 12:36 AM

ensuring local community involvement in decision-making processes

			2	CM	8/11/2025 12:37 AM
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We engage through community-led initiatives, capacity-building workshops, and revenue-sharing programs that benefit local residents.

9/8/2025 10:01 PM

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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			3	CM	8/11/2025 12:37 AM
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Collaborative efforts empower the community to take pride in Sukur's heritage and actively participate in its conservation.

### Internals\\Sukur Landscape Interview 2

No	0.0350	2			
			1	CM	8/11/2025 12:21 AM

involving the local community in heritage conservation efforts.

			2	CM	8/11/2025 12:21 AM
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We engage through community workshops, cultural events, and collaborative projects that empower local residents.

### Internals\\Sukur Landscape Interview 3

No	0.0317	2			
			1	CM	8/11/2025 12:54 AM

engaging local communities in conservation efforts

			2	CM	8/11/2025 12:54 AM
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We actively engage with the community through collaborative projects, cultural festivals, and economic initiatives that empower local residents.

### Internals\\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 1

No	0.0442	2			
			1	CM	8/10/2025 10:37 PM

We collaborate with local communities through education programs, employment opportunities, and revenue-sharing initiatives.

2 CM 8/10/2025 10:37 PM

We also involve stakeholders in decision-making processes to foster support for conservation efforts

### Internals\\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 2

No 0.0285 1

1 CM 8/10/2025 2:03 AM

We engage through educational programs, employment opportunities, and collaborative projects that highlight the benefits of conservation.

9/8/2025 10:01 PM

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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### Internals\\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 3

No 0.0284 1

1 CM 8/10/2025 11:01 PM

We engage through community workshops, environmental education programs, and partnerships that empower local communities in conservation stewardship

### Internals\\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 4

No 0.0292 1

1 CM 8/10/2025 9:59 PM

We engage through community outreach programs, employment opportunities, and partnerships that support local livelihoods and conservation efforts.

## Nodes\\Community Engagement\\Community Perceptions and Identity

### Document

#### Internals\\Focus Group Discussion Interview 5 osun youth

No 0.1296 5

1 CM 8/11/2025 1:26 AM

The Sacred Grove is a place of spiritual connection and cultural significance for our community. It's where traditions come alive, and I feel a deep sense of pride in being part of its legacy.

2 CM 8/11/2025 1:26 AM

Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove represents our cultural identity and the beauty of nature intertwined with spirituality. It's a sanctuary that holds our heritage and beliefs.

3 CM 8/11/2025 1:26 AM

The Grove is our heritage site, a symbol of our ancestors' wisdom and our responsibility to preserve it for future generations

4 CM 8/11/2025 1:26 AM

Osun-Oshogbo Sacred Grove is a sacred space that teaches us about our history and the importance of protecting our natural environment

5 CM 8/11/2025 1:27 AM

The Grove is where our community gathers for rituals and celebrations, embodying the spirit of our people and our connection to the land.

9/8/2025 10:01 PM

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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### Internals\Focus Group Discussion Interview 5 sukur youth

No 0.1296 5

1 CM 8/11/2025 1:11 AM

Sukur is not just our home; it's our heritage. It's where our ancestors lived, and it's our responsibility to protect and promote it.

2 CM 8/11/2025 1:11 AM

Sukur represents our identity and pride. It's a symbol of our resilience as a community and our commitment to preserving our cultural heritage

3 CM 8/11/2025 1:11 AM

Sukur Cultural Landscape is a sacred place that connects us to our roots. It's a source of inspiration and a reminder of our ancestors' wisdom.

4 CM 8/11/2025 1:11 AM

Sukur is where our traditions come alive. It's a privilege to be part of a community that values its history and strives to pass it on to future generations.

5 CM 8/11/2025 1:12 AM

Sukur is our legacy. It's a living testament to our cultural richness and a place where we learn about our past and envision our future.

### Internals\Ogbunike Cave Interview 2

No 0.0203 1

1 MANU 8/10/2025 9:13 PM

My passion for cultural heritage preservation and my roots in the local community drove me to join this field

### Internals\Yankari Game Reserve Interview 4

No 0.0178 1

1 CM 8/10/2025 10:03 PM

My motivation comes from growing up near wildlife corridors seeing habitat loss firsthand





