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A survey of heritage resources for tourism development in Ikem, Isi-Uzo local government area of Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Heritage resources have been identified as among self-development options for rural communities through tourism investments. This study was aimed at surveying the heritage resources in Ikem community with a view to harnessing their socio-cultural and economic opportunities for tourism development in the community. The study adopted qualitative research design where in-depth interviews and field observations were used in investigating a wide range of heritage resources in the community. The findings show a significant amount of heritage assets with potential tourism appeal as well as great cultural and historical significance. However, inadequate infrastructure, cultural sensitivity, and gender-based limitations have surfaced as impediments to the efficient use of these resources for tourism development in the area. The study concluded by recommending the need to critically address socio-economic inequality, sustainable practices, promotion and preservation of the rich heritage assets of the people. Future study is recommended to investigate community viewpoints, stakeholder engagements, and devise plans of improving tourism infrastructure and capacity-building programs. Finally, the study provided insightful information on the relationship between Ikem's tourism opportunities and conservation of community heritage resources.

Keywords: heritage resources; tourism development; cultural preservation; community engagement

1. Introduction

Nigeria has rich tourism landscape that is supported with scintillating attractions, climate, vegetation, quality airspace, sunshine, beautiful scenery, rocks, falls, captivating beaches, historical relics, rich cultural diversity, wildlife and hospitality from the Nigerian peoples [1]. This has positioned the nation as one of the leading tourist destinations in Sub-Saharan Africa. World Trade Organization noted that tourism industry is one of Africa's rich assets, with market worth of \$50 billion, but has \$203.7 billions of untapped potentials which represents four times its current level [2]. More so, Ogili, Olewe and Eneh [3] note that in terms of the environment, Nigeria has world class tropical rain forests, savannah, grassland, mangrove swamps and the Sahel savannah very close to the Sahara Desert, as part of the tourism landscape. Ime, Akpo, Asuquo and Etefia [4] infer that tourism has been a major driver of socio-economic development in most developed nations of the world, and hence it has become an alternative to economic stability and diversification.

Heritage resources have been identified as the bedrock of tourism resources in most African nations with Nigeria inclusive [5,6]. However, despite the numerous socioeconomic gains of tourism, the government have not paid responsive attention to the numerous tourism resources across the nation. The cultural legacy of places like Ikem in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area of Enugu State Nigeria, and some other

places, currently face existential threats. The rapid acceleration of globalization is causing a growing discernible degradation of culture. It is concerning that customs, ceremonies, and food customs that were once intrinsic to Ikem's identity are disappearing. It is more important than ever to record, conserve, and honor these cultural components. Thus, maintaining Ikem's festivals, masquerade parties, and traditional food is essential to the area's cultural existence, and future tourism development initiatives. Ikem's historical resources have a significant economic potential that has not yet been completely realized (also see [7,8])

In terms of tourism development, the district is still underdeveloped despite its wealth of natural and cultural resources. The lack of sustainable tourism practices is a clear indication of this economic stagnation. Ikem's economic growth is impeded and its potential as a catalyst for regional economic development is diminished by the neglect of the economic prospects that come with heritage tourism, including the creation of jobs, revenue, and infrastructure development. It is critical to identify the unrealized economic potential associated with heritage treasures in order to address this issue. Ikem's cultural resources are inextricably linked to the community's social and cultural fabric. The foundation of a community's identity, ties, and pride are these resources. These legacy resources' social and cultural significance is in jeopardy. Investigating the social and emotional bonds that the community has with these resources is essential. This background motivated this study to identify the current state and use of heritage resources in Ikem, and examine the implications of these heritage resources for tourism development in the area using SWOT Analysis.

1.1. Brief information on the study area

Ikem is one of the traditional communities in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area of Enugu State Nigeria (See **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** below). The community lies on Latitude of 64647.7N (6.7799300) and Longitude of 74253.4E (7.7148800). The community has about 200,000 human population judging by 2021 World Bank's population statistics for nations. Majority of this population are predominantly farmers and actors in traditional industries like arts and crafts, etc. Only a limited number is into trading. The community has numerous cultural activities that have existed through generations, including natural heritage resources, that have formed part of the bonding factors for members of the community, just like in some other African communities where heritage resources abound. More on these heritage resources shall be discussed later in this study with pictorial representations.

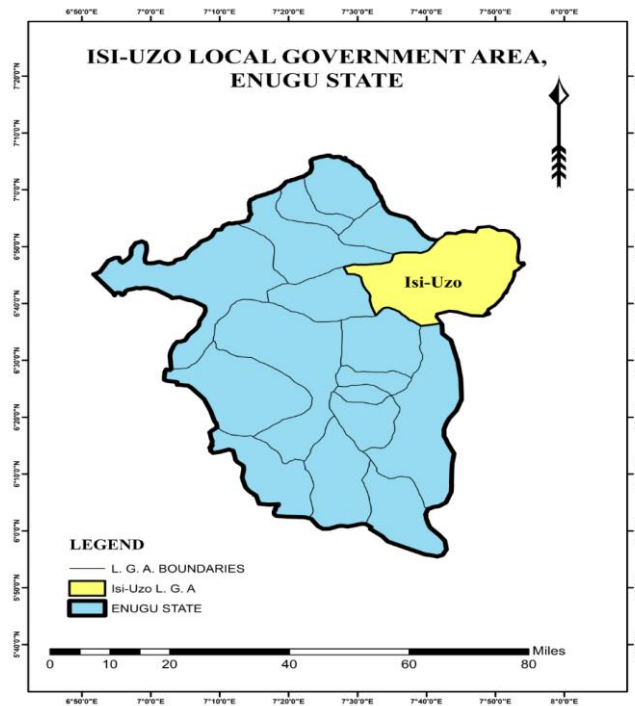


Figure 1. Map of Enugu State showing Isi-Uzo L.G.A.
Source: Archaeology cartography unit, 2023.



Figure 2. Map of Isi-Uzo LGA showing Ikem community.
Source: Archaeology cartography unit, 2023.

1.2. Previous studies

This aspect of the study is focused on the contributions of related previous studies to the current study. This will give a valuable platform to situate the current study

within the context of the existing knowledge on heritage resources and tourism development. To this end, Adekola and Egbo [9] notes that traditions and customs of the people of Nkanu West and Nkanu East LGAs have the potentialities of stimulating socio-economic development in these areas. Also, Bankole [10] carried out a study on harnessing cultural heritage for tourism development in Nigeria: Issues and prospects. The discourse shows that tourism development in Nigeria is encumbered with many systemic problems. He further suggested the need for concerted efforts from the government, private sector operators and host communities, to motivate tourism development in rural areas [10]. In addition, Okonkwo and Odum [11] examined Community-Based Tourism Development in Selected Villages in Enugu State, Nigeria, and note that a well-executed community-based tourism (CBT) will not only create employment opportunities in the selected villages, but will also raise their standard of living.

Nwankwo and Itanyi [5] infer that there are numerous challenges to heritage studies in Igbo area of Nigeria. Identified challenges include remote location of heritage resources, traditional taboos of the people, seasonality of traditional events, attitudinal differences of heritage custodians, and dilapidated state of most heritage resources [5]. More so Nwankwo, Agboeze and Nwobi [12] carried a study on Community Heritage Resources and Crisis Management in Rural Nigeria, and note that a well-preserved heritage resource has the potentialities of positively contributing to crisis management in rural areas in addition to socio-economic development through tourism. Eneji, Odey and Bullus [13] pointed that tourism has the potentialities of impacting in Nigeria's economy. They further note that tourism has direct impact on employment, income, infrastructure and standard of living in host communities if well developed [13].

More so, Oji, Okafor and Okpoko [6] studied the current state of selected heritage resources in Uzo Uwani South Eastern Nigeria, and inform that the heritage resources in the area are facing extinction. Poor preservation techniques, poaching activities, illegal logging, vandalism, iconoclasm, etc., were identified as among the challenges. They further suggested the use of legislation and public awareness to check the menace. Ngozi and Iwuagwu [14] supported this view by asserting that relevant policies and laws, including community orientation and engagements, would aid in propelling sustainable tourism development in rural areas in Nigeria. In addition, Oluwatuyi and Ileri [15] studied cultural tourism and community involvement, on sustainable tourism development in Ekiti State, Nigeria. They identified poor community involvement and engagement as among the banes of cultural tourism development in Nigeria. They suggested bottom-top approach to cultural tourism development in Nigeria, where host communities will be actively involved in tourism development initiatives in their areas [15].

These studies made significant contributions to the relevance of the current study within academic debate by looking at the gains of heritage tourism development, challenges of heritage tourism development and possible solutions to stimulating sustainable tourism development in rural parts of Nigeria where heritage resources form the bulk of tourism resources. However, no of these studies extended their search to Ikem in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area of Enugu State Nigeria, thereby leaving a lacuna on the comprehensive investigation of current state and use of heritage

resources in rural parts of Nigeria. This current study is aimed at narrowing this lacuna by extending the debate and conversations to heritage resources in Ikem, Isi-Uzo LGA of Enugu State Nigeria.

2. Research method

The study adopted qualitative research design and ethnographic research approach. An inductive research approach aided the study in conducting a survey of heritage resources and their implications for tourism development in Ikem. The population of the study was estimated at 150,000 youths and adults in Ikem community, using the estimated World Bank Population statistics for nations in 2021. Purposive sampling techniques as one of the variants of non-probability sampling techniques, was adopted as a sampling technique to arrive at a sample size of twenty-three (23). This is comprised of thirteen (13) men and ten (10) women who are knowledgeable on the community heritage resources and other value systems of Ikem community in Isi-Uzo LGA of Enugu State Nigeria. In-depth interview and Observation were the variants of ethnographic study, that were used in the study. Research instruments include semi-structured interview guide, field notes and pens, cameras, and tape recorders. The study took place in Ikem community between August 2023 to March 2024. At the end, collated data were analyzed descriptively.

3. Results

3.1. Identified heritage resources in Ikem community

During the study, the following were identified as among the significant heritage resources in Ikem community. Their state and current use are presented below.

a) Indigenous Food

There are various species of food that Ikem people and its environs enjoy. These are traditional recipes, cooking techniques, and food rituals that reflect cultural identity and heritage. They include “*Achicha*”, this is a special delicacy that is prepared during dry season due to its abundance and eaten in the rainy season. It is sourced from cocoyam and could be prepared with local bean (Akidi). Another one is “*Jigbu*” or “*Abacha*”, this is sourced from cassava and could be prepared with “*ugba*” (African oil bean), “*Akidi*” (local bean) etc. Others include “*Ayaraya-Oka*”, “*Ayaraya-Ji*”, “*Igbangwu, Otipiri*”, etc. These food types are enjoyed in various homes and during communal ceremonies and other celebrations within the community.

b) Traditional Festivals

Like in some other parts of Enugu North, the Ikem community is known for some notable traditional festivals. These festivals carry deep-rooted traditions, rituals and beliefs that manifest in the community’s heritage and values. They include:

Omabe Festival: This festival is used to celebrate the coming of the Omabe masquerade (see **Figure 3** below). This masquerade only comes out during dry season and goes back towards the end of dry season, because it does not show itself during rainy season. Omabe is not just an ordinary masquerade, but mysterious and shrouded in secrecy. Access to the masquerade is only reserved to the members of the masquerade cult. New members are recruited through initiation rites and covenants.

Omume ihe nwama is the traditional process of initiating young boys to the cult. Members are forbidden to divulging the secrecy of the cult.



Figure 3. Picture of the Omabe masquerade.

Source: ww.google/omabefromntezinigeria. Assessed 4 June 2023.

Omume akwukwo: This is festival of invitation and welcoming of Odo masquerade to people's home (**Figure 4** below). Women are the chief participants during this period. Omume akwukwo is done towards the end of the year. The preparation starts towards the end of Odo masquerade season. The women play some roles in this masquerade event, by assisting in preparing for the arrival of the festival. They make local delicacies for the arrival of the festival.



Figure 4. A picture of the *Odo* masquerade.

Source: www.nairaland.com. Assessed 14 August 2023.

Oruru eshi (New yam festival): This festival normally takes place according to the native calendar month which falls on every seventh month of the year especially with the appearance of the new moon (Onwa-Ofu). Once the date is fixed, the town crier announces to all communities that make up Ikem. The essence of this festival is to thank the gods which is called Iheji oku (a diety responsible for bounty yam harvest) for safe cultivation and fruitful harvest. During this festival, Indigenes of the community from far and near do visit the community to celebrate this festival. Before the celebration of eating and drinking, sacrifices are made at *Unonu Umuararam*, which is where the Iheji Oku shrine is located in Ikem. Yam, Orji Igbo, drink, local-cow, goats, ram etc is being taken to the deity to appreciate it for a good harvest and also ask that the next Oruru Eshi celebration be filled with a greater harvest. This is when the new yam would be eaten for the first time in the homes of every Ikem (every Indigene of Ikem Asokwa), because no person from Ikem who believes in the culture of his peoples dares eat the new yam until the day of the Oruru Eshi. The yam could be eaten as pounded yam, yam porridge, yam & oil, *Ji Mmiri Oku* (Hot water yam) etc. The Masquerades (see **Figure 5** below) will be having their display at the market place where yams are brought for sale. The farmer with the largest yam harvest, becomes the winner of that year's Oruru eshi festival. The celebration lasts for three days; Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and the following day which is Monday, becomes the boxing day (Igba Ote).



Figure 5. A picture of the Akatakpa masquerade.

Source: www.google/akatakpamasquerade/facebook. Assessed 24 June 2023.

Ikoru: The Ikoru is a hand-crafted wooden gong which is installed in Ogor village (see **Figure 6** below). According to Mr. Joseph Odo, he stated that the “Ikoru is a

musical instrument which when beaten signifies Emergency, war or death of a great man in Ikem”. The Ikoru is 6.5 feet tall and is beaten by one man. Mr. Joseph informed the person who sounds the wooden gong is chosen by the gods. The person undergoes different cleansing and rituals to purify himself and fortify his households to avoid the wrath of the gods. The Ikoru gong does not leave the drummer's house except on the death of the player, the Ikoru will move to another family. It is used to announce the death of a king or an elder in the community, or a great warrior.



Figure 6. A picture of the Ikoru.

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Abo Nkata (Local Cart): The Abo Nkata is mainly used in Ikem by men to transport farm produce to the farm or market place since Ikem people are known for their knack in agriculture especially yam production (see **Figure 7** below). The Abo is made from palm fronds by the craftsmen, by peeling the back of the palm fronds and carefully laying it in intricate patterns. According to an informant, Ede Nnumalu Agboo confirmed that the makers of the Abo Nkata are no longer in existence in Ikem Asokwa; that one can only find the makers of normal basket (nkata) they use at home.



Figure 7. A picture of the Abo Nkata.

Source: Field survey, 2024.

The *Abonyi* River: The Abonyi river is located at the center of Ikem Asokwa. It is a large river combining the river from Eha-Mufu, Neke, Umualor and Mbu (see **Figure 8** below). This particular river is the ancestral river, every indigene of Ikem Asokwa fetches water from the river both for drinking, cooking and other domestic uses. The river does not dry up from year to year. Elder Joseph Ugwuokeze informed that the founder of Ikem migrated from Ugbele, the present day Abia State, Nigeria. He was a hunter and he came across the Ebonyi river, and decided to reside with his family. Wild animals like pythons and crocodiles have been killed in the river by great hunters over the years.



Figure 8. A picture of the Abonyi River.

Source: Field survey, 2024.

To an extent Ikem has an interesting cultural background with majority of the population being farmers, are lovers of their cultural heritage. As highly spiritual people, they infuse their believe and spirituality in what they do. In engaging with members of the Ikem community, it became abundantly clear that the cultural heritage resources in the community possess an inherent and significant potential for the development of tourism. Through rich and illuminating conversations, participants passionately conveyed the deep-seated significance of various cultural practices unique to Ikem. Among these are the elaborate marriage rites, intricate burial ceremonies, and vibrant festivals like Omabe and Oruru Eshi, which stand as living testaments to the community's rich cultural tapestry. Participants underscored the allure of these events in attracting tourists seeking genuine and immersive cultural experiences, thus positioning them as pivotal drivers of tourism development within Ikem.

Furthermore, participants articulated a profound sense of pride in Ikem's traditional crafts and artifacts, which serve not only as tangible manifestations of their artisanal skills but also as potent symbols of cultural identity. The Iroko, Nkata, and Abo emerged as emblematic representations of the community's craftsmanship and ingenuity, with participants expressing a keen desire to showcase these treasures to

visitors. Indeed, there was a palpable excitement regarding the prospect of tourism serving as a platform to promote local artisans and revitalize traditional craftsmanship, thereby fostering economic growth and community development.

In delving into the realm of culinary traditions, participants exuded enthusiasm for sharing Ikem's gastronomic delights with visitors. Dishes such as Achicha, Ofe Awaa, and Jigbu/Abacha were heralded as culinary gems, brimming with flavors that tell stories of tradition and heritage. Discussions centered around the potential for culinary tourism to promote these local delicacies, with participants envisioning culinary tours and food festivals as avenues for celebrating Ikem's culinary heritage while simultaneously bolstering local food producers and vendors. Moreover, participants painted vivid pictures of the cultural vibrancy brought to life through festivals like Omabe and Omume Akwukwo, which serve as annual spectacles of communal celebration and spiritual reverence. These festivals, steeped in tradition and ritual, were described as windows into the soul of the community, offering visitors a glimpse into the deeply ingrained customs and beliefs that define Ikem's cultural landscape.

Beyond cultural attractions, participants spoke eloquently of Ikem's natural wonders, particularly the majestic Abonyi River, whose pristine waters and lush surroundings captivate the imagination. Activities such as river cruises and nature walks were envisioned as opportunities to showcase the community's natural splendor while fostering a deeper connection between visitors and the environment. In essence, participants articulated a collective vision of tourism as a catalyst for empowerment and enrichment, both economically and culturally. They emphasized the imperative of responsible tourism development, rooted in a profound respect for local traditions and environmental conservation. Through collaborative efforts and mindful stewardship, participants expressed unwavering confidence in Ikem's ability to harness its cultural heritage resources to create a tourism industry that not only sustains livelihoods but also preserves and celebrates the essence of what makes Ikem truly special.

3.2. Implications of heritage resources for tourism development in Ikem

With the availability of cultural resources in Ikem, one can argue that with proper channeling, heritage resources could have an impact on the cultural, economic and social lives of the people of Ikem community.

- 1) **Economic implication:** This refers to the consequences and effect that a particular decision has on economy. These implications can be positive or negative and can affect various aspects of the economy, such as employment, production and overall economic growth. The economic implication on tourism development in Ikem revolves around the natural resources that make the community, starting with the wonder of their skilled craftsmen (the crafted wooden Ikoro gong). The Ebonyi river and the sweet delicacies could be a point of attraction to tourists and other visitors, because they seek to connect deep to the experience of nature to the fullest. Ikem been a home of strong farmers, tourism could open for innovations, through grants from government to help improve agricultural practices, quality and quantity productions. Improvement in the agricultural

sector and other practices will yield more income and enhance economic growth in Ikem Asokwa.

- 2) Job creation: With the increase of tourists and other visitors to the community, more hands will be required, not only to serve the indigenes of Ikem but also tourists and other visitors who visited the community. In the same light, it will attract the attention of the government to further develop industries to aid agricultural sectors like Rice mills, Flour industries, cassava processing machine and many more. This will give avalanche opportunity for the youths of the Ikem community to be fully involved in community development.
- 3) Cultural preservation: Promoting heritage tourism development in Ikem would help in preserving the rich cultural and heritage resources in Ikem for posterity. Ikem will automatically become a tourist destination. It will also help to promote and preserve the indigenous knowledge system of the people like traditional medicine, the masquerading culture; and also foster a generation that would be proud of their cultural heritage.

3.3. SWOT Analysis of tourism implications of heritage resources in Ikem

This aspect of the study used SWOT Analysis to understand more on the opportunities of the identified heritage resources in Ikem for tourism development in the area. This was done using the four distinctive paradigms of SWO Analysis.

3.3.1. Strengths

Ikem's strengths lie in its rich cultural heritage and natural wonders, which serve as compelling attractions for tourists. The community takes pride in its legacy of skilled craftsmanship, exemplified by revered artifacts like the crafted wooden Ikoro gong. This exquisite piece of artistry not only showcases the ingenuity of Ikem's artisans but also serves as a symbol of cultural identity and pride. Moreover, the enchanting beauty of the Ebonyi River captivates visitors with its pristine waters and lush surroundings, offering a serene escape into nature's embrace. The community's culinary delights, infused with local flavors and traditions, further enrich the visitor experience, providing a tantalizing journey for the taste buds. These strengths position Ikem as a destination ripe for exploration and discovery, drawing tourists eager to immerse themselves in its cultural tapestry and natural splendor.

3.3.2. Weaknesses

Despite its inherent strengths, Ikem grapples with certain weaknesses that pose challenges to its tourism development efforts. Chief among these is the lack of adequate infrastructure to support visitor needs. The community's transportation and accommodation facilities are often limited in scope and capacity, hindering accessibility and comfort for tourists. Additionally, Ikem's heritage assets are underutilized and under-promoted, with insufficient marketing efforts to showcase their ~~its~~ cultural treasures to a wider audience. This lack of visibility and accessibility diminishes Ikem's tourism appeal and revenue-generating potential; limiting its ability to capitalize on its rich heritage resources effectively.

3.3.3. Opportunities

The burgeoning tourism sector in Ikem presents a myriad of opportunities for economic revitalization and community empowerment. As tourist arrivals increase, there emerges a growing demand for additional services and amenities, creating avenues for job creation and entrepreneurship. Local artisans and craftsmen stand to benefit from increased demand for authentic cultural souvenirs and experiences, thereby stimulating economic activity and income generation within the community. Moreover, tourism serves as a catalyst for cultural preservation, providing a platform to celebrate and safeguard Ikem's indigenous traditions for future generations. By leveraging these opportunities strategically, Ikem can harness tourism as a force for sustainable development, fostering socio-economic growth and cultural vitality.

3.3.4. Threats

Despite its promise, tourism development in Ikem is not without its threats and challenges. Environmental degradation poses a significant risk, as increased tourist footfall may strain fragile ecosystems and natural habitats. Without adequate conservation measures in place, the pristine beauty of Ikem's natural landscapes could be compromised, undermining its appeal as a tourist destination. Additionally, the commoditization of cultural heritage presents a threat to authenticity, as commercialization may dilute the genuine essence of Ikem's traditions and practices. Furthermore, external factors such as political instability or economic downturns could disrupt tourism flows and investment, jeopardizing the community's tourism aspirations. By proactively addressing these threats and implementing sustainable practices, Ikem can safeguard its heritage resources while maximizing the benefits of tourism for the host.

4. Discussion of findings

The study on Ikem's heritage resources offers a comprehensive examination of the cultural, historical, and economic significance of this region within the broader context of tourism development in Nigeria. By drawing upon a diverse range of literature, including studies on tourism's impact on socio-economic development, the influence of traditions and customs on community development, harnessing cultural heritage for tourism, and community-based tourism development, this study provides a well-rounded exploration of the opportunities and challenges facing Ikem. This study situates Ikem within the framework of tourism development in Nigeria, acknowledging the potential socio-economic benefits that tourism can bring to local communities. In line with Ogili, Olewe and Eneh [3], which focuses on the effect of tourism on socio-economic development in Enugu State, this study underscores the importance of leveraging Ikem's heritage resources to generate revenue, create employment opportunities, and foster rural development. It was discovered during the research that more than 20% of job opportunities has been as a result of these heritage resources, especially in the aspect of their local craft. These crafts are crafted and sold in exchange for money thereby serving as a source of livelihood for the host. Examples of these hand crafts include the *ikoro* and the *abo nkata*. Ogili et al. [3] also emphasized on the need for economic value of these crafts and how they can be

utilized for economic growth. The existing literature and the current study agreed on the economic value of heritage resources.

This study also explores the cultural background of Ikem, recognizing the impact of traditions and customs on the results of community development. While Adekola and Egbo [9] study on customs and traditions in community development offers insightful information about how local culture shapes perceptions of heritage resources, this study investigates the potential influence of these customs on community engagement in tourism initiatives in Ikem. The results of the current study showed that the Ikem people's cultural, social, and economic lives might be greatly impacted by the use of these legacy materials, making them a double-edged sword. Modern conventions will fight against this legacy, using the caste system of the people of Ikem as an example, which involves isolating any woman who deviates from their customs. This can result in the community's development being sluggish and its economy growing slowly. Additionally, as discussed in Bankole [10], the study addresses the advantages and challenges of using Nigeria's cultural legacy for tourism development. This study highlights the need for infrastructure investment, private sector involvement, and government aid in order to preserve Ikem's heritage assets for future generations. It also highlights the need of sustainable tourism practices.

The present study emphasizes the significance of community empowerment and involvement in tourism projects, which is in line with Okonkwo and Odum [11] research on community-based tourism development in Enugu State. This study establishes the groundwork for inclusive and participatory tourist development strategies in Ikem by investigating potential avenues for collaboration between local communities, government agencies, and tourism stakeholders. The analysis of Ikem's heritage resources provides an in-depth look at the complex dynamics underlying the growth of tourism in the area, and it resonates with a wide range of literature on subjects from the preservation of local heritage resources to the effects of urbanization on tourism.

Nwankwo and Itanyi [5] investigation of the difficulties facing heritage studies in Nigeria's Igbo region emphasizes how important it is to preserve cultural legacy in the face of swift social change. This is extremely in line with the Ikem study's focus on protecting cultural treasures against the intrusion of commercialization and modernity. The studies highlight the importance of heritage resources in building community resilience and identity in the face of changing environments, as they both promote the preservation of cultural identity and legacy. Comparably, Nwankwo et al. [12] study on the contribution of local historical resources to rural Nigerian crisis management offers insightful information about the complex value of heritage preservation. Their findings highlight the critical role that heritage resources play in promoting resilience and community cohesiveness in times of disaster, highlighting the significance of heritage conservation initiatives in rural regions like Ikem. Both studies highlight the intrinsic significance of heritage materials beyond their touristic appeal by highlighting the connections between heritage preservation and community well-being.

The Ikem research is notable for making a significant addition to the discussion on tourism development and heritage preservation in Nigeria since it tackles significant concerns and opportunities by referencing a wide range of literature.

Combining data from multiple sources, the paper offers well-considered recommendations for promoting sustainable tourism growth and safeguarding cultural treasures. This establishes the framework for sensible choices and noteworthy deeds in Ikem and beyond. More so, understanding the socio-economic changes in the area as a result of urbanization, globalization, and technological improvement is made easier by connecting the study of Ikem's heritage resources to modernization theory. According to modernization theory, societies go through phases that are characterized by industry, urbanization, and the adoption of contemporary institutions and values. Within the framework of the Ikem investigation, modernization theory provides valuable perspectives on the continuous metamorphosis of conventional rural communities such as Ikem due to the influence of modernity. The study examines how urbanization affects the growth of tourism in Enugu State, which is in line with modernization theory's emphasis on urbanization as a catalyst for social and economic transformation. Urban centers become hubs for infrastructure development, cultural interchange, and economic activity as they grow and modernize. The report also draws attention to the difficulties caused by unequal urban development, which makes it more difficult to access tourist attractions due to poor infrastructure. This illustrates how modernization theory acknowledges how development advantages are distributed unevenly, with some villages being left out as a result of urbanization.

The study's emphasis on using legacy resources to boost tourism also aligns with modernization theory, which highlights the importance of cultural capital in promoting modernization and economic success (see [16]). Cultural heritage becomes an important tool for drawing tourists and making money as traditional economies shift to service-oriented sectors like tourism. In keeping with modernization theory's concern for striking a balance between economic advancement and environmental and cultural conservation (see [17]), the study also emphasizes the necessity of sustainable development techniques to guarantee that legacy resources are conserved for future generations. Furthermore, the study's analysis of the difficulties facing the preservation of cultural legacy in the face of modernization's demands is consistent with modernization theory's acknowledgment of the conflicts between modernity and tradition (see [18]). The challenges posed by globalization, technological advancement, and evolving socio-cultural norms pose a threat to cultural homogenization and the preservation of customs in rural communities such as Ikem. This emphasizes how crucial it is to protect cultural identity and legacy against the forces of modernization, as the study has argued. In addition, the study highlights the significance of infrastructure investment, community participation, and strategic planning in propelling tourism development by identifying success elements in Rome's heritage management. This is in line with modernization theory, which emphasizes the importance of institutions, governance, and human capital in promoting modernization processes [18].

5. Conclusion

The study was aimed at examining heritage resources in Ikem, Isi-Uzo Local Government Area, Enugu State. The study also explored the economic effects of historical tourism on the area, evaluating its potential to boost local economic

development, create jobs, and generate income. In addition, the research critically evaluated the viability of Ikem's tourist growth, taking into account elements like community empowerment, environmental preservation, and cultural heritage preservation. The research attempted to discover solutions for fostering responsible tourism practices that balance the requirements of present and future generations while maintaining the integrity of the natural and cultural environment by taking a holistic approach to sustainability. The findings of the study conducted in Ikem revealed a wealth of historical resources that have significant ramifications for the growth of the tourism industry. Ikem is a cultural hotspot with a wide range of historical sites, artifacts, and traditions that highlight its importance as a storehouse of regional identity and legacy. Economically speaking, heritage tourism offers good chances for job creation and income generation, but obstacles like poor infrastructure prevent it from realizing its full potential. Although tourism can foster social cohesiveness and intercultural exchange, worries about how it would affect customs and community dynamics still exist. Concerns like cultural commoditization and environmental deterioration brought attention to the necessity of sustainable tourist practices and community-driven projects to guarantee the long-term success and preservation of Ikem's historical treasures (also see [19] for similar studies).

Using a comprehensive survey of the legacy resources in Ikem, Enugu State's Isi-Uzo Local Government Area, this study sought to explore the complex cultural and socio economic opportunities of the areas. The study's use of qualitative research methodologies revealed a wealth of historical resources that highlight Ikem's rich cultural legacy and provide a viable basis for the growth of the tourism industry. The findings highlight the inherent worth of these heritage resources as possible catalysts for sustainable development, community empowerment, and economic expansion. But in the middle of all the promise, there are a few obstacles that need to be overcome. To fully realize the benefits of Ikem's cultural legacy, major obstacles such as inadequate infrastructure, restricted accessibility, and the requirement for sustainable tourism practices have to be addressed. The study also emphasizes how crucial community involvement and stakeholder collaboration are to the formulation of successful plans for heritage preservation and tourism growth. Through the establishment of collaborative relationships between local communities, governmental bodies, tourism establishments, and conservation organizations, all parties involved can effectively harness Ikem's rich cultural legacy to drive equitable development and promote socio-economic progress. Furthermore, encouraging a sense of pride and ownership in Ikem's cultural legacy requires empowering locals to act as stewards of their heritage. Residents can actively contribute to the promotion and protection of their cultural heritage, guaranteeing its long-term viability for future generations, through capacity-building projects and community-driven actions.

In conclusion, despite Ikem's rich cultural legacy, addressing infrastructure deficiencies, advancing sustainable tourist practices, and encouraging community involvement are all necessary to realize the city's full tourism potential. Through the utilization of the cultural resources of the area as catalysts for both social and economic development, stakeholders may map out a course for a thriving and sustainable future for the people of Ikem. Ikem may become a top tourist destination by embracing inclusive and cooperative methods to heritage preservation and tourism development.

This study has significantly contributed to the existing knowledge and literature by providing insightful information on the current state and use of Ikem's heritage resources. The study has also provided an evidence-based plans and policies for the growth of tourism and historical preservation in Ikem and other comparable areas. Through the identification of critical obstacles including inadequate infrastructure and restricted accessibility, the study reveals areas in which focused interventions are required to fully realize the promise of Ikem's cultural legacy. The study acts as a catalyst for positive change, paving the way for a thriving and resilient tourism industry that celebrates Ikem's distinct cultural identity while promoting the prosperity of its citizens and the preservation of its legacy for future generations. It does this by increasing awareness, encouraging collaboration, and advocating for sustainable practices.

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